EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY

WEA
WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

Department of Theological Concerns

Evangelical Review of Theology

A Global Forum

Published by

WEA
WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

Department of Theological Concerns

Editorial Policy
The articles in the *Evangelical Review of Theology (ERT)* reflect
the opinions of the authors and reviewers and do not necessarily
represent those of the Editors or the Publisher.

The Editors welcome both unsolicited submissions and
recommendations of original or previously published articles
or book reviews for inclusion in ERT. Manuscripts, reviews,
queries and other communications may be addressed
to the Executive Editor at bruce.barron0@gmail.com.

Table of Contents

Welcome to the New ERT

In 1921, John G. Bowman became chancellor of the University of Pittsburgh, USA. When he arrived in the city, he reportedly asked people for directions to the university and got vague answers. Dismayed, he determined to make his new university a place that people would not overlook.

Before the year ended, Bowman commissioned work on the 42-story, Gothic-style Cathedral of Learning. Completed in 1937, it remains, 83 years later, the tallest educational structure in the Western Hemisphere. And everyone in Pittsburgh knows where the university is.

Could the new *Evangelical Review of Theology* do for the World Evangelical Alliance what the Cathedral of Learning did for a university? Happily, it doesn't have to. The WEA is already widely known for its effectiveness in representing evangelicals' concerns to governments, advocating for religious freedom, giving evangelicals an informed voice in inter-faith and intra-faith settings, equipping national-level affiliates, and much more. Anyone who needs support from a global evangelical body knows where to find it.

But amidst all that work, the WEA's theological voice has been somewhat muted. The *Evangelical Review of Theology* (ERT) was founded 43 years ago to contribute to a revival of evangelical scholarship (as John Langlois explains in a fascinating retrospective article in this issue). Today, we face a different set of needs: to empower, unite, and educate an evangelical movement that is experiencing unprecedented opportunity in the Global South, vexing challenges in religiously closed countries, and increasing cultural coldness in the Global North.

Arguably, no organization is better positioned to do that than the WEA. We hope that ERT can grow into becoming that vehicle.

After 43 years as a subscription-based journal, this is the first free, open-access issue of ERT. It contains several articles by people associated with the WEA, and we expect to continue featuring WEA-connected voices in these pages—especially the organization's two most prominent theologians, Thomas K. Johnson (who writes in this issue on a major WEA-Muslim collaboration) and Thomas Schirrmacher. We also wish to promote the amazingly perceptive writing of director Jay Matenga and his colleagues in the WEA Mission Commission, recent examples of which are available online at weamc.global.

But ERT is not a mouthpiece for the WEA. We want leading evangelicals all over the world to view ERT as a desirable place to publish, now that the journal will be publicly available and (we hope) widely read.

ERT will be guided by these principles:

- *Academic quality plus readability*. We seek to publish articles and book reviews that are carefully prepared, well-argued and documented, but readable by the average Christian.
- *Evangelical faithfulness*. Although we do not publish only evangelical authors—for example, we have invited the Vatican's liaison to evangelicals to contribute to a future issue—everything we publish will be consistent with our goal of advancing the gospel of Christ as historically affirmed by the WEA and other evangelical organizations.

- *Global relevance.* We want readers around the world to find ERT useful. That does not rule out articles focusing on a particular national context; indeed, we have four such articles in this issue, from Indonesia, Nigeria, Canada and the USA. But each article has clear applicability to other settings.
- *Gracious expression.* Evangelicals are united in our affirmation of Jesus Christ as Saviour and the Scriptures as God's inspired word to humankind, but we have internal disagreements on just about everything else. In areas of disagreement, we should present our views openly, honestly and respectfully. In that spirit, the new ERT welcomes rebuttal articles or letters to the editor, as long as they are charitable.
- *Wide-ranging scope.* We treat the word 'theology' in the journal's title as encompassing anything that affects how we think about, understand and live for God.
- *Contemporary connections.* Although we will continue to publish articles on relatively timeless topics such as biblical studies and church history, we seek articles with clear practical application, and we welcome contributions on current issues. Because we have an internal review process rather than the formal peer review procedure typical of academic journals, the turnaround time from submission to publication can be as little as four weeks.

We know that readers' time is limited, so we want to make ERT user-friendly. Each article begins with a two- or three-sentence summary that will enable you to learn very quickly what the article is about and decide whether to read more.

We recognize that in many parts of the world, English is not a native language. Prospective authors do not have to write in perfect English—or pay for professional editing of their articles—to persuade us to read their submissions. If the content is good, we are willing to edit the English.

In addition to recruiting high-quality article submissions, we would like to expand our stable of book reviewers. Contact Peirong Lin at peironglin@worldea.org to become a reviewer or to suggest books for review.

Although much of the world interacts in English today, there is one large exception: Latin Americans tend to talk to each other in Spanish. Accordingly, we are investigating a possible Spanish-language version of ERT, which would include a combination of original articles in Spanish and translations from the English version. *Si este proyecto le interesa, contáctenos.*

We welcome your feedback on the new ERT. We hope it will inspire and challenge you. If it proves so useful that we have to switch from four to six issues per year to publish all the wonderful submissions we receive, that will be a pleasant problem. Happy reading!

Thomas Schirrmacher, General Editor
Bruce Barron, Executive Editor

How to Advance the Kingdom of God without Travelling

Efraim Tendero

Secretary General, World Evangelical Alliance

Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom, or the strong man boast of his strength, or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth. —Jeremiah 9:23–24

COVID-19 is a *kairos* moment (from the Greek word for 'a crucial time', as opposed to chronological time), a turning point for humanity. It has humbled the world, showing that human wisdom cannot solve our problems. Scientists have been baffled, public-health efforts have triggered a massive global economic downturn, and military might cannot bomb the virus into submission.

In many parts of the world, humanism and secularism have tried to do away with God. But COVID-19 has seized our attention, demonstrating that humans cannot exist or live meaningfully without recognizing God.

Evangelicals have responded admirably to the pandemic, applying Ephesians 5:15–16: 'Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.' National evangelical alliances on every continent have acted in selfless, remarkably effective ways. In Caribbean nations, they participated directly in government decisions on how to reopen from lockdown; in Argentina, the government asked evangelicals to manage distribution of a million food packages; in Sierra Leone, national evangelical leaders disseminated health-related messages by radio and personally travelled to villages to demonstrate proper sanitation.

One common theme, from Argentina to Jordan to Uzbekistan, has been that evangelicals are so well respected for their selfless, honest work that many governments call on them for assistance, even in countries where Christians are a small minority.

I have created a series of videos on national alliances' exemplary responses to the pandemic. You can find them at https://covid19.worldea.org/AlliancesInAction.

Evangelicals have been a source of mercy and comfort to millions, generously providing emergency assistance. We have cooperated in this temporary suspension of normal worship patterns, recognizing that in doing so we are partners in serving our community, not victims of religious persecution.

Sadly, in some cases bad theology has led to gullibility, as a few have fallen

prey to conspiracy theories claiming that COVID-19 is a hoax or a sign of the end times. But other evangelicals have broken free from their silos and collaborated as never before in prayer and ministry.

We all know that churches and theological schools around the world have shifted to online communication and platforms, often reaching far more people than they had been connecting with in person. Global organizations like the World Evangelical Alliance have made a similar shift from travel to electronic connectivity, and the change has not been all bad.

Normally, I am away from my Manila home 75 percent of the time. Since March 16, I have not left my neighborhood. But with the borders closed to travel, we have found that we live in a borderless world.

During the first two years of my tenure as Secretary General, I had to travel to New York every two or three months for meetings. Believing that we could be more efficient if we travelled less, I decentralized our operations into six offices and we began having more of our meetings by Skype. (If you are a latecomer to technology—Skype was the predecessor of Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and GoToMeeting.) Our senior leaders now spend more time together online than we used to spend when meeting face to face.

Granted, this change can negatively impact quality of interaction. Attention can fade during Zoom calls; the informal break times during in-person meetings when ideas could percolate in side conversations are harder to arrange; relationships can become more task-oriented and less person-oriented. But COVID-19 has allowed global leaders to discover that we can meet with more people and be present in more areas via the Internet than as frequent flyers.

The suspension of mass gatherings has powerfully impacted the megachurch phenomenon. We still have no idea when thousands of believers will be able to congregate in huge sanctuaries or auditoriums again. But again, this disruption may have spiritual benefit.

In Acts 1:8, Jesus told the disciples that they would be his witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth. Following Pentecost, the uttermost parts were initially forgotten as the megachurch of Jerusalem instantly attracted thousands of believers. But by Acts 8:1, persecution forced the church to scatter—and to take the gospel to communities throughout Judea and Samaria. Although no one wishes for persecution, one could say that 8:1 achieved what 1:8 had not.

According to Acts 2:46, the Jerusalem believers quickly began having both large-group meetings (in the temple courts) and small-group meetings (in homes). During this pandemic, megachurches can still deliver preaching and inspiration to our electronic devices as a substitute for large gatherings, but interpersonal connections, body life and pastoral care happen only in small groups. Maybe we all needed to rediscover that our homes can be churches and that spiritual transformation happens best in intimate, personal settings.

Whether your church is holding in-person meetings again or not, and no matter how evil these days may seem, let us make the most of our time, technology and other resources to communicate the gospel at a time when empty hearts are crying out for it.

A Candid History of the
Evangelical Review of Theology

John Langlois

As it becomes an open-source journal, the Evangelical Review of Theology will be new to most readers, but it has been around for a long time. John Langlois, who was there at the beginning, meshes personal recollections, theology and magic mushrooms in this fascinating story of how the journal came into existence, as part of the amazing revival of evangelical scholarship over the last fifty years.

From its first publication in 1977, the *Evangelical Review of Theology* has sought to present biblical truth so as to support evangelical believers in the ever-changing contemporary world in which they are called to live and witness. Forty-three years later, its purpose remains the same. This should be no surprise. Indeed, throughout the history of the Christian church there has always been a need to teach sound doctrine. Even before the twelve apostles had died, error was seeping into the church.

The apostles were very much aware of this. Late in his life, Paul exhorted Timothy to 'Follow the standard of sound words which you have heard from me' (2 Tim 1:13) and to be 'trained in the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following' (1 Tim 4:6), because already others in the church were teaching things 'contrary to sound doctrine' (1 Tim 1:10). Paul foresaw that 'the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own passions and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths' (2 Tim 4:3).

Paul had exactly the same message for Titus, whom he encouraged to 'hold fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it' (Tit 1:9).

Over the centuries, the Christian church has been preoccupied with the concept of apostolic succession, typically defined as 'the method whereby the ministry of the Christian Church is held to be derived from the apostles by a continuous succession, which has usually been associated with a claim that the succession is through a series of bishops through the laying on of hands.' Until the Protestant Reformation, there was little concept of an apostolic succession of *faith*.

John Langlois was Secretary of the World Evangelical Alliance's International Council from 1980 to 2019 and is now Member Emeritus of the Council. He was also chairman of the WEA's Religious Liberty Commission from 1992 to 2018 and Administrative Secretary of its Theological Commission from 1969 until 1982.

I have been involved with the World Evangelical Alliance (then called the World Evangelical Fellowship) since 1969, when I joined Bruce Nicholls, who had founded the WEF Theological Assistance Programme the previous year. Bruce's passion was to re-establish biblical theology in theological colleges where it had been eroded, and often discarded, during the preceding century of disdain by liberal theologians that had left the church in a dire state.

I refer to the period of one hundred years for a reason. The man generally regarded as the originator of current liberal theology, Julius Wellhausen, became a lecturer at the University of Göttingen in 1870, or exactly 99 years before I teamed up with Bruce Nicholls. In 1882, Wellhausen resigned his post as professor of theology for reasons of conscience, stating in his letter of resignation:

> I became a theologian because the scientific treatment of the Bible interested me; only gradually did I come to understand that a professor of theology also has the practical task of preparing the students for service in the Protestant Church, and that I am not adequate to this practical task, but that instead despite all caution on my own part I make my hearers unfit for their office. Since then my theological professorship has been weighing heavily on my conscience.

Unlike Wellhausen himself, his students and followers did not resign. They energetically disseminated liberal theology through universities and theological colleges, deriding those who continued to believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and authoritative for faith and conduct. The World Council of Churches became an instrument to promote liberal theology. The WCC created an Ecumenical Institute in Bossey (near Geneva), Switzerland, which awarded scholarships through its Theological Education Fund to leaders of evangelical churches, often in Africa—training them to inculcate liberal theology in their leadership structures.

In 1968, Bruce Nicholls decided to do something about this situation. The WEF's Theological Assistance Programme was designed to raise the academic standards at evangelical theological colleges by giving promising students opportunities to pursue advanced studies, so that they would be in a position to teach and provide leadership in theological schools themselves. After more than fifty years, Bruce is still passionate in pursuing this never-ending task for theology—the true apostolic succession of faith.

It so happened that my own passion was the same as Bruce's, and by divine intervention God brought us together as co-workers in this important task. Bruce was the theologian and I was his assistant in getting the various programmes organized. We met at the London Bible College, where I was a theology student from 1966 until 1969 at a time when Bruce was undertaking further studies there. The college principal, Gilbert Kirby, just happened to be the previous General Secretary of the WEF. When I sought his advice regarding future ministry options, he mentioned Bruce's need for an assistant, so I met Bruce for a chat. We immediately clicked. We shared the same passion for sound theology.

My passion for good theology goes back to my teenage years, when I could see the erosion of solid theology in the Pentecostal church in which I was raised. In this case, liberal theology was not the cause. Rather, the theological training

its ministers received was very shallow, leaving pastors unable to preach the full counsel of God and the members of their congregations ill-equipped in effective discipleship. I realized that unless the denomination devoted itself to a solid Bible-based foundation, it would become liberal within fifty years, whereas the Methodist Church had taken two hundred years.

That comparison to the Methodists was particularly poignant to me and my family. My family had been active Methodists since the time of John Wesley, but in 1926 my grandfather left the Methodist Church and joined a Pentecostal church because that is where the gospel was preached. He wanted his children to be raised hearing biblical truth. Although the lay members in the Methodist church at that time were good people, the ministers were preaching Modernism—casting doubt on the authority of Scripture, including the Virgin Birth, the physical resurrection of Christ, the second coming and so on.

Without good biblical doctrine, the church cannot survive. That has proved to be the case on Guernsey Island in the English Channel, where I live. In the town where I worship, in the nineteenth century they were no fewer than 23 Methodist chapels. The last Methodist church in the town closed eight years ago.

Let me go back a few more steps, historically. In 1509, the Roman Catholic priest of the parish where I presently live was called John Langlois, the same name as me, a member of my family. Then the Protestant Reformation occurred. On the neighbouring island of Jersey, in 1574 the Royal Court of Jersey, which was the government at the time, asked another member of my family, Martyn Langlois, to go and study Protestant theology in Wittenberg, at Luther's seminary, so that he could return to the island and establish Protestant theology in the churches. It is one thing to declare a reformation of the church, but quite another thing to teach the clergy what the new theology is!

Martyn Langlois completed his studies in Wittenberg and returned to the island of Jersey in 1580. Within four years he had solidly established Protestant theology in the state Church (the Anglican Church). The government was so encouraged that it sent Martyn to Guernsey, the island where I live, to do the same on our island, which he did. Ever since that time the churches on all the Channel Islands have been 95 percent Protestant.

That is the main reason why, in my teenage years, I was passionate about the churches having a solid base in biblical theology. On 6 March 1963, when I was nineteen years old, the Lord called me to devote my life to the cause of raising the standard of evangelical theological education. I was studying law at the time. I eventually completed my law studies and was licensed to practise at the bar, but not before having undertaken my studies in theology.

My immediate objective in studying at London Bible College was to obtain a qualification that would enable me to teach at theological colleges overseas. To achieve that, I needed not only to study for the college degree (which, being evangelical, was not generally accredited) but also for the bachelor of divinity (BD) degree of the University of London. Unfortunately I failed the London BD, as did 72 percent of all theology students in all colleges of the University of London that year. It was a time when liberal theology was rampant throughout the university—a time when biblical answers to examination questions were unacceptable to the liberal examiners, who expected adherence to theories of

higher criticism, 'God is dead' and Jesus as a 'magic mushroom'. I redoubled my efforts to do something about the problem!

Interestingly, the faculty at London Bible College were of the opinion that I would make a better administrator than teacher, so when I met Bruce Nicholls and he told me that he needed an administrator for his work, it became very apparent that this was truly a team in the making, as Bruce was still teaching full-time at Yeotmal Biblical Seminary in India and was not as free to travel widely as I could be.

I spent three months with Bruce in India in 1969, also visiting a number of theological colleges in the country. At the end of that year, I went to Singapore, and in the next three months I set up the WEF Theological Assistance Programme's Asia office (now the Asia Theological Association), with Bong Rin Ro as its first secretary.

My work as administrator involved spreading the message of what was needed to reintroduce sound doctrine in evangelical theological education. We published a quarterly newsletter called *Theological News*, reporting what was happening and what was planned. We also produced a second newsletter, *Programming News*, to introduce the concept of writing specialized courses for students learning through Theological Education by Extension (TEE).

In 1977, we launched the *Evangelical Review of Theology* (ERT), with Bruce as its editor—initially twice a year, then quarterly since 1985. The object was (and still is) 'to publish articles and book reviews from around the world (both original and reprinted) from an evangelical perspective, reflecting global evangelical scholarship for the purpose of discerning the obedience of faith, and of relevance and importance to its international readership of theologians, educators, church leaders, missionaries, administrators and students'. I attended to the logistics of publishing ERT—that is, printing, getting subscriptions, keeping mailing lists and distributing each issue.

I served on the WEF's Theological Commission until 1982, when Bruce handed over leadership of the Theological Commission and a new team took over. It was a very creative time as we started out on a task which was so sorely needed fifty years ago. We began as a team of two, but very soon many other people were co-labourers in the task and they deserve all the credit for everything that has happened over the years with God's help.

When I attended the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the Asia Theological Association in Singapore in August 2019, I was deeply grateful to God for the huge amount that has been achieved in the past half-century. In 1969, there were just two people with doctoral degrees teaching at evangelical theological schools in Asia; in 2019 there were 516! During that time evangelical colleges have grown and liberal colleges have largely withered and perished, because they taught fake theology which was far removed from apostolic teaching and provided no spiritual nourishment for the faithful. For the past 150 years the liberal denominations have turned aside from the truth and wandered off into myths—such as those theories of higher criticism, 'God is dead' and magic mushrooms.

When he was on earth, Jesus said that He would build his church on the rock of biblical truth, and he is doing just that, as he has done through the ages. The *Evangelical Review of Theology* still has a vital part to play in proclaiming and restating that truth in a changing world.

A Case for Ethical Cooperation between Evangelical Christians and Humanitarian Islam

Thomas K. Johnson

Humanity's ability to live together in peace and harmony—and the very lives of both Christians and peaceful Muslims in many parts of the world—are threatened by radical Islamic elements. The World Evangelical Alliance and a major Muslim organization have agreed to work together to combat threats to their shared values and articulate a positive alternative. This article explains why such an effort is justified and how it hopes to make a global impact.

On 19 April 2007, as I was preparing to teach a theology class for a low-visibility evangelical seminary in Turkey, I read an email and felt as if I had been kicked in the stomach. Terrorists had slit the throats of three men—two Turkish converts from Islam to Christianity, one German missionary. One of them had enrolled in my class.

The motives of their murderers were a sinister mix of nationalist ideology and the desire to enforce an inhumane version of sharia, or Muslim law.

One could, if one wished, place this attack in the broader context of fourteen centuries of conflict between Muslims and Christians.[1] To me, such an assessment would be one-sided. The typical Muslim today, like the typical Christian, is sickened to see religion used to justify violence. But across history, both Islam and Christianity have often included notions of religiously defined empires, kingdoms, lands, and nations within their systems of ethics. This has contributed to involving religions in the conflicts amongst empires, as well as to countless instances of genocide, terrorism and persecution.

We would be much better off if, on issues of social and political relations, Islam and Christianity were on the same side, offering a universal ethical compass. I believe that such a radical step is achievable via a partnership between evangelical Christianity and an impressive intellectual movement known as Humanitarian Islam.

In this paper, I first discuss the inadequacy of some Muslim responses to Islamic extremism, followed by an explanation of why Humanitarian Islam is

---

1   Raymond Ibrahim, *Sword and Scimitar: Fourteen Centuries of War between Islam and the West* (Hachette Books: Kindle Edition, 2018).

Thomas K. Johnson (PhD, University of Iowa) is senior advisor to the World Evangelical Alliance Theological Commission.

a preferable alternative. I then draw some comparisons to Christian ethics and close by suggesting how we can work together effectively—including one promising new collaboration.

Why some Muslim responses to extremism do not go far enough

In recent years, many Muslim theologians and jurists have been working hard to convince extremists to turn from their violent ways while explaining to the watching world why violence does not represent Islam. Three prominent responses have been the 'Open Letter to Dr. Ibrahim Awwad Al-Badri, alias "Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi", and to the fighters and followers of the self-declared "Islamic State"' published by 126 Sunni leaders in September 2014; the Marrakesh Declaration of 2016; and the 2019 Human Fraternity Document (HFD) signed in Abu Dhabi by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar.

These documents directly confront and condemn violence in the name of Islam; if these principles were followed, our world would be far less violent. This is significant. However, these recent Muslim statements also perpetuate some convictions that undermine their potential to reduce global conflict and local tragedies. For example, the Open Letter of 2014 (in paragraph 22) directly affirms the obligation of Muslims to form a new caliphate, even while rejecting ISIS's use of morally repugnant means to establish a caliphate. Such a perceived obligation, a central cause of conflict among Muslims as well as between Islam and others, has been perpetuated, not resolved, by the Open Letter.

Likewise, the Marrakesh Declaration of 2016, though rejecting violence in the name of Islam and calling for the development of a Muslim doctrine of citizenship that applies to people of other religions, clearly affirms the notion of 'Muslim countries'. In a Muslim country, minorities may be tolerated, and citizenship may increase their level of toleration, but non-Muslims will always be regarded and treated as something less than full stakeholders in a country that officially describes itself as Muslim. It seems as if the Marrakesh doctrine of a Muslim country is a smaller version of the same Muslim doctrine of which the Caliphate is the larger version. It does not affirm true freedom of religion.

The 2019 HFD blends important themes in Roman Catholic and Sunni Muslim ethical teaching in a manner that is designed to be understood by followers of either religion or of no religion. It begins to address the problems related to minority religions and citizenship which were identified in the Marrakesh Declaration. The HFD could be a valuable tool for moral instruction in some circumstances; it has the added value of clarifying international and interfaith ethical standards for many areas of public life, though some will suspect that this text implies an ultimate equivalence of religious beliefs.[2] Despite these significant steps forward,

---

2   For example, the HFD claims, 'The pluralism and the diversity of religions, colour, sex, race and language are willed by God in His wisdom, through which He created human beings.' Many Christians would feel unable to say without qualification that 'God willed the diversity of religions.' Recognition of the similarities of ethical teaching across faith traditions should be balanced by a recognition of the ultimate incompatibility of some claims of those traditions.

the HFD does not explicitly address the problem of the religiously defined state, whether one has a Christian country or a Muslim country in view. By ignoring this topic, the text may unintentionally perpetuate second-class citizenship for adherents of minority religions. And the HFD does not address the explosive issue of how to treat people who convert from one religion to another.

Some recent Muslim statements on public life, such as those just discussed, make passing reference to the 1948 United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). However, UDHR article 18, which is painfully explicit about the freedom to convert to a different religion, is seldom quoted. It states, 'Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.' If UDHR 18 were fully understood, affirmed, and practised, it would not only end the persecution of converts; it would also mean the gradual end of religiously defined countries (whether Muslim, Christian, Hindu or Buddhist). No country that consistently protects the freedom to change religions, including freedom to develop the institutions of the newly adopted religions, can expect to consistently affirm its long-term identity as a state belonging to one religion.

Humanitarian Islam

One very large Muslim movement is quite different from those discussed above. It robustly affirms the UDHR (including article 18) and rejects the notion of a Muslim country or caliphate. Its theory of ethics directly and constructively addresses the reality of religiously pluralistic societies. The main voices in this movement are leaders in the world's largest Muslim organization, the Indonesia-based Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Their perspective, called 'Humanitarian Islam', has spawned many publications in English for the international community, especially since ISIS declared its caliphate in 2014.

A careful examination of the ethics of Humanitarian Islam finds that Muslims of this type, when following their own principles, support religious freedom and human rights for Christians and people of other faiths. But their ethic goes much farther. Though presented mostly as a Muslim alternative to extremist violence, Humanitarian Islam contains a serious assessment of universal moral norms, the relation between faith and reason, fundamental human goods, the laws (both civil and religious) needed to protect those human goods, and the role of religions in societies.

Within the spectrum of varieties of Islam, the Indonesian Humanitarians represent the opposite end from the violent extremists. They present themselves as fully orthodox Muslims, not secularized half-Muslims. Precisely as such, they fully endorse classical human rights, religious freedom for other religions, and constitutional democracy, while openly naming and repudiating 'obsolete and problematic tenets' of Muslim orthodoxy which, they claim, have been misused to promote extremism.[3]

---

3   For example, in February 2019, NU leaders decreed that members of their organization should no longer use the term 'infidel' to describe people who are not Muslims, suggesting that the term 'citizen' be used as a replacement. For the political context see 'NU Calls for End to Word "In-

The representatives of Humanitarian Islam believe that Islamic extremists—from ISIS to the Wahhabis of Saudi Arabia—have been misusing Islam for their own purposes, and that this misuse of religion has been supported by versions of Muslim doctrine which were contextualized many centuries ago in a radically different situation. In their May 2017 *Declaration on Humanitarian Islam*[4] they write, 'Various actors—including but not limited to Iran, Saudi Arabia, ISIS, al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, Qatar, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Taliban and Pakistan—cynically manipulate religious sentiment in their struggle to maintain or acquire political, economic and military power, and to destroy their enemies. They do so by drawing upon key elements of classical Islamic law (*fiqh*), to which they ascribe divine authority, in order to mobilize support for their worldly goals' (para 28).

Therefore, the *Declaration on Humanitarian Islam* says, 'If Muslims do not address the key tenets of Islamic orthodoxy that authorize and explicitly enjoin such violence, anyone—at any time—may harness the orthodox teachings of Islam to defy what they claim to be the illegitimate laws and authority of an infidel state and butcher their fellow citizens, regardless of whether they live in the Islamic world or the West.' As an alternative, NU seeks to establish a new Islamic orthodoxy that addresses the problematic tenets of medieval Islamic teaching which extremists claim to be orthodox.

Precisely as Muslims, the Humanitarians claim that the extremists do not reflect the best of Islam. The core of their argument is that Islam has a tradition of developing the application of Muslim ethics and law by means of interaction with changing cultures, but that this process stopped several centuries ago, leaving many Muslims bound to an ossified and conflict-producing version of Sharia that is not tenable in a global, pluralistic society. In contrast, truly orthodox Islam contains within itself its own proper theological and legal method that leads to a humanitarian, pro-democracy position, including promoting religious freedom for all and signalling the end of religiously defined countries. Humanitarian Islam seeks to reactivate this authentically Muslim theological method to develop a truly new and more fully orthodox Islam, thereby displacing the outdated version of Islam that is fuelling many conflicts and possibly a global clash of civilizations.

As Humanitarian Islam explains, 'Islamic orthodoxy contains internal mechanisms, including the science of *uṣūl al-fiqh*—the methodology of independent legal reasoning employed to create Islamic law, or *fiqh* (often conflated with *sharīʿah*)—that allow Muslim scholars to adjust the temporal elements of religious orthodoxy in response to the ever-changing circumstances of life. These internal mechanisms entail a process of independent legal reasoning known as *ijtihād*, which fell into disuse among Sunni Muslim scholars approximately five centuries ago' (*Nusantara Manifesto* para 106).[5] As they see it, for some five hun-

---

fidels" to Describe Non-Muslims', *Jakarta Post,* 1 March 2019, https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2019/03/01/nu-calls-for-end-to-word-infidels-to-describe-non-muslims.html.

4   *Gerakan Pemuda Ansor Declaration on Humanitarian Islam: Towards the Recontextualization of Islamic Teachings, for the Sake of World Peace and Harmony Between Civilizations* (Bayt ar-Rahmah, May 2017), https://baytarrahmah.org/2017_05_22_ansor-declaration-on-humanitarian-islam/.

5   *Nusantara Manifesto* (Bayt ar-Rahmah, October 2018), https://baytarrahmah.org/2018_10_25_nusantara-manifesto/.

dred years the proper Muslim theological method, the 'internal mechanism' for the unfolding of Muslim orthodoxy, has not been properly implemented, leading to the debacle of the role of Islam on the global stage, and leaving their thought leaders with a lot of unfinished homework.

The theological method of Humanitarian Islam

Several notable themes characterize the distinctive theological method used by Humanitarian Islam in its systematic effort to define a new Islamic ethics and theory of law. I will highlight four of them here.

1. *Humanitarian Islam sharply distinguishes eternal, unchanging ethical and legal norms from contingent norms that are limited in their relevance to a particular time and situation.*

The *Declaration on Humanitarian Islam* says, 'Religious norms may be universal and unchanging—e.g. the imperative that one strive to attain moral and spiritual perfection—or they may be "contingent", if they address a specific issue that arises within the ever-changing circumstances of time and place. As reality changes, contingent—as opposed to universal—religious norms should also change to reflect the constantly shifting circumstances of life on earth' (paras 3 and 4). Humanitarian Islam claims that the current crisis of Islam arises from taking contingent norms from previous centuries, whether the seventh century or the Middle Ages, and applying them in the twenty-first century as if they were eternal, unchanging norms. This leads to a horrendous misperception of Islamic religious rules, both by Islamist extremists and by the enemies of Islam.

The eternal norms cited by Humanitarian Islam are general principles of morally sensitive behaviour. For example, they emphasize the need 'to revitalize the understanding and practice of religion as *raḥmah* (universal love and compassion)' in contrast with hatred and violence (*Manifesto* para 7). They continue, 'Noble behavior entails acting with compassion and treating others with respect' (para 61). As a dimension of respect for others, they repeatedly mention the UDHR (for example, para 132).

2. *This hermeneutic for properly applying religious norms is related to a transcendental definition of the sharia, not a concrete or specific definition of the sharia.*

Because of the complex origin of sharia in the Koran, in the early Muslim tradition, and in the interpretations of classical Muslim theology, sharia does not have an historically given source or definition found in one particular text. Nevertheless, amongst several strands of Islam, the perception of a single, firmly established form of sharia is great enough that several countries have attempted to fully implement a specific set of laws that they call 'the sharia', even if the historical claim, that this is the true sharia, is questionable. For example, in recent years Sudan, Pakistan, Libya, parts of Nigeria, the Aceh province of Indonesia, some regions in the Philippines, and Yemen have implemented sharia law to strictly enforce such matters as women's dress, punishment for blasphemy or

apostasy, corporal punishment, stoning for adultery, and even cutting off limbs.[6]

Humanitarian Islam decries this practice as the false application of contingent religious norms from a previous era to the current situation. Instead, the term 'sharia', which the Humanitarians use sparingly, is applied to eternal principles that exist outside time and space. They see sharia as transcendent moral values leading to God (and protecting creation) that have to be applied anew in every situation, not as specific laws that can be enforced by a police officer.

The *Nusantara Manifesto* (2018) includes an essay by Abdurrahman Wahid (1940–2009), president of Indonesia from 1999 to 2001, called 'God Needs No Defense' as an official appendix. Wahid wrote, 'Shari'a, properly understood, expresses and embodies perennial values. Islamic law, on the other hand, is the product of *ijtihad* (interpretation) which depends on circumstances and needs to be continuously reviewed in accordance with ever-changing circumstances, to prevent Islamic law from becoming out of date, rigid and non-correlative—not only with Muslims' contemporary lives and conditions, but also with the underlying perennial values of shari'a itself.' In other words, Islam cannot merely copy a law code from a previous era; perennial and eternal values have to be applied in every generation, for which a clear theological and legal method is needed.

Wahid assumed that in some instances, religious law as taught today, based on contingent interpretations from a previous era, would contradict a proper contingent interpretation or application of the perennial values of the eternal, higher sharia to our era. For example, anti-blasphemy or anti-apostasy laws, which may have been proper applications of the eternal sharia in a previous socio-political situation, might themselves become blasphemous in our era because they attempt to defend God in ways that are inappropriate in a multi-religious society.

Such a definition of sharia, if followed by the global Muslim movement, would undermine many reasons for Islamophobia, since it would shift the discussion of the religious ethics of public life away from, for example, the proper way to execute blasphemers and toward a principled discussion of what constitutes human goods and what types of religious and civil laws would serve to protect the primary human goods. People from different religious communities and cultures might have different opinions, but the discussion of human goods and the proper ways to protect human goods would constitute civil public discourse, not an endless war.

3. *In its social doctrine, Humanitarian Islam has appropriated and approved selected principles of Indonesian civilization which it views as predating the arrival of Islam.*

The Humanitarian Islam movement believes that important moral and political principles that have long existed in Nusantara culture (the historical culture of the Malay Archipelago) merit new application today. In fact, for them, Nusantara culture provides the filter (hermeneutic) through which Islam and other religions can be understood, evaluated, and applied. Clearly, anyone who takes such a stance is already committed to accepting religious pluralism, because he or she has con-

---

6   Christine Schirrmacher, *The Sharia: Law and Order in Islam*, trans. Richard McClary, ed. Thomas K. Johnson (Bonn: World Evangelical Alliance, 2013), 24; https://iirf.eu/journal-books/global-issues-series/the-sharia-law-and-order-in-islam/.

sciously utilized cultural norms and values related to multiple religious traditions.

The *Nusantara Manifesto* concludes with a ringing endorsement of the Indonesian constitutional principle of Pancasila (which affirms humanitarian unity despite diversity), including officially recognizing several religions, which is a specific rejection of Muslim theocratic visions.

Humanitarian Muslims are not shy about recommending Nusantara culture to the world. Indeed, in the *Declaration of Humanitarian Islam* they even suggest that their experience can serve as a 'pilot project' for a multi-religious nation-state (para 19).

4. *Humanitarian Islam accepts the moral legitimacy of selected socio-political developments of the last two centuries.*

The *Nusantara Manifesto* identified four key social and political developments which make our world different from that of previous centuries: '(1) A complete transformation of the global political order; (2) fundamental changes in demography; (3) evolving societal norms; and (4) globalization, driven by scientific and technological developments that enable mass communications, travel and the emergence of a tightly integrated world economy' (para 108).

Until two hundred years ago, and to a large extent even one hundred years ago, much of the world's population lived in kingdoms or empires in which there was a supposed unity of a majority religion and the ruling power, though minority religions may have been tolerated. Within Europe, this was described as the 'unity of throne and altar'. Today most empires have passed away, replaced by nation-states that contain millions of immigrants of all religions and cultures, with those populations and states connected by intergovernmental organizations (such as the UN) and international businesses. The age of religiously defined empires, whether in Asia, Europe, Turkey or the Middle East, is long gone.

Therefore, for Humanitarian Islam, any desire to return to a caliphate or a religiously defined country, as displayed by Muslim extremism, is an impossible desire to return to a previous era and can lead only to conflict, destruction and death. Instead, Muslims should fully accept a different relationship between religion and society, including a critical endorsement of some societal transitions such as those mentioned.

Importantly, Humanitarian Islam accepts only *selected* socio-political developments of modern global society. It does not endorse atheism, moral relativism or hyper-individualism. Though religious pluralism is expected, Humanitarian Islam does not call on governments or schools to ignore religious values, practices and communities. Rather, it believes that people's lives should be shaped by the teachings of their religious communities. The movement fully accepts the existence of multiple religious communities within one country, with the hope that those communities and their members can flourish together.

A Christian response to Humanitarian Islam

Our Muslim friends have set a very high goal, that of a new and truly orthodox Islam; I hope they can freely pursue their dreams. It is a philosophically sophisticated response to some of the crucial questions of our era.

Theologically, Christian ethics claims to differ in a crucial way from Islam. As the apostle John said, 'For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ' (Jn 1:17). This relationship between law and grace underlies everything we do as Christians. Law is God's command about what to do or not do; grace is his provision of undeserved acceptance and forgiveness in Jesus Christ as proclaimed in the gospel. In contrast, Islam is generally seen as containing a much heavier emphasis on law than on grace, although hints of the need for grace occur occasionally, such as in the well-known saying attributed to Mohammed that God's throne bears the inscription, 'My mercy precedes my wrath.' This is obviously an all-important issue for Christians, who believe that the grace that came through Jesus Christ is our only hope of salvation and that we cannot be saved by any amount of obedience to law.

Despite this central theological difference, a comparison of Humanitarian Islam with Christian social ethics and philosophy of law reveals that, amidst today's great global threats, we are ideological allies and should treat each other as such. Even though the theological differences between Christians and Muslims may never be resolved, our level of agreement in the spheres of ethics and law calls for global cooperation in the public square. Rather than taking opposite sides, evangelical Christians and Humanitarian Muslims should help to protect each other's religious communities and to articulate and embody a global moral compass.

Moreover, reflecting on the themes expressed by Humanitarian Islam can help us understand more clearly key aspects of Christian ethics and how they relate to Muslim thinking. I will mention three points.

1. *A Christian hermeneutic on the law distinguishes among God's moral, ceremonial and judicial laws, all of which are found in the Bible. This distinction has both similarities to and differences from the distinction made by Humanitarian Islam between eternal norms and contingent norms.*

As the Westminster Confession of 1646 stated:

> Beside this law, commonly called *moral*, God was pleased to give to the people of Israel, as a church under age, *ceremonial laws*, containing several typical ordinances, partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, his graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits; and partly, holding forth divers instructions of moral duties. All which ceremonial laws are now abrogated, under the new testament. To them also, as a body politic, he gave sundry *judicial laws*, which expired together with the State of that people.[7]

A few Christians have questioned this threefold hermeneutic, but it has received widespread support. With slight variations, it was used during the Reformation by John Calvin (1509–1564) and in medieval Christian ethics by Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), both of whom regarded it as a common distinction long known to Christians. Calvin and Aquinas assumed the similar distinctions used by Augustine (354–430) and Justin Martyr (circa 100–165); indeed, one of the earliest Christian books after the New Testament, the Epistle of Barnabas, sharply

---

7 Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 19, paragraphs 3 and 4; emphasis added.

contrasts the moral and ceremonial laws (compare chapters 2 and 19). Jonathan Bayes argues that this hermeneutic was already used in some Old Testament passages, such as Proverbs 21:3: 'To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.' For Bayes, righteousness refers to the demands of the moral law, whereas justice refers to the demands of the judicial law.[8]

This three-part hermeneutic has guided most Christians to view blasphemy or adultery as against God's moral law but to steer clear or punishing blasphemers or adulterers with death, even though the theocratic nation of Israel sometimes applied capital punishment to these offenders. At times, Christians have indeed enforced anti-blasphemy laws, even to the point of executing those accused. This was wrong and based on an improper hermeneutic. Almost all Christians have repented of this sin, even if not all have consciously adopted a better hermeneutic. There is much to learn from ancient ceremonial and judicial laws, but we do not teach Christians to obey them directly. In contrast, the moral laws remain crucial for Christian living today.

2. *The whole undertaking of Humanitarian Islam entails an appeal to a universal moral norm which they expect both Muslims and non-Muslims to recognize, even if the source and nature of this norm are not yet always fully articulated. This is what Christians call the 'natural moral law'.*

When people argue, they inevitably appeal, perhaps implicitly, to a moral norm by which everyone's actions may be evaluated. When the people involved share the same religion, they may refer to a religious text, such as the Bible or the Koran. If they do not, the norm referenced may be less explicit; nevertheless, it is crucial. Normal people seldom say, 'There are no standards, so do what you want.' Rather, we are implicitly claiming, 'According to the standards which we both know, I am right and you are wrong.'[9] This unwritten standard is traditionally called 'the natural moral law', or sometimes simply 'natural law.'

Within Christian theology, the natural moral law has been regarded as a part of creation, with the result that humans can hardly avoid distinguishing between right and wrong and almost necessarily make similar assumptions about right and wrong (even though they sometimes deny this knowledge, as Paul stated in Romans 1). Christian theology also regards the natural moral law as a prominent theme in God's ongoing 'general revelation', or God's speech to humanity which comes to all people through his creation. (God's general revelation is usually contrasted with God's 'special revelation' which was given in Christ and Holy Scripture.)

The natural moral law is so strongly assumed in the Bible that the assumption is rarely clarified. Such clarifications typically arise when believers do something

---

8   Jonathan F. Bayes, 'The Threefold Division of the Law', The Christian Institute, 2017, https://www.christian.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/the-threefold-division-of-the-law.pdf.

9   This analysis of moral discourse is heavily dependent on C. S. Lewis, especially *Mere Christianity* (rev. ed. London and Glasgow: Collins, 1952), 15–26. For an assessment of Lewis on this topic, see Thomas K. Johnson, *Natural Law Ethics: An Evangelical Proposal*, Christian Philosophy Today vol. 6 (Bonn: VKW, 2005), 85–105, https://www.academia.edu/36884239/Natural_Law_Ethics_An_Evangelical_Proposal.

which their pagan neighbors properly regard as wrong, showing that unbelievers sometimes respond to the moral law better than do believers. A painful example is when Pharaoh followed principles protecting marriage and truth-telling and confronted Abram for not following such principles (Genesis 12:10–20).

In the twentieth century, some Protestant theologians mistakenly claimed that we cannot know God's natural law; some said we should not even mention the topic. This fatal mistake threatens the soul of civilization, because it removes any explanation of why people of all religions can distinguish right from wrong, thus eliminating any basis for ethical agreement with non-Christians.[10]

Prior to New Testament times, many Greek writers claimed that there is no universal standard of right and wrong. In response, Aristotle and the Stoics argued that there is a universal ethical standard, which they began to call the natural moral law. The apostle Paul sided with the natural-law theorists against moral relativism. He wrote, 'When Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them' (Rom 2:14–15). In this way, early Christianity adopted the moral philosophy of the Old Testament (of which the account of the Pharaoh and Abraham in Genesis is one of many examples) and contextualized it in the terminology of the Roman Empire.

The church fathers of the first four centuries usually summarized the demands of the natural law in the Golden Rule: do onto others as you would have them do to you. Both Aristotle and Augustine taught the doctrine of natural law, but for different purposes. Aristotle pointed to the universal moral law as a basis for a civilized society, assuming the existence of many communities and cultures with their particular laws, but did not mention God as its source; Augustine preached that all people are accountable to God, even if they do not yet acknowledge God.[11]

In the centuries after Augustine, within Europe and the Mediterranean basin, Christianity grew from a persecuted minority to become the majority religion, sometimes even the official religion. This prompted a discussion within Christian ethics of the relation between the universal moral law and the civil or human laws of particular countries. Now the perceived threats to a humane religious and social life came not so much from moral relativism and cultural diversity as from the church and the state (or states) alternately seeking absolute power. Two different types of tyranny threatened human flourishing.

In his 'Treatise on Law', the great medieval thinker Thomas Aquinas distinguished four types of law in a manner intended to overcome both moral relativism, on one hand, and religious and political absolutism on the other hand. The four types are (1) eternal law, which is a universal idea which has always

---

10   See Thomas K. Johnson, 'The Rejection of God's Natural Moral Law: Losing the Soul of Western Civilization,' *Evangelical Review of Theology* 43, no. 3 (2019), https://www.academia.edu/39590583/The_Rejection_of_Gods_Natural_Moral_Law_Losing_the_Soul_of_Western_Civilization.
11   Augustine, Letter 157, paragraph 15; found in Augustine, *Works*, Part 2, vol. 3, Letters 156–210, ed. Boniface Ramsey and John E. Rotelle, trans. Roland John Teske (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1990), 25.

existed in the mind of God and is not distinct from God himself; (2) the natural law, which is the participation of the eternal law within human rationality, communicated to humanity by the creation of the human mind in the image of the divine mind, the light of reason which cannot be fully extinguished even by sin; (3) human law, which is framed by human lawgivers and given to a particular community for the common good; and (4) the divine law, which is the special revelation of God in the Bible.[12]

Revolutionary themes were hidden in this medieval text. Though he was writing during the period of 'Christendom' or European church–state unity, Aquinas did not claim that human law should be based on the 'divine law', the Bible; moreover, he said that neither the state nor the church has ultimate authority to evaluate a human law. In a manner that was remarkably untheocratic and anti-autocratic, he argued that human law is to be derived from and evaluated primarily by the natural law.[13]

For Aquinas, laws coming from a king or government are to be evaluated by the principles of equity which God has built into human reason, but without giving ultimate authority to the church, which would evaluate human law by interpreting and applying religious texts. This was a principled break with both theocracy and autocracy. Aquinas was a Christian who honoured God as the source of law and reason, but not in a manner that had to exclude other religions, since it was not a religious institution that could evaluate human laws.

During the Reformation, the new Evangelicals, such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, did not carefully follow the precise terminology of Aquinas. They simply assumed the natural law, as was common in the Bible. But their rediscovery of justification by faith alone (not by obeying the moral law) pushed them to clarify what functions God's moral law carries. Luther taught that God's moral law has two special functions (in addition to guiding the lives of Christians). The first is the civic use of the moral law, which restrains sin enough to make life in society possible; the second is the theological use of the law, which reveals our sin to ourselves.[14]

Calvin did not precisely follow the terminology of Luther, but his teaching was remarkably similar. First, Calvin compared the moral law to a mirror that 'warns, informs, convicts, and lastly condemns, every man of his own unrighteousness' so one sees the need for forgiveness.[15] He then added, 'The second function of the law is this: at least by fear of punishment to restrain certain men who are untouched by any care for what is just and right', almost a repeat of Luther.[16] In this manner the Reformation more clearly distinguished the dimensions of the

---

12 See Johnson, *Natural Law Ethics*, 15–18.

13 Thomas Aquinas, 'Treatise on Law', questions 90–96 of the *Summa Theologica* I-II, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Benzinger, 1947), question 91, article 3. Republished online in *Classics of Political Philosophy*, http://www.sophia-project.org/uploads/1/3/9/5/13955288/aquinas_law.pdf.

14 Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, ed. and trans. Jaroslav Pelikan, vol. 26: *Lectures on Galatians*, 1535 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1963) 308, 309.

15 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), II, vii, 6.

16 Calvin, *Institutes*, II, vii, 10.

biblical-classical synthesis which came through Aristotle from those which came through Augustine. The reasoning of Aristotle formed the basis for the civic use of the moral law; the reasoning of Augustine supported the spiritual use of God's moral law. On the question of how to order life in society, Calvin can be taken as speaking for the main Reformers: 'There is nothing more common than for a man to be sufficiently instructed in a right standard of conduct by natural law.'[17]

3. *Within Christian ethics, there is a developing discussion of the relation between moral laws and human goods which has significant parallels in the philosophy of Humanitarian Islam.*

In Western civilization, it has been common for three hundred years to distinguish between doing things that are good for people and those things which are seen as duties in an abstract sense—i.e. doing what is 'right' regardless of the consequences. In moral theory, this is the contrast between utilitarian ethics (doing good for people) and deontological ethics (doing what is good in itself). But this sharp contrast does not seem reasonable to many people in the theistic religions. In other words, we who believe in one God, creator of all people, see a close link between moral norms (i.e. our abstract duties) and human goods (the results of doing good actions). For example, Moses connected is quoted as saying, 'The Lord commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the Lord our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive', clearly connecting abstract duty to God with human well-being (Deut 6:24).

In his discussion of this question, Aquinas argued that there are definable human goods that correspond with God-given human inclinations, that the natural moral law commands us to protect these goods, and that good, enforceable human laws give more detail about how to protect these human goods. Commentators on Aquinas normally say these primary human goods are 'life, procreation, social life, knowledge, and rational conduct'.[18] To avoid a secularized misunderstanding of Aquinas, one should note that knowledge, in his definition, includes knowing the truth about God; his definition of social life includes the protection of private property.[19]

There is an astonishing similarity between Aquinas' definition of human goods and the definitions provided by the Sunni Muslim jurists Imam al-Ghazali (1058–1111) and Imam al-Shatibi (d. 1388), who are quoted in the 2017 Declaration on Humanitarian Islam. These Sunni jurists described five human goods—faith, life, progeny, reason and property—which should be protected by moral norms. This similarity reflects extensive interaction between Muslim and Christian scholars in the twelfth through fourteenth centuries which occurred largely in France and southern Europe. They interacted with each other to the

---

17 Calvin, *Institutes*, II, ii, 22.

18 For example, Mark Murphy, 'The Natural Law Tradition in Ethics', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2002, revised 2019), https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/natural-law-ethics/.

19 See Aquinas, 'Treatise on Law', question 94, article 2. The 'new natural law' theory offers a longer list of primary human goods, mostly by means of dividing Aquinas' categories into distinct parts. For example, John Finnis, *Natural Rights and Natural Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 59–99, argues that the basic forms of human good, which he also calls 'values', are life, knowledge, play, aesthetic experience, sociability (friendship), practical reasonableness, and religion.

extent that it is now difficult to know who influenced whom and who is quoting whom in many books or essays.[20]

One clarification of human goods that has been articulately argued in the twenty-first century points out that freedom of religion should be described as a basic human good to be protected by moral and civil law.[21] Indeed, we should perhaps place freedom of religion at the top of the list, because it plays such an important role in securing or promoting the other human goods.[22]

Primary Human Goods in Medieval Philosophies

Christian	*Muslim*
Life	Faith
Procreation	Life
Social life (including property)	Progeny
Knowledge (including God)	Reason
Rational conduct	Property

These Christian and Muslim scholars referenced higher laws that are not precisely written in a particular text to evaluate human laws, though all these writers spent large parts of their lives interpreting the religious texts of their respective traditions. One side (Muslim) references a transcendent or higher sharia, whereas the other side (Christian) references a natural moral law, imprinted in the human mind that was made in the image of God, which no one can truly claim not to know. Nevertheless, the Muslim and Christian scholars came to astonishingly similar conclusions regarding the primary human goods which are to be protected by the application of moral and human laws. The representatives of Humanitarian Islam have once again made these claims prominent in their twenty-first-century proclamations.

So what can we do?

Though we understand and relate to God in very different ways, Humanitarian Muslims and evangelical Christians see life, family, rationality, a faith community, and an orderly socio-economic life as fundamental human goods that lead to comprehensive well-being in this world. We know that these deep human goods

---

20 For more background on al-Shatibi, see Ahmad al-Raysuni, *Imam al-Shatibi's Theory of the Higher Objectives and Intents of Islamic Law,* trans. Nancy Roberts; abridged by Alison Lake (Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2013).

21 Robert P. George, 'Religious Liberty and the Human Good', *International Journal for Religious Freedom* 5, no. 1 (2012): 35–44, https://www.iirf.eu/site/assets/files/92052/ijrf_vol5-1.pdf.

22 Brian Grim and Roger Finke have used social science research to argue convincingly that freedom of religion contributes to many other indicators of societal flourishing including economic growth, political freedom, freedom of the press, longevity of democracy, lower levels of armed conflict, and reduction of poverty. See, for example, *The Price of Freedom Denied: Religious Persecution and Conflict in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

are vulnerable, needing protection from various threats. We have similar convictions regarding universal moral standards that should influence religious and legal norms, all of which should protect basic human goods. This must be demonstrated intellectually, politically, in education, and in shared humanitarian efforts.

When the fundamental principles of Humanitarian Islam are brought into interaction with corresponding principles of Christian ethics, one obtains an ethical–jurisprudential method to respond to religious extremism, and to efforts to maintain religiously defined states which require a particular religious identity to be full stakeholders in the society. In other words, Christians and Muslims have a clear way to explain the moral wrongness of both religious extremism and religiously defined states—one that does not depend on a prior commitment to any religious view—on the basis of which we can then engage in principled discourse with those who hold other views and seek to eliminate religious-based terrorism and persecution. Our influence could be much greater if presented by official representatives of two major religious traditions that are widely perceived as in conflict with each other.

How can Christians around the world foster such cooperation?

- We could hold joint events at which scholars or civic leaders from both religious communities discuss how we talk about each other and how we address questions regarding religion's role in society.
- We could produce joint publications.
- We could bring together political leaders from both faith communities to talk about how they can develop civil laws, based on their shared understanding of the universal moral law, that will protect all people's basic human goods.
- We could work together to provide information for the business, government and education sectors on how to promote harmonious interaction among people from multiple cultures and religions.
- We could cooperate in delivering humanitarian aid or in addressing other problems that government alone cannot readily solve, such as homelessness, human trafficking, drug addiction and environmental problems.

The World Evangelical Alliance is currently taking on this challenge at a global level. In November 2019, while in Indonesia for the WEA's General Assembly, several of us spent most of a day with leaders of Nahdlatul Ulama. After further correspondence and discussion, in April 2020 we announced a joint project to respond to threats to religious freedom arising from both religious extremism and secular extremism. At our June meeting, we decided to pursue cooperative efforts in three main areas: opposing 'tyranny' (i.e. governments and movements that threaten basic human rights and freedoms); articulating shared messages in the areas of jurisprudence, ethics and human rights; and public communications.

The expansion of secularism, atheism and moral relativism in the modern West have been partly fuelled by the widespread, though generally false, perception that organized religions are a cause of war and oppression. The level of philosophical agreement between evangelical Christians and Humanitarian Islam demonstrated in this paper justifies a concerted joint effort to build a world in which religious faith can flourish for the benefit of humanity.

Where Are the Goalposts Now? Christian Theology on Sexuality in a Changing World

Janet Epp Buckingham

In the last 20 years, as LGBTQ rights have greatly advanced, claims to religious freedom that conflict with these rights have been eroded. This paper considers the case of Trinity Western University, which was denied the right to establish a law school by two provincial law associations and the Supreme Court of Canada, and the implications for Christian behaviour in cultures that have shifted away from traditional views of human sexuality.

In light of the rapid change in legal rights and social acceptance of LGBTQ persons in Canada, what is the place of traditional Christian theology on human sexuality? The sexual revolution of the 1960s did not place relentless pressure to conform on religious institutions, but the LGBTQ sexual revolution of the early 2000s has done so. Many Christian institutions have been legally challenged if they refuse to accept the new normal of same-sex marriage. Where are the goalposts? Is there still respect for traditional Christian theology on marriage and sexuality?

Trinity Western University (TWU) is a Christian university located near Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. In the 1990s, the university developed an education programme and sought accreditation. It was denied on the basis of its code of conduct, which prohibited homosexual intimacy. The university challenged this denial in court and won at all levels, including the Supreme Court of Canada in 2001.[1]

In June 2012, TWU submitted a law school proposal for accreditation. The proposal was very controversial because the school's community covenant, although it had undergone some revision since 2001, still required staff, faculty and students to agree to refrain from sexual intimacy outside heterosexual marriage. The law school proposal was rejected. TWU brought legal challenges and ultimately lost at the Supreme Court of Canada in 2018.[2] Today, there is a School of Education at TWU but no School of Law.

How could there be such a radical shift in 17 years that the Supreme Court of Canada would reverse itself? TWU placed heavy reliance on the previous prec-

---

1   *Trinity Western University v. British Columbia College of Teachers*, [2001] 1 SCR 772 (Supreme Court of Canada).
2   *Law Society of British Columbia v. Trinity Western University*, [2018] 2 SCR 293; *Trinity Western University v. Law Society of Upper Canada*, [2018] 2 SCR 453 (Supreme Court of Canada).

Janet Epp Buckingham (LLD, Stellenbosch University) is a professor at Trinity Western University and Director of its Laurentian Leadership Centre. She held a leading role in the development of the university's proposal to create a law school.

edent and thought that lawyers and courts would respect a decision by the highest court in the land. It was bitterly disappointing that the Supreme Court itself did not uphold its previous decision.

During the education case, TWU's faculty and students solidly supported the university and its position. This was not the situation in the law school case. Alumni were divided. Some faculty spoke publicly against the university's position.

In light of social pressure and divisions in evangelical Christianity, is there still a place for traditional beliefs and practices with respect to sexuality and marriage? This paper will explicate the experience of TWU through the eyes of a professor in the midst of it. I conclude with some thoughts on whether orthodox theology on sexuality will be tolerated in Western countries such as Canada and how we can respond.

The context

Theological context

Human sexuality is part of biblical theology. In the creation narrative, God created male and female humans to have sexual intimacy and procreate (Gen 1:27–28). In Old Testament law, homosexual intimacy is condemned (Lev 18:22). In the gospels, Jesus affirms a high view of marriage and condemns divorce (Mt 10:3–9) but does not address homosexuality directly. Paul introduces a high view of celibacy as a preferred alternative to marriage (1 Cor 6:12–20; 7:7) and condemns both sexual intimacy outside marriage and same-sex intimacy (Rom 1:26–27).

In recent decades, some Christians and Christian denominations have questioned the received orthodoxy about sexual intimacy and marriage. Particularly since the sexual revolution of the 1960s, some denominations have accepted divorce and remarriage, premarital sex and common-law unions. With the advance of public policy changes relating to LGBTQ rights, particularly same-sex marriage, mainline Christian denominations in Canada (including the United Church of Canada and the Anglican Church) have accepted and even solemnized same-sex marriages. Denominations and churches have split over this issue, and evangelicals have wrestled with it as well, with some prominent evangelical leaders endorsing same-sex marriage.[3]

Younger generations of evangelicals are much more accepting of LGBTQ rights and same-sex marriage than older generations.[4] It is therefore perhaps not surprising that support for TWU's code of conduct was much different in 2001 than in 2018. During the legal cases over the School of Education, the faculty and students firmly and publicly supported the university administration. During the law school cases, some faculty members publicly opposed the code of conduct's provisions on sexuality. A 'One TWU' group formed to give a voice to LGBTQ alumni and allies who disagreed with the university's position.

---

3   See Douglas Todd, 'TWU President Says "Society Has Moved the Yardsticks" on Same-Sex Relationships', *Vancouver Sun*, 20 June 2014, www.vancouversun.com/life/Douglas+Todd+preside nt+says+society+moved+yardsticks+same+relationships/9959491/story.html.

4   Alex Vandermaas-Peeler, Daniel Cox, Molly Fisch-Friedman, Rob Griffin and Robert P. Jones, 'Emerging Consensus on LGBT Issues: Findings from the 2017 American Values Atlas', 1 May 2018, https://www.prri.org/research/emerging-consensus-on-lgbt-issues-findings-from-the-2017-american-values-atlas/.

Legal context

Canada did not have a constitutional bill of rights until 1982. In that year, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms[5] came into force, with the exception of the provision on equality, which took effect in 1985. It requires government to respect the rights and freedoms of Canadians.

As expected, a barrage of litigation followed, to determine if courts would take a broad and liberal interpretation of the Charter. They did. The Charter protects religious freedom in section 2(a) and requires equal treatment without discrimination on the basis of religion in section 15. The rights and freedoms guaranteed in the Charter are subject to a limitation clause, in section 1, which allows the government to violate Charter rights in certain circumstances.

Although the equality clause in section 15 does not specifically protect sexual orientation, the enumerated list of attributes where discrimination is prohibited is open-ended. The first case considering LGBTQ equality rights was heard in 1995. The Canadian government conceded that sexual orientation was an 'analogous ground' of discrimination and so essentially read it into the Charter.

In that first legal case, *Egan v. Canada*, the Supreme Court of Canada specifically affirmed the heterosexual definition of marriage:

> Suffice it to say that marriage has from time immemorial been firmly grounded in our legal tradition, one that is itself a reflection of long-standing philosophical and religious traditions. But its ultimate *raison d'être* transcends all of these and is firmly anchored in the biological and social realities that heterosexual couples have the unique ability to procreate, that most children are the product of these relationships, and that they are generally cared for and nurtured by those who live in that relationship. In this sense, marriage is by nature heterosexual. It would be possible to legally define marriage to include homosexual couples, but this would not change the biological and social realities that underlie the traditional marriage.[6]

In 1999, two momentous events concerning LGBTQ rights occurred. The first was a decision from the Supreme Court of Canada[7] that same-sex couples should have the same rights, obligations and benefits as opposite-sex common-law couples. This decision required the revision of hundreds of pieces of legislation. In response to this ruling, the Canadian House of Commons passed a resolution affirming the opposite-sex definition of marriage.[8]

In the following year, three legal challenges were launched across Canada to challenge the opposite-sex definition of marriage. In Canada, the definition of marriage is the national government's responsibility but solemnization of marriage is a provincial government responsibility. The national government did not have legislation defining marriage but relied on the common-law definition dat-

---

5   Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, section 7, part 1 of the Constitution Act, 1982, being Schedule B to the Canada Act of 1982, chapter 11.

6   *Egan v. Canada*, [1995] 2 SCR 513 (Supreme Court of Canada), 536.

7   *M v. H*, [1999] 2 SCR 3 (Supreme Court of Canada).

8   House of Commons Journals, No. 240, 8 June 1999, https://www.ourcommons.ca/Document-Viewer/en/36-1/house/sitting-240/journals.

ing back to 1866 from Britain.[9] As the legal challenges were heard and appealed, courts in several provinces redefined marriage to 'between two persons'. They reasoned that the definition was discriminatory and contrary to the Charter of Rights and that a common-law definition could be revised by the courts.

The national government ultimately passed legislation to redefine marriage in 2005.[10] During the hearing process prior to the passage of this legislation, religious leaders expressed concern that changing the definition of marriage would lead to discrimination against and marginalization of those who objected to the new definition on religious grounds. The legislation was amended to add the following two Preambles that recognize religious objections to same-sex marriage:

> WHEREAS nothing in this Act affects the guarantee of freedom of conscience and religion and, in particular, the freedom of members of religious groups to hold and declare their religious beliefs and the freedom of officials of religious groups to refuse to perform marriages that are not in accordance with their religious beliefs;

> WHEREAS it is not against the public interest to hold and publicly express diverse views on marriage;

In addition, section 3.1 was added, containing the following guarantee:

> For greater certainty, no person or organization shall be deprived of any benefit, or be subject to any obligation or sanction, under any law of the Parliament of Canada solely by reason of their exercise, in respect of marriage between persons of the same sex, of the freedom of conscience and religion guaranteed under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* or the expression of their beliefs in respect of marriage as the union of a man and woman to the exclusion of all others based on that guaranteed freedom.

In 2005, there was a clear consensus that same-sex marriage and religious beliefs about human sexuality could co-exist in Canada.

Trinity Western University's law school proposal

The university

TWU was founded as a Christian junior college in 1962 and gained full university accreditation in 1984. It is primarily a liberal arts university but also has several professional programmes, including nursing, education and counselling psychology.

Like many Christian universities, TWU has a code of conduct that sets forth behavioural expectations. There are several rationales for such a code of conduct. First, the university is a religious community, in which it is helpful to have common expectations. Second, Christian universities see themselves as standing in the place of parents for students attending. Asking all students to adhere to Christian behaviours reinforces those behaviours and enhances cementing Christian faith in students.[11]

---

9   *Hyde v. Hyde and Woodmansee*, [L.R.] 1 P. & D. 130 (English Court of Probate and Divorce).
10   Civil Marriage Act, S.C. 2005, chapter 33.
11   Gerald A. Longjohn, Jr., *By the Book: Spiritual Formation and Conduct Codes at Selected Chris-*

The TWU code of conduct is quite comprehensive and covers issues from human dignity to plagiarism. It has always made reference to expectations related to human sexuality, including a requirement to refrain from sexual intimacy outside marriage. Prior to 2009, the code of conduct stated the sinfulness of homosexual intimacy. In 2009 a more positive statement was adopted. It required abstinence from sexual activity that would violate the sanctity of marriage, defined as between one man and one woman. All aspects of the code of conduct that address Christian behavioural standards are referenced in Scripture.

The pre-2009 version of the code of conduct was at issue in the Supreme Court of Canada's 2001 ruling, addressing a proposed School of Education. TWU had a teacher training programme but was seeking full accreditation so that education students could complete all requirements at the university rather than having a local public university supervise their final year. The British Columbia College of Teachers denied accreditation on the basis of the code of conduct, which prohibited 'activities that are biblically condemned' including 'homosexuality'. The College of Teachers maintained that teachers graduating from such a programme would discriminate against LGBTQ students.

TWU brought a legal challenge against the College of Teachers' decision on the basis that it violated religious freedom. The Supreme Court of Canada ruled in favour of the university by 8 to 1. The essence of its rationale is encapsulated in this statement:

> TWU is not for everybody; it is designed to address the needs of people who share a number of religious convictions. That said, the admissions policy of TWU alone is not in itself sufficient to establish discrimination as it is understood in our s. 15 jurisprudence. It is important to note that this is a private institution that is exempted, in part, from the British Columbia human rights legislation and to which the Charter does not apply. To state that the voluntary adoption of a code of conduct based on a person's own religious beliefs, in a private institution, is sufficient to engage s. 15 would be inconsistent with freedom of conscience and religion, which co-exist with the right to equality.[12]

In 2007, the President of Trinity Western University invited two professors to begin to develop a proposal for a law school. These two professors, Kevin Sawatsky, dean of the School of Business, and Janet Epp Buckingham, director of the Laurentian Leadership Centre, are both lawyers and had expressed prior interest in this project. The two made site visits to several US Christian law schools and convened a blue-ribbon panel of legal experts to consult on the direction for this proposal.

In 2007, it was reasonable that TWU would not consider its code of conduct an impediment to the accreditation of a law school. It had a strong Supreme Court of Canada precedent. The legislation redefining marriage made it clear that there was room for traditional religious beliefs and practices about marriage in Canadian society. When the code of conduct was revised to use language that did not directly condemn homosexuality, any reasons for concern seemed to have been reduced further.

---

tian Universities (EdD dissertation, Olivet Nazarene University), 2013, https://digitalcommons. olivet.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1056&context=edd_diss.
12   *TWU v. British Columbia College of Teachers*, para. 25.

The approval process

As of 2007, no new law school had been approved in Canada for over 30 years. There was therefore no process for law school approvals. Another Canadian university signalled its interest in establishing a new law school that year, so the Federation of Law Societies of Canada began developing criteria and procedures for new law school approvals.[13] The Federation is the umbrella association of provincial law societies, which are the governing bodies for the profession of law in Canada. In August 2011, the Federation released the criteria and process for approval of new law schools.[14] TWU now knew, or thought it knew, where the goalposts were for the accreditation of its proposed law school.

TWU submitted its proposal in June 2012 to the Federation of Law Societies of Canada, as that appeared to be the appropriate professional accreditation body. It also submitted the proposal to the Minister of Advanced Education in British Columbia. The Minister approves all new programmes for universities in the province.

TWU had gone out of its way to ensure that its proposal had the best possible chance for approval. Most universities in Canada are public universities, regulated and funded by provincial governments. Very few are private, and most of those are religiously based. TWU knew that as the first private and first Christian university to apply for approval of a law school, it needed to be twice as good as other proposals.

TWU's proposal fulfilled all the criteria required by the Federation. Its developers had consulted with the head of the Council of Canadian Law Deans, the Law Society of British Columbia and the deans of other law schools in British Columbia. None of these entities expressed concerns.

As part of its approval process, the Federation also consulted the Council of Canadian Law Deans and the Law Society of British Columbia. The law deans issued an open letter condemning the proposal on the basis of the university's required community covenant.[15] The media quickly picked up the story,[16] creating pressure on the Federation to deny approval.

The Federation appointed a Special Advisory Committee of experts to address concerns raised about the code of conduct. The advisory committee concluded that as long as the national requirement was met, there was no public-interest reason to exclude future graduates of TWU from law society bar admission programmes. The Federation therefore approved the law school.[17]

The British Columbia Minister of Advanced Education had its own process

---

13   Ad Hoc Committee on Approval of New Canadian Law Degree Programs, *Report on Applications by Lakehead University and Thompson Rivers University*, Federation of Law Societies of Canada, January 2011, http://docs.flsc.ca/Task-Force-Report-new-law-schools.pdf, 2.

14   Common Law Degree Implementation Committee, 'Final Report', Federation of Law Societies of Canada, August 2011, http://docs.flsc.ca/Implementation-Report-ECC-Aug-2011-R.pdf.

15   Bill Flanagan (President, Canadian Council of Law Deans), letter to Federation of Canadian Law Societies, 20 November 2012, www.docs.flsc.ca/_documents/TWUCouncilofCdnLawDeans-Nov202012.pdf.

16   Douglas Todd, 'Proposed Christian Law School at Trinity Western Under Fire Because of University's Anti-Gay Rules', *Vancouver Sun*, 17 January 2013, www.vancouversun.com/life/Proposed+Christian+school+Trinity+Western+under+fire+because+university+anti+rules/7830354/story.html.

17   Federation of Law Societies of Canada news release, 'Federation of Law Societies of Canada Grants Preliminary Approval of Trinity Western University's Proposed Law Program', 16 December 2013.

for approval. It had appointed an expert panel to do a site visit at TWU. Although some panel members had concerns over the required statement of faith for faculty members, the Minister approved the law school the day after the Federation announced its approval.

The university rejoiced, thinking that the accreditation process was complete and it could make plans to construct a building, hire faculty and recruit students. But this was not the final step.

An unexpected rejection

Although it appeared that provincial law societies had delegated their powers of accreditation to the Federation, that was not actually the case. This issue was important because only graduates from 'approved' law schools can clerk or practise law in each province. Ontario, the largest of Canada's ten provinces, was the only province that had not completed the process to delegate law school accreditation to the Federation. However, the benchers of the Law Society of British Columbia (the elected governing body) had voted to amend their delegation to allow themselves to reverse Federation approval.[18]

In both Ontario and British Columbia, lawyers supportive of LGBTQ rights mobilized opposition to TWU. Both law societies received submissions and held hearings regarding approval. Benchers' meetings are not usually well attended, but these hearings attracted large crowds and became highly politicized. TWU was compared with Bob Jones University in the US, known for prohibiting interracial dating. Bizarre religious issues were raised. TWU's prohibition was likened to the Canadian government's discriminatory head tax on Chinese immigrants (passed in 1885 to discourage further Chinese immigration) and Canada's former residential schools, which had been a collaborative venture of church and state to integrate Indigenous children into white society.

In the end, the law societies in Ontario and British Columbia denied approval of a law school at TWU.[19] Therefore, graduates from the proposed TWU law school would not be able to serve as lawyers in those provinces. The Minister of Advanced Education then withdrew approval on the basis that the law school could not function without professional accreditation.

The court cases

TWU brought legal challenges against the law society decisions on the basis that they violated the religious freedom of the university and its students. It did not take this step lightly; the Board of Governors wrestled with whether going to court was the right step. On one hand, Christians do not want to be perceived as homophobic. On the other hand, this issue was likely to arise for other Christian institutions in Canada as well, and TWU had the best chance of success given

---

18   Law Society of British Columbia, Law Society Rules, 2–54(3).
19   The Nova Scotia Barristers' Society also denied approval. That action is not addressed here because that law society had delegated approval to the Federation and did not have the authority to deny approval.

the 2001 precedent. In many ways, TWU saw itself as carrying the ball for the Christian community in Canada.

In British Columbia, TWU won at the provincial Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal.[20] These courts ruled that procedures followed by the law society resulted in the benchers failing to properly consider the university's religious freedom. The British Columbia Court of Appeal concluded:

> A society that does not admit of and accommodate differences cannot be a free and democratic society—one in which its citizens are free to think, to disagree, to debate and to challenge the accepted view without fear of reprisal. This case demonstrates that a well-intentioned majority acting in the name of tolerance and liberalism, can, if unchecked, impose its views on the minority in a manner that is in itself intolerant and illiberal.[21]

In Ontario, TWU lost at both levels of court.[22] The judgements ruled that the Law Society of Upper Canada's decision not to approve the TWU law school was reasonable. Justice MacPherson, in his Ontario Court of Appeal ruling, stated, 'My conclusion is a simple one: the part of TWU's Community Covenant in issue in this appeal is deeply discriminatory to the LGBTQ community, and it hurts.'[23]

The Supreme Court of Canada heard both the British Columbia and Ontario appeals together but issued separate judgements.[24] The court was deeply divided, issuing four separate opinions in each of the cases. In the result, seven justices were opposed to TWU's approval and two were in favour.

The majority judgement focused on the fact that signing the code of conduct is mandatory for all students even though the university is open to non-Christians. Thus, the ruling says, TWU 'imposes' its beliefs on students who may or may not share those beliefs. The justices made this statement even though the code of conduct recognizes explicitly that signing the code of conduct does not signify agreement.

Two justices wrote individual opinions against TWU. Justice Rowe stated that the denial of TWU's proposal did not constitute a violation of religious freedom, since evangelical Christian students are free to attend public university law programmes. Chief Justice McLachlin balanced the competing rights of religious freedom and LGBTQ equality and found in favour of the latter.

Justices Brown and Côté, dissenting, would have ruled in favour of TWU. They strongly affirmed religious freedom and the requirement of state neutrality. This quotation from their dissent summarizes their position:

> [I]n conditioning access to the public square as it has, the regulator has—on this Court's own jurisprudence—profoundly interfered with the constitu-

---

20 *Trinity Western University v. The Law Society of British Columbia* (LSBC) (2015), 85 BCLR (5th) 174 (BC Supreme Court); *Trinity Western University v. LSBC* (2016), 92 BCLR (5th) 42 (BC Court of Appeal).

21 *TWU v. LSBC* (Court of Appeal), para. 193.

22 *Trinity Western University v. The Law Society of Upper Canada* (LSUC) (2015), 126 OR (3rd) 1 (Ontario Divisional Court); *Trinity Western University v. LSUC* (2016), 131 OR (3rd) 113 (Ontario Court of Appeal).

23 *TWU v. LSUC* (Court of Appeal), para. 119.

24 *LSBC v. TWU,* [2018] 2 SCR 293 (Supreme Court of Canada); *TWU v. LSUC,* [2018] 2 SCR 453 (Supreme Court of Canada).

tionally guaranteed freedom of a community of co-religionists to insist upon certain moral commitments from those who wish to join the private space within which it pursues its religiously based practices. While, therefore, the LSBC [Law Society of British Columbia] has purported to act in the cause of ensuring equal access to the profession, it has effectively denied that access to a segment of Canadian society, solely on religious grounds. In our respectful view, this unfortunate state of affairs merits judicial intervention, not affirmation.[25]

Responses to the decision

In the aftermath of the Supreme Court of Canada's ruling, several accreditation bodies for other professional programmes indicated that they planned to review TWU's prior approval. The TWU Board of Governors decided to make the community covenant non-mandatory for students but to maintain it for administration, faculty and staff. However, the university has not moved forward to establish a law school despite having removed what appeared to be the main factor cited in the adverse Supreme Court of Canada ruling.

The university chose to view the change in the code of conduct as an opportunity rather than a disaster. The student life programme has ensured that it is focused on helping students to experience Christ through chapel and Christian student leadership on campus rather than being hedged in by a code of conduct. Some students, of course, welcomed not having a set of rules to abide by. Others miss having common expectations for behaviour.

While the long-term consequences of the legal cases are not yet known, the university has experienced a growth in enrolment. The publicity resulted in TWU receiving applications for admission from additional parts of Canada. Since the community covenant was made non-mandatory for students, more non-Christians have enrolled. The divisions amongst the faculty continue. Some faculty hoped that the new president, appointed in 2019, would liberalize the theology of sexuality contained in the community covenant but that has not happened.

For me personally, this experience has been very challenging. I first approached TWU with the proposal of founding a law school in 1993, when I was the executive director of the Christian Legal Fellowship. I felt the development of the law school proposal was my calling, and it was a longtime dream for both Kevin Sawatsky and me. I still wrestle with understanding God's plan in all this.

Conclusions

This paper has examined the moving of the goalposts concerning the balance between religious freedom and LGBTQ rights at three different time periods. In 2001, a Christian university's right to establish its theology and religious practices on marriage and sexuality was respected. The Supreme Court of Canada ruled that these factors could not be used to restrict the approval of new programmes

---

25   *LSBC v. TWU* (Supreme Court of Canada), para. 261.

at the university. In 2005, when same-sex marriage was officially recognized by the Canadian government, the legislation specified that 'diverse views on sexuality' were not contrary to public policy. Again, Christians' theology of sexuality and marriage was recognized and respected. By 2018, however, the situation had changed, and holding to a traditional Christian theology of sexuality and marriage could be considered a bar to approval of new programmes on the basis that they created inequality for LGBTQ persons who may wish to attend the university.

There has been a progressive narrowing of the scope of religious freedom when it comes into conflict with LGBTQ rights. During the Supreme Court of Canada hearing, one lawyer argued that institutions that refuse to recognize equal rights for LGBTQ persons, regardless of whether they are rooted in religious beliefs, should lose all government benefits and recognition. Although the court's ruling did not comment on that argument, it may be a harbinger of where Canadian society is headed. The goalposts are shifting, and where they will finally end up is not yet certain.

Given the cultural, legal and political realities, what should Christian organizations do? Richard Niebuhr's five models of Christian interaction with culture are helpful here.[26] Separatists distance themselves from culture and continue to hold to traditional beliefs, engaging in minimal interaction with the state. At the other end of the spectrum lie culturalists, who would decide in cases like the TWU case that this is not a 'hill to die on' and would simply change or remove policies dealing with human sexuality. Dualists would take a similar approach. Synthesists and conversionists would both try to maintain their beliefs while engaging with their culture in positive ways. Synthesists might try to model positive heterosexual marriages; conversionists might engage with political and legal leaders to encourage them to accept the diversity of beliefs and practices around marriage.

Christians no longer influence culture and public policy as they once did in the West. In Canada, evangelical Christians constitute a very small percentage of the population. Organizations wishing to maintain a traditional view of marriage will find themselves marginalized and may have to accept the separatist stance of staying at a distance from government. For a Christian educational institution, this may mean foregoing not only government financial assistance but possibly accreditation as well.

Christian organizations must recognize the challenges in advance and plan their responses. If an organization has a clear plan and has determined where it is willing to compromise and where it will stand firm, this clarity may prevent internal conflict and public dissension. The battle for public opinion is vital, so it is crucial to choose and train spokespersons in advance.

Although we do not know where the goalposts will move, Christians know what they believe and why. Jesus sent out his disciples with these instructions: 'I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves' (Mt 10:6). This instruction is as relevant today as it was two thousand years ago.

---

26   H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper, 1951).

Bringing God to Work:
The Benefits of Embracing
Religious Diversity
in the Workplace

Brian Grim

It often seems that corporations welcome and encourage diversity in every dimension except religion. In this article, a global leader on religious freedom in the business sector analyses data on US Fortune 100 companies and makes a business case for welcoming expressions of faith.

In the United States, under laws enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), it is illegal for employers to discriminate against applicants or employees on numerous traits or characteristics, including religion. Moreover, employers are required to reasonably accommodate employees' religious beliefs or practices, unless doing so would cause difficulty or expense for the employer.

This means that an employer may have to make reasonable adjustments at work that allow an employee to practice his or her religion, such as allowing the employee to voluntarily swap shifts with a co-worker so that he or she can attend religious services.

Laws concerning accommodation of religion, freedom of speech and protection against oppressive work environments have informed companies' minimum requirements for accommodating religion in the US and elsewhere. However, as corporate America has become increasingly focused on creating environments where people can bring their whole selves to work regardless of their backgrounds or abilities, some companies are embracing diversity practices that go beyond the minimum legal requirements for accommodation.

This focus on diversity comes in the wake of overwhelming research and evidence showing that a company's bottom line improves when the company values each employee's uniqueness and equitably includes diverse perspectives in the workplace. Most of America's Fortune 100 companies have well-developed diversity, equity and inclusion programs, sometimes headed by a senior executive-level director. Many also have company-sponsored employee resource groups (ERGs) that support people from these protected categories.

However, of the various identities protected by the EEOC, religion stands out as being significantly under-addressed by America's largest companies.

Brian Grim (PhD, Penn State University) is founding president of the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation and a leading expert on how faith and business can build a better world. He was previously a senior researcher in religion and world affairs at the Pew Research Center.

Our content analysis of the main diversity and inclusion landing pages of Fortune 100 companies' web pages (Figure 1) shows that religion receives less attention than all the other major identity categories. However, our research also indicates that corporate America is at a tipping point towards giving religion similar attention to that afforded to the other major diversity categories, especially as the US becomes more religiously diverse with no denomination holding a majority. Indeed, including religion can be considered a litmus test of whether a company fully embraces diversity, equity and inclusion.

Fortune 100 Diversity & Inclusion Landing Page Analysis

Total Number of Times Mentioned

Category	Value
Race/Ethnicity	1059
Women/Gender	658
Sexual Orientation	380
Veterans/Military	350
Dis/Ability	413
Age	179
Family	127
Religion	92

Percentage of Companies Mentioning at All

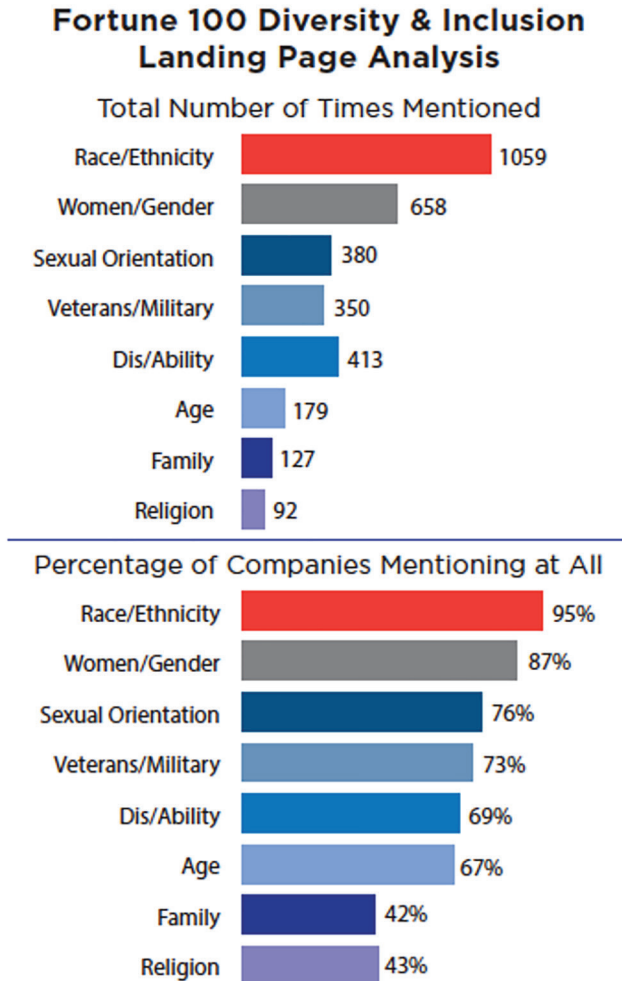| Category	Value
Race/Ethnicity	95%
Women/Gender	87%
Sexual Orientation	76%
Veterans/Military	73%
Dis/Ability	69%
Age	67%
Family	42%
Religion	43%

Figure 1: Content analysis of Fortune 100 diversity and inclusion landing pages.
Notes: Religion includes terms such as spirituality, faith/interfaith and religions. Sexual orientation includes terms related to LGBTQ. Women/Gender includes mention of gender or women separate from sexual orientation. Dis/Ability refers primarily to disabilities that might require accommodations.

Companies of all sizes and industries take great pride in their range of diversity and inclusion initiatives designed to ensure that employees work in environments where they feel they are treated with respect. After all, equitable treatment in the workplace is not only the right thing to do, it's the law. An employee's gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and other characteristics are part of who they are, and those aspects of themselves should not be demeaned on the job.

For many people, religious beliefs are as significant a component of their identity. Recently, a senior executive at a top insurance company lamented that at every milestone, she was lauded for breaking through another glass ceiling. She believed, however, that her faith was truly behind her success and wished that this aspect of her life could have been recognized too. Indeed, faith has long been left outside when people come to work. But that situation is beginning to change, with some surprising brands at the vanguard of the effort achieving remarkable results.

Misguided reluctance

Our research shows that most of the Fortune 100 fail to even mention religion or belief as part of their diversity initiatives on their public websites. References to religion or belief as part of these corporate policy statements pale in comparison to mentions of other categories, which cumulatively outnumber the religious mentions by 3,166 to 92, or a 34-to-1 margin.

This reticence is fuelled by several factors. First, some assume that religion is declining to such a degree that it may not warrant recognition. But this is not true in the global marketplace where the world's largest companies operate. An international data project developed by the Pew Research Center estimates that our planet will have 2.3 billion more religiously affiliated people by 2050, compared with just 100 million more religiously unaffiliated people. By their estimate, religious populations worldwide will outnumber the religiously unaffiliated by a factor of 23-to-1 by 2050.

Religion is not only on the increase but is also shifting. By 2050, the top economies will shift from being majority-Christian to include greater participation by Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and the unaffiliated. That means the world and its main marketplaces are becoming not only more religious, but also more religiously diverse.

Misperceptions about the intersection of business and faith have also been created by the prominent attention paid by the media to controversies involving Hobby Lobby and Chick-fil-A. In such cases, corporate leaders' opposition to abortion or support for traditional marriage has been framed so as to portray faith in the workplace as exclusionary and fuel for confrontation.

However, according to the 2020 Corporate Religious Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (REDI) Index (described further below), companies that include faith-oriented components as part of their employee programming create a more accepting environment overall. The index shows that those faith-friendly workplaces are actually more inclusive of all diversity categories, including the LGBT community, rather than the other way around.

Major companies on the Index's top ten, including Google, American

Airlines, Intel, American Express and Tyson Foods, are taking a wide variety of approaches to this issue. All are proving the concept that fostering faith-oriented groups and interfaith activities leads to stronger work environments.

At Tyson Foods, ninety-eight chaplains provide on-call spiritual assistance to people of all religions or no religion. Google's Inter-Belief Network of ERGs helps the company understand the sensitivities of religious groups when creating new products.

The world's largest retailer, Walmart, launched its first faith-oriented ERG last year, playing a bit of catch-up with Target. The taboo about faith at work is even fading in the financial industry, with American Express having active groups called SALT (Christian), CHAI (Jewish) and PEACE (Muslim).

Texas Instruments, a pioneer in the movement, has been at this for more than 20 years. Others, like Salesforce's Faithforce, are only a few years old but growing quickly. Faithforce, which works to cultivate a culture of respect and belonging for all people, today has more than three thousand members in 13 regional offices across five continents and is the fastest-growing ERG in company history.

PayPal recently launched its first faith-oriented ERG. Apple's Diversity Network Associations include faith-focused groups. Dell's Interfaith ERG is part of a larger network that regularly engages executives to share ideas for product development.

At American Airlines, when Greg McBrayer, an Anglican priest, isn't working as a chief flight dispatcher at Dallas–Fort Worth Airport, he's serving as director of the airport's chaplaincy. American Airlines offers faith-oriented groups for Muslims, Jews and Hindus as well as Christians, along with programmes that foster inter-faith understanding.

The examples go far beyond these, making religion and faith at work perhaps one of the next big trends in corporate management and human resources. This is not just a feel-good initiative, it's good for the bottom line—improving retention, market understanding, employee cooperation and brand warmth.

Just as with any newcomer to the office environment, bringing God to work will require a learning curve, understanding, exploration and time for adjustment. In the end, greater emphasis on faith in the workplace might just mean more religious tolerance, more effective diversity programming and employees who are more fulfilled in their work.

Companies high on religious equity also score better in all other diversity areas

As part of the initial launch of the Corporate Religious Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (REDI) Index, the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation (RFBF) analysed the level of attention that Fortune 100 companies pay not only to religion, but also to seven other categories (Figure 2). RFBF calculated scores for each category by counting the mentions of each topic on the companies' diversity and inclusion pages and by awarding a weighted score for the number and diversity of ERGs related to each category.

We then calculated the average score for each category for the 48 companies

that do not acknowledge religion on their diversity and inclusion or ERG land-ing pages, as well as for the 53 companies that have some acknowledgement of religion (including images or videos) on these pages. (The sample contained 101 company websites because one Fortune 100 firm was the result of a recent merger.) This allows us to calculate a 'religion dividend' (an indication of the positive association between acknowledging religion and the company's com-mitment to the other diversity categories) by subtracting the average category score for the companies not acknowledging religion from the average for those that do acknowledge religion.

The range of diversity category scores reflects the amount of attention com-panies pay to each topic. Therefore, the best gauge of the religion dividend is the percentage increase in the category score.

Religion Dividend

Category	Percentage
Age	69%
Veterans / Military	63%
Dis/Ability	60%
Race / Ethnicity	47%
Women / Gender	35%
Family	31%
Sexual Orientation	4%

Companies acknowledging religion as part of equity, diversity & inclusion protect all other identity categories better than companies that do not acknowledge religion

	Race/ Ethnicity Avg. Score	Women/ Gender Avg. Score	Sexual Orientation Avg. Score	Veterans/ Military Avg. Score	Dis/Ability Avg. Score	Age Avg. Score	Family Avg. Score
Companies Acknowledging Religion	15.8	8.6	4.8	5.6	5.1	2.9	2.0
Companies Not Acknowledging Religion	10.8	6.3	4.7	3.5	3.2	1.7	1.5
Religion's Dividend (raw)	5.1	2.2	0.2	2.2	1.9	1.2	0.5
Religion's Dividend (percentage)	47%	35%	4%	63%	60%	69%	31%

Figure 2: The 'religion dividend', defined as the statistically greater likelihood, amongst companies that acknowledge religion as a matter of inclusion, of recog-nizing other diversity categories relative to those that do not

The results show that the degree of focus placed on each of the seven diver-sity categories other than religion is higher amongst companies that acknowl-edge religion than among those that do not. In other words, in all diversity areas, there is a religion dividend.

For example, companies focusing on religion score 69% higher on age inclusion, 63% higher on veteran and military inclusion, 60% higher on (dis)ability inclusion, and 47% higher on race/ethnicity inclusion. Sizable religion dividends are also present for women/gender inclusion (35%) and family inclusion (31%).

The smallest religion dividend is in the area of sexual orientation (scoring 4% higher), but it is still notable that the relationship is positive. This finding coincides with global RFBF research showing that religious freedom fosters a positive environment for LGBT people, and that LGBT rights are increasing in countries with higher levels of religious freedom.

The business case for faith

These data offer promising signs that, while still on the fringes of most corporate inclusion programmes, faith-friendly workplaces are poised to make significant gains in the years ahead. Moreover, according to RFBF's research, companies that include religion in their initiatives on equity and inclusion are stronger in all other inclusion categories mentioned above. Faith inclusion is therefore an important indicator of a more welcoming workplace environment overall.

The drivers behind a greater corporate focus on faith are increasingly clear and make good business sense for companies in a global marketplace. They should not be ignored. When faith-friendly initiatives are implemented equitably, corporations are more appealing from a recruitment and retention standpoint. They increase morale, reduce religious bias, and foster greater collaboration, creativity, productivity, commitment and innovation.

Faith is already an important part of people's lives and the marketplace, so to be religiously tone-deaf is a strategic liability. Faith-friendly workplaces enable employees to help companies successfully navigate a more religious and religiously diverse planet.

The research on religion and the workplace summarized in this article provides a foundation not only for assessment but also for driving positive change, to ensure that the global business community is at the vanguard of efforts to provide work experiences where employees can reach their true potential. That means stronger, more resilient businesses and a better quality of life for people of all faiths and beliefs around the world.

The Correlation between Church Growth and Discipleship: Evidence from Indonesia

Bambang Budijanto

This article presents and analyses data from surveys conducted by the Bilangan Research Center, which were patterned after similar surveys by the Barna Research Group in the United States. The findings have important implications for improving congregational engagement in effective disciple making.

One of the primary tasks of a leader is to make decisions for his or her organization, company, church, community and nation. The more access a leader has to reliable information (data), the better chance that leader has of making well-informed and wise decisions.

In most cases, news articles and reports on the growth of Christian churches in Indonesia have historically been based on anecdotal information. It has been impossible to discern how much these often amazing anecdotes reflect the reality of church growth in Indonesia as a whole. On the other hand, in 2016 and 2017, when I met with several denominational leaders in Indonesia, I heard stories of how their denominations were suffering decline. They were very eager to know if the decline they had been experiencing was a phenomenon affecting only churches within their denomination or if it was a widespread trend at the regional or even national level.

The inability to define the reality they were facing created frustration for these Christian leaders, as they could not respond to the challenge with confidence. There was no way to know whether their ministry strategies and investments were addressing the situation confronting them with the best possible solutions.

The discrepancies between those anecdotes of spectacular church growth in Indonesia and what I was hearing about decline from several denominational leaders provided the background for the establishment of the Bilangan Research Center (BRC), based in Jakarta, Indonesia.

The BRC came into existence after a number of Christian leaders met in Jakarta to discuss this question: What would be the most strategic gift we could give to the church in Indonesia, which would empower believers to fulfil their mandate and mission in this country? As a result of this discussion, the BRC was founded in 2017 as a Christian, interdenominational research centre. Its vision is to provide churches and Christian communities with relevant, valid and current data on Christianity and the spirituality of Indonesian Christians.

Bambang Budijanto is General Secretary of the Asia Evangelical Alliance and co-founder and chairman of the Supervisory Board of Indonesia's Bilangan Research Center.

Survey data

In its inaugural year, the BRC launched two national surveys. The first one looked at the spirituality of Christian youth in Indonesia. To some extent, this survey was triggered by the Barna Research Group's findings among youth in the USA, which were published in *You Lost Me* (2011).[1]

This first national survey involved 4,095 Christian respondents, age 15 to 25, scattered across 44 cities and towns in Indonesia. The survey was administered at schools, universities and community gatherings. Its many eye-opening findings have been very helpful in stimulating churches to develop strategies to strengthen youth ministry in Indonesia.

The survey found that 73.1% of those who had accepted Christ as their personal saviour identified a parent as the one(s) who led them to Christ. Unfortunately, only 23% of parents were considered good at nurturing their children's spirituality (i.e. making disciples at home).

The second survey was on Indonesian church growth between 2007 and 2016, with some 4,394 respondents—most of them pastors. In response to the same question, the participants in this survey, who were on average 25 years older than those in the first survey, indicated that 46.5% were led to Christ by their parents. (See Figure 1 for answers on both surveys.)
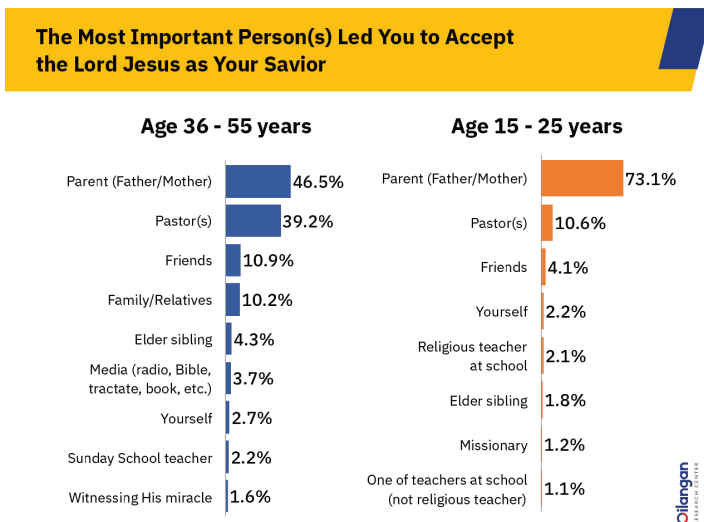
Figure 1: Who introduced believers to Christ

The second survey found that between 2007 and 2016, 58% of churches in Indonesia were growing quantitatively and 42% were not. This is roughly the reverse of the situation among US Protestants, where during the years 2016 to 2018, 39% of churches were growing.[2]

---

1   David Kinnaman, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church … and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011).

2   Aaron Earls, 'How Many US Churches Are Actually Growing?' Lifeway Research, 6 March 2019,

Interestingly, the highest numerical growth in Indonesian churches over the period of 2007–2016 occurred among children. Amongst Indonesian congregations, 58.1% experienced growth in their adult membership but 64.2% saw growth in their Sunday school (i.e. children up to age 14). The lowest frequency of growth occurred amongst youth (age 15 to 24), with only 53.2% reporting an increase in numbers (Figure 2).
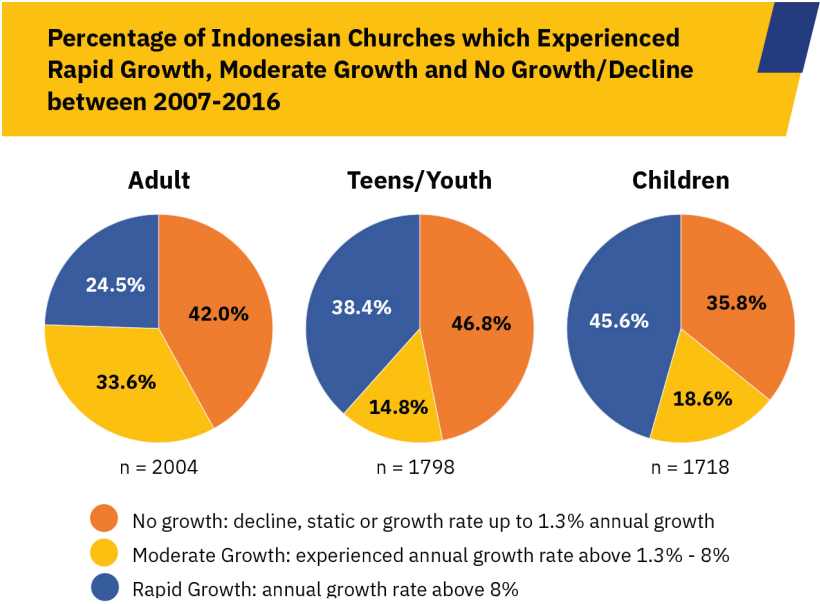
Percentage of Indonesian Churches which Experienced Rapid Growth, Moderate Growth and No Growth/Decline between 2007-2016

Adult

24.5%
42.0%
33.6%

n = 2004

Teens/Youth

38.4%
46.8%
14.8%

n = 1798

Children

45.6%
35.8%
18.6%

n = 1718

● No growth: decline, static or growth rate up to 1.3% annual growth

● Moderate Growth: experienced annual growth rate above 1.3% - 8%

● Rapid Growth: annual growth rate above 8%

Figure 2: Indonesian church growth patterns by age group

The BRC also found that amongst those churches where more than 10% of members engaged in disciple making, 67.5% had experienced growth. This means that disciple-making processes in Indonesia have produced, in most cases, both spiritual growth and quantitative growth (Figure 3).

Interestingly, the highest level of correlation between disciple making and quantitative growth occurred among mid-size churches (with 51 to 200 adult members). In 74.5% of cases, mid-size churches with more than 10% of their members engaged in disciple making experienced numerical growth. On the other hand, during the same period, more than 60% of large churches (more than 200 adult members) with little or no disciple-making engagement experienced no growth or declined in numbers (Figure 4).

The Growth of Adult Congregations (Worship Attenders) and Their Engagement in Disciple Making Process
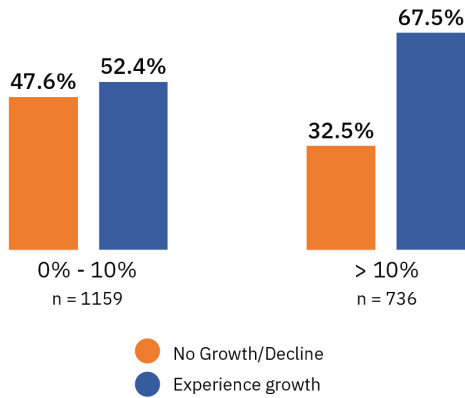
Figure 3: Correlation between discipleship and church growth. The bars at left represent congregations with 10% of members or fewer involved in disciple making; the bars at right show the results for churches with more than 10% involved.

Correlation between Growth of Adult Congregations (Worship Attenders) and Their Engagement in Disciple Making Process based on the Church's Sizes.
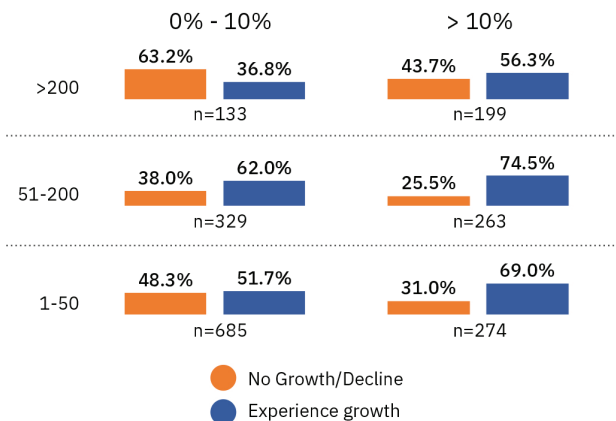

Figure 4: The relationship between disciple making, church size and church growth

Obedience to the Great Commission and its impact

As disciple making has been identified as a significant part of church growth and health in Indonesia, BRC's fourth survey, in late 2019, focused on the Great Commission of Matthew 28 and disciple making in Indonesia. To some extent, this research was triggered by Barna's research findings on discipleship (*The State of Discipleship*, 2015) and the Great Commission (*Translating the Great Commission*, 2018). Some of the survey questions and response choices were purposefully framed to align with Barna's, so as to allow appropriate comparisons between Indonesia and the US on these topics.

This was the BRC's largest survey yet, with close to six thousand respondents, including 270 pastors, 872 other church leaders or elders, and 4,613 church members, representing more than 50 denominations in Indonesia.

With regard to the term 'Great Commission', 17% of respondents in the US and 40.4% in Indonesia indicated that they had a good understanding of the term and could explain its meaning to others. One of the shocking findings of Barna's study was that 51% of the US respondents said they had never heard of the term 'Great Commission'. In Indonesia, only 5.5% gave this answer (Figure 5).

Understanding the Great Commission

USA (Barna)

- 51.3%
- 6.3%
- 25.3%
- 17.3%

Indonesia (BRC)

- 42.3%
- 11.9%
- 5.5%
- 40.4%

● Good understanding (able to explain)
● Limited understanding
● Had heard, didn't understand the meaning
● Never heard

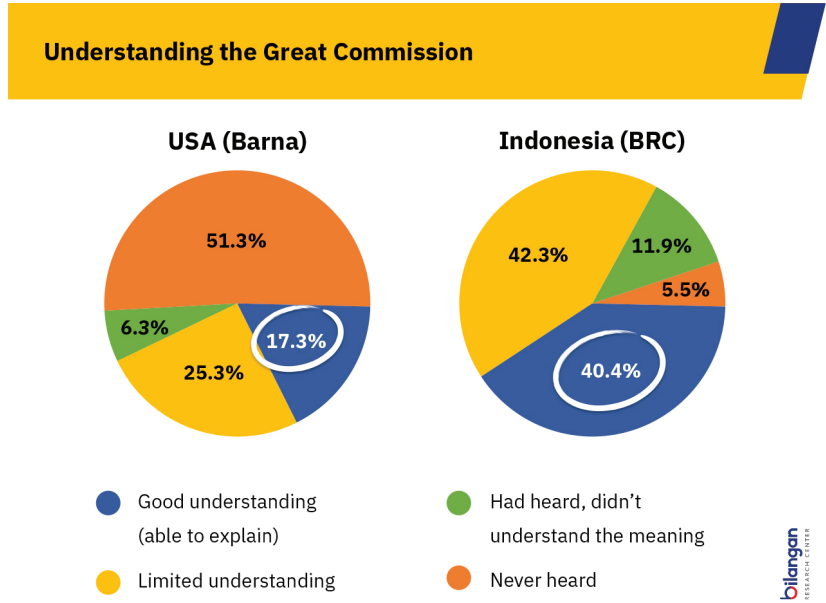**Figure 5: Church members' understanding of the Great Commission in Indonesia and the US**

Sixty-two percent of churches in the US and 52.6% in Indonesia set worshippers' spiritual growth amongst the church's top priorities. When church participants were asked whether they had experienced spiritual growth in the past 12 months, 33% in the US and 37.7% churchgoers answered affirmatively (Figure 6).

In terms of effectiveness, on average, churches in the US indicated accomplishing 52.2% of their desired outcomes with regard to attenders' spiritual growth. On the other hand, churches in Indonesia were able to achieve 71.7% of their desired outcomes.

Spiritual Growth between Desire and Reality

USA (Barna)

62.0%

33.0%

Indonesia (BRC)

52.6%

37.7%

● My spiritual growth is among my highest priority in the past 12 months

● I experience significant spiritual-growth in the past 12 months
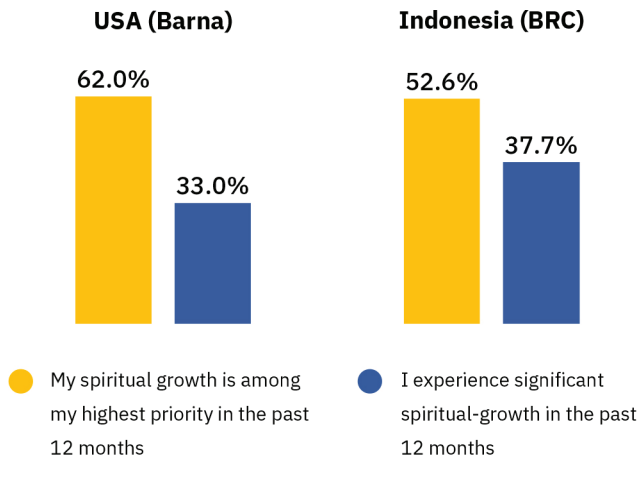
bilangan
RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 6: Church priority on spiritual growth and resulting outcomes, in Indonesia and the US

Several factors may have contributed to the higher performance of Indonesian churches in helping their members to grow spiritually. First, socio-religious pressures, and to some extent persecution, as Christians in the country with the world's largest population of Muslims may have an effect. Often in church history, pressures, challenges and persecution have been associated with accelerated spiritual growth and maturity.

Second, there have been several incidences of spiritual awakenings in different parts of Indonesia over the past few decades, which may have fostered a deepening of spiritual hunger and thereby spiritual growth. Amongst others, these include the spiritual awakenings of the early 1960s on Timor Island and revivals in Bandung in the late 1960s, Borneo in the mid-1970s, Semarang and Surabaya in the late 1970s and Solo in the late 1990s.[3]

But we believe that the strongest factor contributing to the effective achieve-

---

3   See Avery T. Willis, *Indonesian Revival: Why Two Millions Came to Christ* (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1977); Bambang Budijanto and Tanto Handoko, *30 Years' Walk with Jesus* (Jogjakarta, Indonesia: Andi, 2009); Bambang Budijanto, 'Evangelicals and Politics in Indonesia: The Case of Surakarta', in David H. Lumsdaine (ed.), *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 154–83..

ment of the spiritual growth among Indonesia's churches, as compared to those in the US, is illustrated in Figures 7 and 8. About 20% of Christians in the US were involved in some kind of discipleship activities (based on their own definition of the term). Indonesian Christians doubled this percentage, with 40.4% of believers claiming to have been involved in discipleship activities in the previous 12 months.
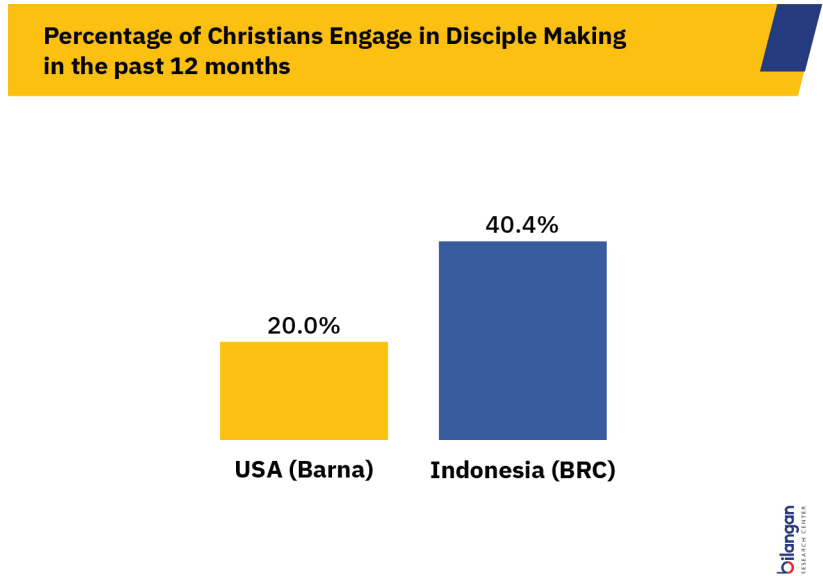
Percentage of Christians Engage in Disciple Making in the past 12 months

40.4%

20.0%

USA (Barna)   Indonesia (BRC)

Figure 7: Percentage of Christians involved in any kind of discipleship activities, in Indonesia and the US

Although neither Barna nor we attempted to define the concept of disciple making precisely, nor did we seek to measure qualitative aspects of the discipleship process, the significant percentage gap on this question is notable, especially when the US had a higher percentage of churches expressing a commitment to spiritual growth as a priority than Indonesia reported.

Finally, although the disciple-making process aims primarily at helping those being mentored to grow spiritually, the Indonesian experience suggests that the disciplers have gained as much spiritual benefit, if not more, than the learners from obeying Christ and the Great Commission by seeking to make disciples of all people. More than 80% of all respondents who have discipled others in the past 12 months said that doing so significantly impacted their own spiritual growth. Only 3.6% said that their obedience to the Great Commission did not have any positive impact on themselves (Figure 8).

How Discipling Others Impact Your Spiritual Growth

1.9%
3.6%
13.9%
80.7%

- Significant/Huge
- A little
- None
- Don't know
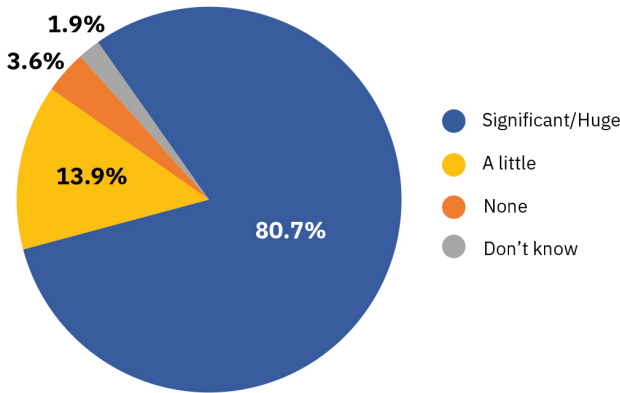
Figure 8: How making disciples contributes towards spiritual growth of the disciplers

Conclusions

The purpose of the church is to equip every member to grow into Christ-likeness (Eph 4:13). The church has created numerous programmes and invested significantly in many strategies to move carnal or new Christians towards full maturity in Christ. Some of these are more effective than others.

The BRC's study results reveal that amongst those who have obeyed Christ's Great Commission to make disciples of all people in the past 12 months, more than 80% have themselves gained significant spiritual growth. In other words, helping others grow in Christ has enabled the disciplers to grow too. This could be the best investment opportunity for the church, with a four-fifths chance of success in enabling church members to grow spiritually. Probably more effective than sermons, books or seminars is the strategy of equipping, supporting, encouraging and releasing believers of all ages to make disciples of all people.

The essence of discipleship is that none of Christ's followers, wherever they are and whether young or old, should live for themselves. Disciple making is giving one's best to help other people grow in becoming more like Christ. As we focus on leading and helping others to become disciples, we ourselves will experience significant growth in Christ, for the best way to learn is to teach.

At the BRC, we view disciple making as a process of leading other people (primarily through example—i.e. 'follow me') closer to Christ, so that they can experience His love and forgiveness too, and so that they can walk alongside their mentors towards becoming more like Christ themselves.

Demystifying Gender Issues in 1 Timothy 2:9–15, with Help from Artemis

Gary G. Hoag

1 Timothy 2:9–15 is a source of considerable debate over women's role in the church. Many aspects of the passage have long mystified interpreters. This article shows how a little-noticed contemporary love story from Ephesus may enable us to unlock this influential and often troublesome text.

Discussions of 1 Timothy 2:9–15 can become heated very fast, because the common interpretation of this passage has limited the role of women, especially as church leaders, in ways that are quite controversial today.[1] The dispute has been hard to resolve due to the elusive function and meaning of rare terms and themes throughout the text. The socio-rhetorical research presented in this paper suggests that fresh evidence to demystify Paul's message on gender issues comes from the last place we might expect to find it: Artemis.

Literary evidence from a document that has been largely overlooked in New Testament scholarship, *Ephesiaca* by Xenophon of Ephesus, provides important clues that have been heretofore outside our view. Upon its discovery, this document was dated to the second or third century CE, but more recent research suggests that it was written in the mid-first century CE, around the same time frame as the ministry of Paul in Ephesus. *Ephesiaca* fills in important missing information about the social setting and cultural rules in Ephesus at that time, which can aid us in reading and interpreting texts in 1 Timothy.

In the next section, I present seven unresolved interpretive issues in 1 Timothy 2:9–15. I then show how the testimony of Xenophon of Ephesus adds to our knowledge in those seven areas. Finally, I suggest practical implications for our use of this passage.[2]

---

1 Relevant works on the passage include Andreas J. Köstenberger et al., eds., *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of I Timothy 2:9–15* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005); Sharon Hodgin Gritz, *Paul, Women Teachers, and the Mother Goddess at Ephesus: A Study of 1 Timothy 2:9–15 in Light of the Religious and Cultural Milieu of the First Century* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1991); Richard Clark Kroeger and Catherine Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11–15 in Light of Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1992); James R. Beck and Craig L. Blomberg, eds., *Two Views on Women in Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001); Bruce Barron, 'Putting Women in Their Place: 1 Timothy 2 and Evangelical Views of Women in Church Leadership', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 33, no. 4 (1990): 451–59.

2 For my exhaustive analysis, see Gary G. Hoag, *Wealth in Ancient Ephesus and the First Letter to*

Gary G. Hoag (PhD, Trinity College Bristol) is president and CEO of Global Trust Partners, which empowers national church and ministry workers to build trust and to grow local generous giving to God's work. He serves as a visiting professor at schools in the Philippines, South Korea and the US.

Unresolved interpretive issues in 1 Timothy 2:9–15

1 Timothy 2:9–15 reads as follows (in the New Revised Standard Version):

> [9] Also that women should dress themselves modestly and decently in suitable clothing, not with their hair braided, or with gold, pearls, or expensive clothes, [10] but with good works, as is proper for women who profess reverence for God. [11] Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. [12] I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. [13] For Adam was formed first, then Eve; [14] and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. [15] Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.

Disputes orbit around nearly every word or theme in these seven verses, which should tell us that there must be social realities that the author of 1 Timothy had in mind and that we cannot see, or at least factors that have evaded us until now. I will identify seven debated interpretive issues in 1 Timothy 2:9–15 before considering ways in which Xenophon of Ephesus might help us grasp how women in Ephesus would likely have understood these verses.

1. *Having 'hair braided, or with gold, pearls' in v. 9.* Some scholars have associated the term *plekō*, translated as braided or plaited hair, with immodest or ostentatious women.[3] Others read it through the lens of 1 Peter 3:3–4, though different words are used there. The passage in 1 Peter aims at instructing women to cultivate inner beauty rather than at prohibiting any particular hair style or dress.[4] To this point, researchers have lacked evidence to explain the apparently prohibited decorum in v. 9.

2. *Dressing in 'expensive clothes' in v. 9.* Some scholars have suggested that the second part of the prohibition in v. 9, *himatismō polutelei*, meaning 'expensive apparel' or 'costly clothing', points to imprudent apparel associated with prostitutes or promiscuous women.[5] These scholars lean on ancient descriptions of two contrasting categories of women—those pursuing either pleasure or

Timothy: Fresh Insights from Ephesiaca by Xenophon of Ephesus (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015).

3   Bruce W. Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 97–140; Clifford Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 233.

4   E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (London: Macmillan, 1946), 432–35; L. Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 217–18; Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary* (ECC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 196; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation and Introduction* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 200; Paul R. Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 406; S. M. Baugh, 'A Foreign World: Ephesus in the First Century', in Köstenberger et al., *Women in the Church*, 47–48.

5   I. Howard Marshall and Philip H. Towner, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 450; *Seneca, On Benefits* 7.9; John W. Basore, ed. and trans., *Seneca: Moral Essays III* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows*, 97–109; Joachim Jeremias, *Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 21. Jeremias also reads this text as calling women to follow the Roman municipal modesty codes.

virtue—in writings from the cultural landscape. In their thinking, the prevalent social trends leaned toward pursuing pleasure, and this prohibition regarding expensive clothing called women to virtue instead, urging them to dress with modesty rather than sumptuousness. This view, however, is only a theory without specific support.

3. *Learning 'in silence with full submission' in v. 11.* 'The woman' is instructed to learn in silence. The shift from 'women', plural in v. 10, to 'the woman', singular in v. 11, seems to imply that this statement relates to every Ephesian woman. Such a shift directs our gaze from the context of the church to the function of women in a larger world that revolved around the goddess Artemis.[6] Some scholars harshly apply this imperative to all women, using 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 for supplemental support, while others argue the inconsistency of this view in light of New Testament texts that treat women as equal to men.[7] Modern researchers tend to lean in a different direction, thinking that social and religious realities associated with women lurk in the shadows of 1 Timothy 2:9–15 and 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, as they seem to contain contextual instructions rather than universal commands.

4. *The prohibition of women teaching in v. 12.* Some read this text as prohibiting women from teaching Scripture in adult mixed-gender settings (although the text itself does not say that specifically). This interpretive tradition says that women cannot teach because their doing so would violate the creation order as expressed in vv. 13–14.[8] Beyond citing 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 for support, however, advocates of this view fail to reconcile their position with the portrayal of various New Testament women presented as teaching men or being labelled as apostles, who would presumably be expected to teach.[9] A growing number of scholars unwilling to place limits on gifted female Bible teachers contend that this injunction may be related to a local heresy linked to Artemis, who was mystically associated with Isis.[10]

5. *The meaning and function of* authentein *('have authority over') in v. 12.* Since the translation of this text into English, *authentein* has most commonly been rendered as 'exercise authority' over man. This rendering has licensed men to treat women as less than equal. Later researchers have suggested 'teaching and usurping authority', 'instigating violence', or 'author or originator' as additional plausible meanings of this rare term.[11] When read in context, it occurs in

---

6   Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 213.

7   See Galatians 3:28 and 1 Corinthians 12:7 among many others; cf. Lucy Peppiatt, *Women and Worship in Corinth: Paul's Rhetorical Arguments in 1 Corinthians* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015), 108–11, 141–42.

8   Leland Wilshire, 'The TLG Computer and Further Reference to *authentein* in 1 Timothy 2.12', *New Testament Studies* 34 (1988): 120–34; James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 208.

9   See Luke 2:36; Acts 18:24–26, 21:9; Romans 16:7.

10   Elizabeth A. McCabe, *An Examination of the Isis Cult with Preliminary Exploration into New Testament Studies* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2008), 99–100; Kroeger and Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman*, 117; Gritz, Paul, *Women Teachers, and the Mother Goddess at Ephesus*, 137.

11   Henry Scott Baldwin, 'An Important Word: *authentein* in 1 Timothy 2', in Kostenberger et al., *Women in the Church*, 39–51; Linda L. Belleville, 'Teaching and Usurping Authority', in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, ed. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 2004), 220.

contrast to the biblical account of creation, as if the author of 1 Timothy were seeking to set the record straight in a religious setting where prevailing beliefs were backwards.

6. *The link between these instructions and the biblical account of creation and the fall in vv. 13–14.* Again, those who read this text as universally prohibiting women from teaching see such a practice as going against the biblical order: Adam was created first and sin came into the world through woman. The context, however, may suggest that this statement is concerned not with the role of women in ministry but with demythologizing the function of women in Ephesus: they must cease cultic activities and stop promoting the renown of the goddess. Views remain mixed.

7. *The promise of salvation through childbearing in v. 15.* The statement that 'the woman' (singular), again seemingly implying all women in Ephesus, 'will be saved through childbearing, provided they [plural] continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty' (v. 15) is yet another topic of debate. Scholars have proposed a variety of possible explanations.[12] A few think it limits the role of women to making babies. Since the woman is singular, some suggest without evidence that it refers to Mary, though recent scholarship looks to a different woman (of sorts), Artemis. Others say that 'saved through childbearing' refers to the option of choosing to go ahead with a pregnancy rather than having an abortion, a practice that was growing in popularity among 'new' Roman women.[13] The diversity of views beckons us to see what fresh evidence might add to the conversation.

Ephesiaca **and how it helps us interpret 1 Timothy 2:9–15**

Ephesiaca is a story about a young Ephesian couple, Anthia and Habrocomes, who fall in love in Ephesus and endure wild adventures that test their character and commitment to each other.[14] Hesychius of Miletus, an historian from the fifth or sixth century CE, provides the lone testimony ascribing authorship to a person named Xenophon who lived in Ephesus. This ascription is recorded in *Suda*, the tenth-century CE Byzantine Greek historical encyclopaedia.[15] However, *Suda* cites the love story as having ten books and the only extant copy of *Ephesiaca* has only five books. This discrepancy caused early analysts to argue that *Ephesiaca* is a second- or third-century epitome of a longer work.[16]

In 1995, James O'Sullivan analysed Xenophon's composition technique and concluded that he primitively used formulaic phrases and repeated themes, coupled with the influence of oral storytelling, to create a new genre—the novel—which others following him would refine. O'Sullivan proposed dating the work to

---

12   S. E. Porter, 'What Does It Mean to Be "Saved by Childbirth" (1 Timothy 2:15)?' *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 49 (1993): 87–102.

13   Winter, *Roman Wives, Roman Widows*, 109–12.

14   All citations of Ephesiaca follow Jeffrey Henderson, ed., *Anthia and Habrocomes by Xenophon of Ephesus* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 199–365.

15   Henderson, *Anthia and Habrocomes*, 208.

16   Gottfried Bürger, 'Zu Xenophon von Ephesus', Hermes 27 (1892): 36–67; Erwin Rohde, *Der Griechische Roman und Seine Vorläufer* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1876), 38–54.

50 CE, and subsequent scholarship has concurred in that judgment.[17] This dating would place *Ephesiaca* in the same general time frame as the apostle Paul and in the very city where Pauline mission centred around 52–54 CE. Of interest to this study, *Ephesiaca* contains terms and themes that appear in 1 Timothy. On this basis, we can use *Ephesiaca* as a lens to help us exegete texts such as 1 Timothy 2:9–15, which have heretofore been hard to interpret.

Let us therefore consider how evidence from *Ephesiaca* may help to reconcile the seven unresolved issues listed above.

1. *Having 'hair braided, or with gold, pearls' in v. 9. Ephesiaca* begins with the main characters, Anthia and Habrocomes, dressing to prepare for a parade to honour the birth of the goddess Artemis. Xenophon of Ephesus portrays Anthia as looking like Artemis. Interestingly, the word used to describe Anthia's hairstyle is the same rare root word that occurs in v. 9, *plegma*:

> Her hair was blonde, mostly loose, only little of it braided (*peplegmenē*), and moving as the breezes took it. Her eyes were vivacious, bright like a beauty's but forbidding like a chaste girl's; her clothing was a belted purple tunic, knee-length and falling loose over the arms, and over it a fawnskin with a quiver attached. (*Ephesiaca* 1.2.6)

No other woman looks or acts more like the goddess than Anthia, and 'often when seeing her at the shrine, the Ephesians worshiped her as Artemis' (*Ephesiaca* 1.2.7).[18]

The term *plekō* also appears in the bridal chamber of Anthia and Habrocomes associated with the realm of the gods (*Ephesiaca* 1.8.2–3).[19] Though scholars have linked this coiffure to immodest women, in the social setting of 1 Timothy 2:9–10 and *Ephesiaca*, Xenophon of Ephesus uses it to refer to the religious expectation that all young women should wear this hairstyle to show piety to Artemis.

2. *Dressing in 'expensive clothes' in v. 9.* The term *poluteleia*, 'expensive' or 'costly', occurs five times in *Ephesiaca*. In 1 Timothy 2:9–10, it refers to clothing. Xenophon of Ephesus uses it to describe costly women's clothing and appearance on four of the five occasions. In the procession to the Artemisium to honour the goddess, Anthia is described as 'sumptuously clothed or expensively dressed' (*Ephesiaca* 1.2.2). She turned heads toward the goddess and away from God. The costly clothing appears to match the prohibited decorum of vv. 9–10.[20]

3. *Learning 'in silence with full submission' in v. 11.* Learning started early in the Artemisium. Anthia was named a priestess from birth (*Ephesiaca* 3.11.4–12.1). Part of the daily routine for young Ephesian women included perform-

---

17   James O'Sullivan, *Xenophon of Ephesus: His Compositional Technique and the Birth of the Novel* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995). For a concurring view, see Henderson, *Anthia and Habrocomes*, 209–10. Also, Bridget Gilfillan Upton, in *Hearing Mark's Endings: Listening to Ancient Popular Texts through Speech Act Theory* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), xv, dates *Ephesiaca* as 'roughly contemporary to Mark's gospel'.

18   G. Dalmeyda, *Xénophon d'Éphèse: Les Éphésiaques ou le roman d'Habrocomès et d'Anthia* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1926), 5, states, 'Anthia represents, in effect, Artemis!'

19   For more on this coiffure that links it to the realm of the gods, see *Athenaeus, The Deipnosophists* 525E.

20   Sandra L. Glahn, 'The First-Century Ephesian Artemis: Ramifications of Her Identity', *Biblioteca Sacra* 172 (2015): 455–59.

ing daily rituals to 'serve the cult of the goddess' (*Ephesiaca* 1.5.1).[21] They also said prayers aloud to the goddess in her temple courts (*Ephesiaca* 1.5.3–5). For Xenophon of Ephesus, the context for religious learning for Ephesian women was not characterized by silence or any measure of submission, but rather by repetition and incantation combined with rigorous competition to attain religious roles associated with advancing the renown of the goddess.[22]

4. *The prohibition of women teaching in v. 12.* Xenophon of Ephesus depicts Ephesus as a 'sacred city' and claims that *Ephesiaca* was inscribed on the walls of the Artemisium, exalting the goddess as 'saviour' (*Ephesiaca* 5.15.2).[23] Scholars suggest that based on its structure and composition*, Ephesiaca* represents not a classical Greek novel, but rather a *hieros logos,* a sacred writing with a didactic aim.[24] Readers see Ephesus as home to the Artemisium, the place where visitors from across the ancient world came to learn about Artemis, who throughout *Ephesiaca* is mysteriously depicted synonymously in the oracles (*Ephesiaca* 1.6.2) and prayers (*Ephesiaca* 5.13.4) as one with Isis. Women like Anthia aspired to cultic posts in which they benefitted from promoting the Artemis myth. As the social norms expected all Ephesian women to serve Artemis/Isis, the prohibition regarding women's teaching, when read in context, seems to instruct women (along with men) to stop teaching the myths and legends that conflict with the biblical record (*Ephesiaca* 1.6.2; cf. 1 Timothy 1:3–4).

5. *The meaning and function of* authentein *('have authority over') in v. 12.* According to Xenophon of Ephesus, all aspects of life for Ephesian women had cultic and religious expectations linked to the goddess. When we understand the gravity of this social norm alongside the content of the actual myths, the picture comes more clearly into view. We find that the Artemis/Isis myths included a warped view of the creation of man and woman and the origin of sin when compared with the Genesis account. Whether *authentein* is rendered as 'exercise authority over', 'usurp authority over', 'instigate violence towards', or 'be the originator of' man becomes a moot point, as each expression can be explained in light of this heresy. The Isis myth of the origin of man stated that Isis (the woman)

---

21 While Baugh, 'A Foreign World', 15–32, may be accurate in saying that women did not have a monopoly on priestly roles in Ephesus as compared with other ancient Mediterranean cities, what *Ephesiaca* adds to our knowledge is that all young Ephesian women participated in cultic activities that honoured the goddess, while also competing for roles of prominence.

22 For more on 'silence and submission' in 1 Tim 2:11, see Thomas R. Schreiner, 'An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9–15: A Dialogue with Scholarship', in Kostenberger et al., *Women in the Church*, 97–99. Examination of the function of women associated with Aphrodite, the goddess of Corinth, may prove helpful, as the Corinthian text may likewise have a demythologizing function for Corinthian women who may have participated in cultic prostitution (as their behaviour in marriage comes into view) and propagating myths (such as alleging that God's Word originated with women; cf. 1 Cor. 14:36).

23 On Artemis as 'saviour' see Guy MacLean Rogers, *The Mysteries of Artemis of Ephesos: Cult, Polis, and Change in the Graeco-Roman World,* Synkrisis (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013); Sandra L. Glahn, 'The Identity of Artemis in First Century Ephesus', *Biblioteca Sacra* 172 (2015): 330–33.

24 R. E. Witt, *Isis in the Ancient World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 249–53; cf. Reinhold Merkelbach, *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike* (Berlin: Beck, 1962), 94. R. E. Oster, 'Ephesus as a Religious Center under the Principate', *ANRW* 18, no. 3 (1990): 1677, describes it as 'literary propaganda for the goddess Isis'.

had usurped authority from Ra (the man) in the *Legend of Ra and Isis* so as to become as powerful and prominent as Ra. She also instigated violence in the story by forming a serpent that would bite him, resulting in great pain. Additionally, the Artemis myth gave her authority as the author of all life.

In light of the myths present in the world of *Ephesiaca*, the injunction from the author of 1 Timothy to silence 'the woman' (singular in v. 12) sends a message to Ephesian women like Anthia to abandon the myths and cease retelling the legends learned from childhood.

6. *The link between these instructions and the biblical account of creation and the fall in vv. 13–14.* Regardless of our vague understanding of the mystical unity of the cultic identities of Artemis, Isis and (as the goddess was known in the Roman world) Diana, the prevailing cultic tradition in the mindset of Xenophon of Ephesus promoted the view that Ra was the one who was deceived in their creation account. On the other hand, 1 Timothy 2:13–14 emphasizes the creation of Adam (the man) first, then Eve (the woman), and identifies the teaching that Adam was not the one deceived but, rather, Eve. The construction of the statement in vv. 12–14, when compared to this foundational belief from the world of *Ephesiaca*, demonstrates that the author of 1 Timothy may be aiming at demythologizing life for Ephesian women, turning everything they had learned right side up.

7. *The promise of salvation through childbearing in v. 15.* Xenophon of Ephesus, like other ancient authors, stresses the centrality of honouring the goddess Artemis *or else!* Artemis was known widely as the 'saviour' or 'deliverer', the mother of all life, the goddess of childbearing, a goddess of vengeance who strikes down those who do not follow her purity laws, and the one in whom all women placed their trust.[25]

With this reputation, the debated expression 'saved through childbearing' takes on new meaning. It could point to a local expression linked to how the goddess aided her supplicants in delivering babies.[26] It may also have alluded to the threat that likely gripped young women who came to faith in Jesus Christ and ceased service to Artemis, since according to the prevailing tradition, those who failed to follow the purity laws of the goddess would meet an untimely demise.[27]

Pregnant Ephesian women would thus find themselves alone and at risk of the wrath of the goddess of childbearing at the time of delivery. In this light, v. 15 offers them hope and protection in place of fear and intimidation. Ephesian women could trust God to deliver them.

Applications

When we examine *Ephesiaca* alongside 1 Timothy 2:9–15, a fresh reading emerges that calls Ephesian women to shift their allegiance and service from Artemis/Isis to the Lord Jesus Christ. This interpretation demystifies gender issues in the passage and helps bring three applications into view.

---

25   Artemis gained distinction as the goddess of childbearing by helping her mother, Leto, deliver her twin brother, Apollo. For a contemporary testimony that all women put their trust in Artemis, see Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists* 15.694D.
26   Glahn, 'The First-Century Ephesian Artemis', 468.
27   For implications tied to disobeying purity laws, see Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon* 8.6.11–14.

First, just as Ephesian women of faith needed to abandon social and religious norms linked to decorum and deeds associated with the goddess, women who turn to Christ in modern times would do well to follow suit. Almost certainly, this will lead them to make dramatic shifts in spending related to appearance and apparel. As a result, they will exhibit a lifestyle characterized by modesty and good deeds. Imagine this application globally. As women everywhere set their hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, they rise above both pagan practices and cultural expectations. They are free from having to adorn themselves or act in a way that aims to please people (inside or outside the community of faith). Their decorum and deeds reflect their reverence for God.

Second, Ephesian women who decided to follow Christ would have to disregard the long-standing, local tradition of competing to teach legends about creation and the origin of sin. This was not an easy choice to make. A woman who failed to obey the rules related to the goddess of childbearing, according to her myth, faced the danger of death during delivery. Likewise today, in some places around the world, choosing to live for Jesus means putting your life at risk. The threat of vengeance from spiritual forces of evil is real. This text inspires disciples everywhere to rest in the fact that just as Ephesian women would be kept safe through childbearing, God will preserve those who persevere in the faith.

Third, as joint heirs of the gospel of grace, both men and women should be very cautious in approaching texts with divisive readings. Closer examination has shined light on social realities that previously lurked in the shadows. Consequently, we discovered that this text does not actually prohibit women from teaching God's Word to men or women. The text had a higher target. It spelled out what they should stop teaching. In similar fashion today, let us take the high road and stop contending that this text is about the role of women in ministry. Gender status distinctions are levelled in the New Testament. So, rather than battle each other or posture for position, men and women must work together on an equal plane, remembering that the aim of instruction is to make the truth known in love and holiness.

Ephesian women in antiquity had to take bold steps to live out their Christian faith. How ironic to learn that from Artemis! Obedience looked radically countercultural back then and still does today. In light of the larger literary context of 1 Timothy, I desire that we rethink this text altogether in light of ancient evidence rather than argue about it, lest we find ourselves guilty of promoting tradition rather than truth. In particular, I encourage female Christ-followers to dress modestly, live simply, do good works, teach about Jesus, and live out their faith in love and holiness with modesty, despite the potential risks of doing this inside and outside God's church.

The Theology and Culture of Marriage in Nigerian Evangelical Film

Elizabeth Olayiwola

Nigerian evangelicals have embraced filmmaking as a way to share Christian truth, but their transnational films expose the significant worldview differences between Christian cultures in Nigeria and the West. This article probes the somewhat mixed messages that appear in videos by Nigeria's best-known evangelical film producer, Mike Bamiloye.

Historical background

Nigeria's initial contact with filmmaking dates back to colonial times. The first film exhibited in Nigeria was at the Glover Memorial Hall in Lagos in 1903. In 1926, Geoffrey Barkas produced *Palaver*, the first film shot in Nigeria and the first to feature Nigerian actors. After Nigeria's independence, indigenous filmmakers emerged and flourished until the 1980s, when it became apparent that they could no longer afford to shoot on celluloid film. Filmmakers began to experiment with video technology, which was cheaper and easier to produce.

By the early 1990s, video production had become a commercial success[1] as producers in the secular world (known as mainstream Nollywood) continued to grapple with the video technology. An evangelical filmmaker, Mike Bamiloye—founder of Mount Zion Faith Ministries (MZFM)—and his team also began shooting in video format. In 1986, MZFM attempted to produce two videos, *The Secret of the Devil* and *Separated Forever*. The Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State, Nigeria rejected *The Secret of the Devil* for poor quality and the second film never reached the editing stage.

After these failures, Bamiloye and his group continued staging dramas at churches all over the country and in neighbouring countries such as Ghana. Eventually Bamiloye became a prominent figure in Christian filmmaking, drawing widespread attention to the Nigerian Christian film industry.

Sarah Zylstra, writing for the American evangelical magazine *Christianity Today* in 2009, declared Nigeria the 'Christian movie capital of the world'.[2] She

---

1   See Onookome Okome, 'Introducing the Special Issue on West African Cinema: Africa at the Movies', *Postcolonial Text* 3, no. 2 (2007); Onookome Okome, 'Video Film in Nigeria: Preliminary Notes on an African Popular Art', *Voices* 2 (1999): 51–69.

2   Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra, 'Nigeria: Christian Movie Capital of the World', *Christianity Today*, 27

Elizabeth Olayiwola (PhD, University of Abuja, Nigeria) is a lecturer in the Department of Film and Film Production at Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria. Her research interests cut across gender, religion and film studies. Her latest article, 'Nigerian Evangelical Film Genres: The Spectacle of the Spiritual', was published in the *Journal of African Cultural Studies* (doi: 10.1080/13696815.2019.1610364).

stated that Nigerian Christians were contributing significantly to the national film industry as well as witnessing to the gospel through their films. Bamiloye continues to be a leading figure amongst these evangelical filmmakers. When the *Jesus* film project wanted to embark on a more Africa-relevant initiative, under the title *Walking with Jesus*, Bamiloye was contracted to write the script.

Bamiloye reached age sixty on 13 April 2020 and received hundreds of congratulatory messages from disciples and fans all over the world. His admirers had planned a big, multi-day birthday celebration, including the premiere of a feature-length film called *The Train: The Journey of Faith* (based on Bamiloye's own life story),[3] before the coronavirus epidemic intruded. *The Train* (2020) focuses on the struggles of Bamiloye's early years and the establishment of the ministry. Also, Pastor Seun Jonathan, an alumnus of Bamiloye's Mount Zion Institute of Christian Drama (MZI), produced a documentary titled *Celebrating Mike Bamiloye at 60.*[4] The documentary contains comments from notable figures such as Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye, general overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God; other US-based co-producers of MZFM videos; and MZI alumni.

When the pandemic prevented MZI from holding its annual May training session, it instead organized a five-day Zoom workshop on church drama. With a registration fee of $15, the workshop attracted more than four hundred participants, with hundreds more on a waiting list. As a result, MZI quickly assembled a second workshop, and then a third. The one I attended had participants from twenty-six countries on all six continents. In short, Bamiloye has become a brand and a force to reckon with internationally.

This article traces the trajectory of Mike Bamiloye and his organization as it has transcended his home country and entered into transnational space. In an earlier article,[5] I provided an introductory note on transnational evangelical videos, tracing the spread of these videos and their makers to other African countries and beyond. In this article, I pay specific attention to their spread outside Africa— mainly to the United States—and I draw on two videos (*A Crack in the Wall* and *Filling in the Crack*, both 2009) to analyse Bamiloye's theology of marriage.

The making of Mount Zion

I use the term *Nollywood* to describe the entire Nigerian film industry, but this realm is actually quite heterogeneous. Almost every region of the country has its own vibrant film industry.[6] In addition, a flourishing religious video sector oper-

---

October 2009, https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2009/octoberweb-only/7.17.html.

3   *The Train* is available on Damilola Mike-Bamiloye's YouTube channel, https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGyPHwlkRV_Ai7aLRXpXJow. Damilola is the firstborn son of Mike Bamiloye and his wife Gloria.

4   This documentary is also available on Damilola Mike-Bamiloye's YouTube channel.

5   Elizabeth Olayiwola, 'Transnational Evangelical Video: Notes on the Growth and Spread of Mount Zion Evangelical Videos'. *JOTAMS: A Journal of Theatre and Media Studies* 2, no. 1 (2017): 255–67.

6   See Jonathan Haynes, 'Video Boom: Nigeria and Ghana', *Postcolonial Text* 3, no. 2 (2007); Akinwumi Ishola, "In Whose Image?"in Ogunleye Foluke (ed.), *Africa through the Eye of the Video Camera* (Swaziland: Academic Publisher, 2008), 7–15; *Uba Abdalla Adamu,* 'Transgressing Boundaries: Reinterpretation of Nollywood Films in Muslim Northern Nigeria', in Matthias Krings and Onookome Okome (eds.), *Global Nollywood: The Transnational Dimensions of an African Video Film*

ates independently of the secular or mainstream sector. Evangelical filmmakers[7] use the phrase 'secular Nollywood' to create some distinction between themselves and mainstream Nollywood.

In 1985, Mike Bamiloye founded Mount Zion Faith Ministries (originally Mount Zion Christian Productions) to evangelize through drama. Most of its early members were students at the Oyo State College of Education, from which Bamiloye himself had just graduated. MZFM is an inter-denominational organization with various arms, including Mount Zion Film Productions (MZFP), Mount Zion Christian Drama Institute (MZI) and the Women Intercessors for Drama Ministries. MZFM regularly holds quarterly night vigils, as well as retreat sessions mainly for drama ministers. Bamiloye is also chairman of the board of trustees of the All Nigeria Conference of Evangelical Drama Ministers.

In the early 2000s, most evangelical filmmakers including Bamiloye did not regard themselves as part of Nollywood but as an alternative to it, often using the title 'evangelist' for themselves. Over time, however, these artists became more conscious of their art and began to think critically about Nollywood in relation to their work. In an interview with me, Bamiloye described himself and his colleagues as the Christian bloc of the Nollywood industry. Although they now view themselves as part of Nollywood, they still strive to create a distinction between themselves and secular filmmaking. Bamiloye has stated that the message differentiates between actors and ministers, noting that whereas the secular industry primarily entertains, evangelicals deliver a message.

Omolara Ayoola, a contemporary evangelical actress and MZI alumna, made a similar distinction when she described an encounter with a non-evangelical filmmaker:

> Remember in 2009 a friend invited me to his house. When I got there, he said, 'Florence, you are a fantastic actress, you have the face and the features, and I want you to take your acting to a new level, you will go far. I want to introduce you to someone. He is my very good friend. He is a good Christian but not into Christian film.' I said okay. I asked him who, he mentioned the name and said, 'He will mentor you and help you in your acting career; you will also make money too along the way.' I told him thank you, and I said God has called me into Evangelical film and that I may not go in the direction he wants me to go, I went further to tell him that I would be going to the Mount Zion Institute for training in Evangelical movies. He looked at me and made a statement that day; looking very serious he said, 'Don't greet me if I dare see you in Mount Zion film.' I laughed that day and left. I proceeded to the institute a few days later with the help of Pastor Adenike Adeyemi; she encouraged me and told me to go and fulfil God's purpose and answer his call on my life. That was how God used this destiny helper to launch me into purpose and destiny. It's been God all the way. What if I had listened to that young man that day? I don't even want to imagine where I would be. I may

---

Industry (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 287–305.
7   I use this term for all Nigerian filmmakers who seek to evangelize through drama, not as a demarcation between shades of Christianity.

have fame and money by now, but I can never have this peace and fulfilment that I have now doing it for my creator and winning souls for Jesus Christ. So I CAN BOLDLY SAY THAT I am a drama minister by grace. I am acting the word; I am called to do it not just passion. I owe no one an apology. I will stay in this assignment. Nothing can stop me because it's grace that brought me here. Soul winning and eternity is my goal. God help me.[8]

Ayoola's post emphasizes how seriously Nigerian evangelical filmmakers see their art as a call to ministry, not just to the profession of filmmaking.

MZFP became well-known on the Nigerian screen in the mid-1990s. At that time the primary source of visual entertainment for the Nigerian audience still consisted of pirated versions of Hollywood, Bollywood and Chinese martial arts films. Mount Zion's first job was to sell itself as an alternative to existing art forms of the time and to create a unique cultural space. So from the onset, Mount Zion positioned itself as an alternative to other existing film cultures in Nigeria. In an interview with Victoria Odelami, Bamiloye stated, 'When the ministry started in 1985, the initial main objective … was to produce Christian films and teledrama for the propagation of the gospel of Jesus Christ and to counter the effect of the prevailing few secular films of that time.'[9]

In an article titled 'We Are God's Alternatives!' Bamiloye stressed the oppositional nature of his type of film—in contrast not just to Nollywood but to other industries across the globe:

> The majority of children movies are no longer clean. Many of the films, including ordinary children cartoons, are laced with subtle witchcraft, occultism, and immorality. Youth movies made by Hollywood have been worse since the production and release of *Harry Potter* and *Lord of the Rings*. Hollywood has suddenly discovered goldmines in films full of subtle occultism, witchcraft, black magic, and sorcery. In light of all these, what is the mandate of Nigerian Drama Ministers given to us by the Lord? We must be determined and committed to this calling. WE ARE GOD'S ALTERNATIVE to the craziness of Hollywood and Nollywood.[10]

Bamiloye and his transnational films

After Mount Zion stabilized its artistic production within Nigeria, it and its videos began to migrate outside Nigeria. The concept of transnational film covers a broad spectrum. Linda Basch defines transnationalism as 'the processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin

---

8   Omolara Ayoola, 'Remenber in 2009', Facebook, 3 October 2017, https://m.facebook.com/story/graphql_permalink/?graphql_id=UzpfSTY5MjUwNjk50DoxMDE1NTQ4MTg0MTk50Q%3D%3D.

9   Victoria Odelami Oluremi, 'Development and Management of Christian Theatre in South-Western Nigeria' (PhD dissertation. Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ibadan, 2009).

10   Mike Bamiloye, 'We Are God's Alternatives!' *Drama Mission Fields* (newsletter of Mount Zion Faith Ministries International), December 2012, 2.

and their country of settlement'.[11] This definition aids our understanding of Bamiloye's transnational video filmmaking. Building on Basch's interpretation, we can infer that transnational films build on links between home countries and diaspora settlements. Jonathan Haynes[12] explains that transnational Nigeria video filmmaking encompasses both movies shot in Nigeria with the illusion of settings abroad and those actually shot outside the country. In either case, transnational films or videos have the goal of dissemination beyond the nation of their makers' origin. Whether produced within one country and exported elsewhere or created by a national filmmaker outside his or her homeland, such films aim to attract transnational discourse.

In 1999, MZFM made its first official trip outside Nigeria, to Ghana. After that, the group visited Kenya in 2001, and it subsequently toured other African countries as well as Europe and America, making the beginning of the now-booming transnational video production tradition of MZFP.

Gradually Mount Zion began to network with Nigerian transnational churches, the Redeemer Christian Church of God being prominent among them. Mount Zion collaborates with these churches to produce transnational videos as its aim of re-evangelizing the world coincides with Nigerian churches' efforts to carry out reverse or foreign mission.

Bamiloye's transnational videos usually centre on the need for African diaspora Christian families to hold on to the fervency and energetic brand of Christianity that they practised back home before their migration. Many of the videos touch on marriage-related themes, often highlighting the fact that marriages in modern societies, especially in the West, are easily dissolved. Bamiloye believes that successful marriage is a key to successful Christian living, and that attacking Christian marriages is high on the devil's agenda. He has made this stance clear in several films.

In the opening of Bamiloye's transnational film *The Return* (2014), the devil sends his demons to destroy godly homes. The first dialogue of the film involves a demon who says, 'Homes, marriages—we hate it. Especially godly marriages that produce solid homes where godly children are raised, to live a righteous life in this rotten society. Therefore it is our desire to attack homes and make marriages undesirable!' The demons continue, 'When the home is broken, we tamper with the destiny of the children.' After the demonic scene comes one displaying a couple in combat; the audience immediately understands that the demons are responsible for the fight.

Several factors that Bamiloye considers unusual in the lands in which diaspora Nigerians have settled find their way into his transnational scripts. For instance, the idea of women having the right to call for the arrest of a husband seems strange to him. In *The Finest Wine* (2013), Bamiloye frowns on a system that empowers wives to kick their husbands out of the house; this is contrary to Nigerian norms, where the wife is usually the one sent packing in the event of unreconcil-

11   Afe Adogame. *The African Christian Diaspora: New Currents and Emerging Trends in World Christianity* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 7.
12   Jonathan Haynes, 'The Nollywood Diaspora: A Nigerian Video Genre', in Matthias Krings and Onookome Okome (eds.), *Global Nollywood: The Transnational Dimensions of an African Video Film Industry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 74.

able differences. In *The Return*, the home mortgage is financed by the wife, yet the film makes it clear that the husband, as head of the family, has greater control over the house. *The Prodigal Ones* (2008) similarly draws attention to a wife who contributes a higher amount of earnings than her husband towards the mortgage. Whereas in the Western world, women making a decent living or earning more than their husbands are usually not a cause for concern, in Nigeria and its diaspora community they still are. This is an example of how cultural differences influence the practice of Christianity. Nigerian Christianity remains largely tied to patriarchy. Thus, even when Bamiloye tries to profile a biblical solution, he still finds himself struggling with the cultural interpretation of manliness. Women's financial emancipation remains a sensitive matter in Nigerian Christian marriages.

Two examples of Nigerian-born pastors are illustrative. In a Pentecostal church in Nigeria, I once heard a full-time preacher (in his early forties) mention that he was the financial manager of his home, and that therefore his working-class wife's debit card was in his possession and used at his discretion. On the other hand, Enoch Adeboye, the widely known general overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (a man in his seventies), had a somewhat different take on the economic role of husbands and wives. In one sermon, he opined that God created man to be the breadwinner and thus 'It is a shame for a man to be fed by his wife.'[13]

I will now turn to two films in which Bamiloye examines issues of marital relations, fertility and rape.

A marriage influenced by Nigerian cultural views

A Crack in the Wall (2009) and its sequel *Filling in the Crack* (2009) tell the story of a young couple, Fred and Linda. They are Africans in diaspora, living in Dallas, Texas. The couple has been married for four years without having a child. Linda seems more worried about the situation than Fred. She has gone for three fertility tests, which confirmed that she is fit to bear children. Fred, on the other hand, refuses to go for any fertility tests. This leads to a series of tensions that leave Linda frustrated, vulnerable and defenceless.

A Crack in the Wall opens with a prologue, in which Linda stands by the window at night, unable to sleep. She reflects back on an episode with her mother-in-law, who visited from Africa. The following conversation took place between them:

Mother-in-law (sitting with a cup of tea in the dining room): Linda?
Linda (walking in with shopping bags): Ha! Mama.
M: I asked you a question this morning and you did not respond. You have turned me into a radio that speaks without its listeners responding.
L: You did not ask me any question this morning, Mama.
M: Arguing with me, aren't you?
L: I don't seem to remember any question anymore.
M: When are you going to give my son a child?
L: When the Lord gives me one, Mama.

---

13 Patience Kadiri, "It's a Shame for a Man to Be Fed by His Wife—Adeboye', *Redeemer's Torch*, October 2016, 1.

M: No! I cannot accept that answer. My people will not accept that answer. They are asking me questions.

L: What questions?

M: They are asking me if you still have a womb. (Linda is shocked and speechless.) They are asking, you might have spoiled yourself before you came the way of my son. They are asking why after four years of marriage you are yet to produce a child?

L: God will give me a child, a perfect one at his appointed time.

M: (springing to her feet, moving towards Linda and tapping her by the shoulder): When is the appointed time? Is it after four years of marriage?

L: (teary-eyed): What do you want me to do, Mama? (Linda grabs her bags to leave.)

M: (pulling her by the hand): Go and give my son a child or do something about yourself.

L: I cannot kill myself.

M: I am going back to Africa next week. I will tell my people that my son married a he-goat.

L: (crying): Ha! Mama, you called me a he-goat.

M: Go and give my son a child.

The above scenario is not unusual in Nigeria; however, one would think that the diaspora community would be spared such discomfort. In many Nigerian marriages, even Christian ones, interference by relatives is a leading concern. This is so because of the type of kinship relationships that are entrenched in most Nigerian cultures.

As the film continues, the pressure on Linda over being childless after four years of marriage grows. We see Linda lost in thought again, sitting on the staircase inside the house. Linda tells her husband she needs a doctor for the pain of childlessness, more than for the leg pain regarding which Fred wanted her to see the doctor. Fred responds, 'Do not rely on the doctor for he is just but a man.' Linda answers, 'The doctor is not any man but a specialist sent by God to help me.'

Realizing that he won't win this argument, Fred says it is too early for such conversation and rises to leave for work. Then, on second thought, he quotes Psalm 127 to his wife: 'Except the Lord builds a house, they labour in vain that build it. Except the Lord keeps the city, the watchman watches but in vain.' In irritation, Linda helps Fred to complete the following verse: 'It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.' She is not willing to hear any of Fred's sermon, and we soon realize the cause of her annoyance.

As noted above, Linda has taken three fertility tests, all of which have shown that she is fine. The doctor has suggested that Fred should also come in for a test, but Fred refuses. In one such debate, Linda tells Fred he is probably the cause of their infertility since he won't go for a test. Fred responds, 'I am okay, my dear; I believe I am fearfully and wonderfully made. I am complete in him. And a man needs not to confirm to me what God has already confirmed.' Linda says with frustration, 'Stop this religious talk and let's talk reality.' A heated argument ensues, and Linda repeats her suspicion: 'Maybe you have a problem fathering a child, who knows.' Fred becomes angry, his male ego bruised, and slaps Linda, who falls to the ground, crying.

Soon afterwards, Fred repents of his anger and returns to apologize to his wife,

but he again tells her that she should believe the report of the Lord rather than the report of man. Fred assures her that he will go for the fertility test, but he keeps postponing it until Jacob comes to visit. Jacob, a former schoolmate of Fred and Linda, is coming to town for business and plans to stay with the couple for about two weeks.

Fertility is a crucial issue in Nigerian marriages; unions often collapse because the woman did not get pregnant. Moreover, it is conventionally assumed that infertility in marriage is due to a malfunction in the women's reproductive system. Even in churches, when a call is made to pray for married members seeking to have children, invariably it is the woman who comes for prayer. It is a cultural assumption that the woman is responsible for childlessness; she is interrogated by her in-laws, whereas the man is barely questioned. This norm of the wife bearing sole responsibility for childlessness is played out in the film as Linda goes alone for fertility testing.

While Fred is away on travel, Linda and Jacob begin talking, and Jacob shares the story of another man who refused to go for a fertility test, knowing that he was incapable of fathering a child but keeping the information secret from his wife. This further heightens Linda's fear, and she asks Jacob to talk to her husband, since they are close friends from college. On one of Linda's tear-filled nights, Jacob offers consolation and then walks Linda into her bedroom as he urges her to go to sleep. In the next scene, we see Linda filled with rage and crying out, 'Jacob, you raped me!' Jacob offers apologies, claiming he does not know what came over him, after which Linda throws him out of the house.

Fred returns from his trip the following day to a sobbing, devastated wife who summons the courage to report the incident to her husband. As soon as he hears the news, his concern changes to anger—but towards Linda, not Jacob. Fred calls her careless, spiritually weak and unable to resist temptation in her husband's absence.

The hostility between them continues until their pastor intervenes, insisting that Fred should love his wife and support her in her trying times. In the course of his counselling, the pastor says that Fred should forgive his wife. The audience is left wondering what her offence was, or if it is a sin to be raped. This exchange highlights the common situation in which survivors of rape are further traumatized as they are forced to share in the blame for what happened to them.

Fred rebuffs the pastor's pleading, however. Days later, Linda confronts him, saying that he set her up to be raped by leaving her alone with Jacob despite her objections. She then locks herself up in a room for hours and will not take his calls nor those of their pastor. Fred again calls the pastor, who breaks into the room and reunites the couple. As the film ends, the couple reconcile, with Fred apologizing and Linda accepting his apology.

In the sequel, *Filling in the Crack* (2009), the peace is again broken when Linda becomes pregnant. The couple is initially happy—until they realize the timing of the pregnancy seems to coincide with the rape. Fred becomes mad again, declaring that he won't father a product of rape. He suggests that Linda instead start talking with Jacob, the father of the child she is carrying. Linda's sorrow begins anew. She and their pastor try to convince Fred otherwise, but he won't listen.

Linda wisely refuses to involve Jacob but instead goes back to the hospital and asks if the doctor would tell her the exact time of her pregnancy. In the course of her conversation with the doctor, she discovers that they didn't hear him correctly when he broke the news of the pregnancy. The doctor had told them that it began

three months ago, not two—meaning she was already pregnant before the rape.

Linda pleads with the doctor to inform her husband. Having heard the new information, Fred returns home to make up with his wife, but she is no longer there; she has packed her things and left him a note. Fred rushes to the pastor's house. The pastor and his wife rebuke him, saying that he should have loved his wife as Christ loves the church. Seeing Fred's remorse, the pastor's wife eventually tracks Linda down. He apologizes profusely to his wife, they are again reconciled and have their baby, and the film concludes with a happily-ever-after ending.

A somewhat mixed message

Bamiloye provides a theological perspective on two sensitive issues: fertility and rape. Bamiloye's primary response is 'Husband, love your wife as Christ loved the church and gave up himself for her.' In all of Bamiloye's films, marriage is forever; thus, regardless of the gravity of the offence, couples are encouraged to forgive and make up. However, the wife is expected to do more and sacrifice significantly to ensure a peaceful home.

Although Bamiloye prescribes that husbands should love their wives as Christ loves the church, the body of the film struggles with the homegrown cultural worldview of a family setting. The film reflects how Nigerian marriage is understood. In Nigeria, the idea of a man leaving his father and mother and cleaving to his wife is farfetched. Often, in accordance with the prevailing Nigerian cultural view of marriage, the man pulls his wife from her parents and brings her to join him and his entire family. The couple and the husband's relatives may not all physically live together, but specific structural factors and measures demonstrate that the wife is to join the husband and the rest of his family.

When a woman is getting married in the Yoruba culture, she is said to be leaving for *Ile Oko* (her husband's house). Thus, she is the one leaving her family to join her husband and his family. In the Yoruba tribe, the wife is usually referred to as *Iyawo mi* (my wife) by any relative of the husband's family who was born before she got married. This collective sense of ownership can sometimes be problematic. On one hand, the wife enjoys care from every member of the family, since they see it as their responsibility to show concern for her. But she has to reciprocate by submitting to a great number of in-laws in addition to her husband! This notion empowers Linda's forceful mother-in-law. In Bamiloye's transnational filmmaking; the stereotypical Nigerian mother-in-law still finds her way into the scene, even in the United States, because Fred's relatives are assumed to be major stakeholders in the marriage.

One of Bamiloye's goals is to reach the world with the message of Christ through drama, but the prominence of features of a Nigerian worldview may be largely responsible for limiting his audience mainly to members of the African diaspora. In an interview with him, I asked who his transnational audience was, and he responded that they were 'unfortunately' Africans in diaspora, expressing regret regarding his difficulty in reaching white audiences. Although Bamiloye's Christian message is universal, the content of his transnational films remains very much wrapped in Nigerian culture.

World Diasporas: An Opportunity for World Mission

Johannes Reimer and Chris Pullenayegem

Many of us who cannot leave our home country on Christian mission have world mission coming to our doorstep—in the form of increasing numbers of international refugees and migrants. This article explains the cultural situation experienced by members of today's world diasporas and how the body of Christ can reach out to them.

Millions of people are on the move. According to the United Nations, 244 million people live outside their country of origin.[1] This figure is projected to rise to 405 million by 2050.[2] The UN High Commission on Refugees claims that in 2019, an unprecedented 70.8 million people around the world were forced to leave their homes. This number included nearly 26 million refugees, over half of whom were under age 18. No other time in human history has had such high numbers of migrants. We truly live in an 'age of migration'.[3]

This unfolding reality presents the global church with new challenges. Sam George, professor of missiology at Wheaton College and chair of the diaspora network of the Lausanne Movement for World Evangelization, describes mission to people in diaspora as like 'shooting a moving target'.[4] How do we share the good news of the gospel with people on the move, who are searching for a new identity between the culture of their ancestors and the new culture they have become part of through migration?

The world has become a global village in which different cultures seek to co-exist and where people try to find meaningful ways of living together. A contemporary theory of Christian mission needs to answer the following questions: What must Christian mission take into consideration when engaging with these migrant communities, generally referred to as the diaspora? What can we learn from and share with these newly forming communities of people who may

1   Doris Peschke, 'Weiter wachsende Zahlen. Flucht und Migration: Zahlen, Daten, Fakten', in Zuflucht Europa, Mission Yearbook 2016 (Hamburg: EMW, 2016), 40.

2   Amelia Hill, 'Migrants, Expats, Asylum Seekers, Refugees, IDPs—What Are the Differences?' *The Guardian*, 10 September 2018.

3   Hein de Haas, Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World* (London and New York: Red Globe Press, 2020).

4   Sam George, 'The Past and Future of Evangelical Mission', paper presented at the EMS Regional Conference, Toronto, 6 March 2020.

Johannes Reimer directs the World Evangelical Alliance's Department of Public Engagement; **Chris Pullenayegem** is International Director of the WEA's Diaspora Task Force.

hold the new key to world evangelization? What role can the World Evangelical Alliance and other global Christian organizations play in all this?

Defining diaspora

The term *diaspora* (from the Greek word for a scattering or sowing of seeds) refers to any people group or ethnic population that is forced or induced to leave their traditional homelands and becomes dispersed throughout other parts of the world, along with the ensuing developments in their culture.[5] Originally the term was used to describe the scattered Jews, who lived outside Israel beginning with the Babylonian captivity beginning around 607 BC.[6] Since the 1950s, the term has broadly applied to groups of people living outside their original homelands.[7]

Diasporas typically seek to preserve their own cultural and sometimes linguistic identity. Members of a diaspora live bi-culturally. They have social contacts with their 'host culture' neighbours as well as with members of their own ethnic group in other countries.[8] As a rule, the relation of kinship is the stronger of the two. A member of a Turkish diaspora in Germany or France will have much more in common with fellow Turks than with their neighbours of German or French background.

Often, kinship ties amongst diaspora groups are transferred to the global level through the development of ethnic networks.[9] An Iranian businessman whom I (Johannes) met on a recent flight from Frankfurt to Toronto proudly explained to me how this works. He lives in Canada and runs his business in Asia. His sister, a medical doctor, lives in Germany and has a cousin in Sweden. 'I am related to people in almost all Western countries', he said. 'They speak the local languages and are fully integrated in their particular societies. But between us we speak Farsi, the language of our heart.'

Nina Glick and her research colleagues call people like this Canadian-Iranian contact *transmigrants*.[10] They easily adjust to different cultures and have multiple identities. 'As a result, family and kinship have moved from a largely local to a global scale.'[11] Transmigrant communities build networks across national borders. Monica Boyd writes:

5   Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), ix.

6   Narry F. Santos, 'Exploring the Major Dispensation Terms and Realities in the Bible', in Enoch Wan (ed.), *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology and Practice* (Portland, OR: Institute of Diaspora Studies, 2011), 35–52.

7   Enoch Wan, *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology and Practice* (Portland, OR: Institute of Diaspora Studies, 2011), 14–18; Jana Evans Brasiel and Anita Mannur, *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 4.

8   Nina Glick et al., 'From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration', *Anthropological Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (1995): 48–63.

9   Nadje Ali-Ali and Khalid Koser, eds., *New Approaches to Migration? Transational Communities and the Transformation of Home* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 3–4; Monica Boyd, 'Family and Personal Networks in International Migration: Recent Developments and New Agendas', *International Migration Review* 23, no. 3 (1989): 641.

10 Glick et al., 'From Immigrant to Transmigrant'.

11 Ali-Ali and Koser, *New Approaches*, 3–4.

Networks connect migrants across time and space. Once begun, migration flows often become self-sustaining, reflecting the establishment of networks of information, assistance and obligations, which develop between migrants in the host society and friends and relatives in the sending area. These networks link populations in origin and receiving countries and ensure that movements are not necessarily limited in time, unidirectional or permanent.[12]

Diasporas are connected to both their old and new home countries. This was already typical of the early Jewish diaspora.[13] Today, in times of globalization, transnationality and connectivity have enormously intensified.[14] Although migrants may leave their homelands, many do not sever ties with their past and they build strong relationships with others who have migrated. This sense of living in two worlds, or in a parallel world relative to those around them, can result in isolation and disintegration of the given group from the majority population.[15]

According to William Safran, most diasporas are marked by the following distinctives:[16]

1. A common place of origin, which institutes a symbolic center of communal life for the group
2. A common longing for the lost homeland and the dream of returning one day
3. A common feeling of being a minority in the society to which they belong
4. Common solidarity with the country of origin
5. A common sense of belonging to the same ethnic and social group and sharing a common destiny

Being a social group with a distinct identity may have positive as well as negative effects. An intentionally lived identity is a prerequisite for any integration into society.[17] At the same time, it may also foster isolation and escape from society. The German theologian Eberhard Werner writes, 'Negative effects are political and religious radicalization, economic poverty and ethnic tensions, often resulting in criminal acts.'[18] In Germany, the negative effects of closed diasporal communities can be observed amongst the Turkish diaspora[19] and the development of the radical Muslim Salafi movement.[20]

---

12 Boyd, 'Family and Personal Networks', 641.

13 See for instance Ted Rubesh, 'Diaspora Distinctives: The Jewish Diaspora Experience in the Old Testament', in Enoch Wan (ed.), *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology and Practice* (Portland, OR: Institute of Diaspora Studies, 2011), 53–86.

14 Wan, *Diaspora Missiology*, 31.

15 Paloma Fernandez de la Hoz, *Familienleben, Transnationalität und Diaspora* (Vienna: Österreichisches Institut für Familienforschung, 2004), 17–18; Eberhard Werner, 'Migration und Flucht—Diaspora als Lebensmitte: Einleitende missiologische Überlegungen', *Evangelische Missiologie* 32, no. 2 (2016): 94–95.

16 William Safran, 'Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return', *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1, no. 1 (1991): 83–84; Fernandez de la Hoz, *Familienleben*, 20–21.

17 See Wilfred Felix, *Theologie vom Rand der Gesellschaft. Eine indische Vision* (Freiburg: Herder, 2006), 68–92.

18 Werner, 'Migration', 96.

19 Werner, 'Migration', 94–95.

20 See Mohammad Abu Rumman, *I Am a Salafi: A Study of the Actual and Imagined Identities of*

Diasporal communities form around extended family and clan-driven struc-tures.[21] The willingness of an extended family to change decides how open the group will be with regard to integrating into the host culture.[22] The family's at-titude determines whether the group will isolate itself or pursue social integra-tion. This could affect how missions to the diaspora are re-strategized and re-framed—for example, with a focus on family-friendly evangelism as an effective strategy and entry point.

Diasporas: a new perspective for mission

Our approaches to Christian mission are being challenged by diasporal devel-opments throughout the world, and missiological reflections on this challenge have only recently begun. The Korean missiologists S. Hun Kim and Wonsuk Ma date the beginning of such reflection to the founding of the Chinese Coordinating Committee for World Evangelization in 1976 in Hong Kong,[23] after which a number of international meetings followed. Of significant importance was the Lausanne Forum in Pattaya, Thailand in 1980, where the working group on dias-pora mission produced a paper entitled 'The New People Next Door'.[24]

In 2009 the Lausanne Diasporas Leadership Team (LDLT) was formed, and it was largely responsible for the Seoul Declaration on Diaspora Missiology, ad-opted by the Lausanne Diaspora Educators Consultation in November 2009. The LDLT was merged into the Global Diaspora Network Advisory Board at the Third Lausanne Congress in Cape Town, South Africa in 2010.[25] This step marked the beginnings of what is called 'diasporal missiology'.

A number of important studies have been published since then, such as Darrell Richard Jackson and Alessia Passarelli's *Mapping Migration, Mapping Churches´ Responses—Europe Study*.[26] All studies stress the great opportunities available to us to learn about world evangelization in this new diasporal context. The studies agree on five distinctives of diasporas that make them important for missions: transnational connectivity; hospitality and a culture of welcome; focus on extended family; flexicurity; and biblical pattern.

Salafis (Amman: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2014).

21 Boyd, 'Family and Personal Networks'; Wolf-Dietrich Buckow, *Theologie vom Rand der Gesell-schaft. Eine indische Vision* (Freiburg: Herder, 2000), 9ff.; Fernandez de la Hoz, *Familienleben*, 24.

22 Paloma Fernandez and Johannes Pflegerl, 'Familie als Schlüssel zur Integration', in *Bundes-ministerium für Umwelt, Jugend und Familie, Zur Situation von Familie und Familienpolitik in Österreich*—4. Österreichischer Familienbericht: Familie zwischen Anspruch und Alltag (Vienna: Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Jugend und Familie, 1999), 364–81.

23 S. Hun Kim and Wonsuk Ma, eds., *Korean Diaspora and Christian Mission* (Oxford: Regnum, 2011), 1.

24 'The New People Next Door', Lausanne Occasional Paper 55 (2004), https://www.lausanne.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/06/LOP55_IG26.pdf.

25 Kim and Ma, *Korean Diaspora*, 2.

26 Darrell Richard Jackson and Alessia Passarelli, *Mapping Migration, Mapping Churches´ Re-sponses—Europe Study* (Geneva: Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe, World Council of Churches, 2008); Jehu Hancilles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration, and the Transformation of the West* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006).

Transnational connectivity

Diasporas exist across at least two borders: those of the sending and the receiving country. In most cases, a number of other countries, where migrants from the same country of origin live, are also included in a diasporal network. The Russian diaspora, for instance, is spread over all European and many Asian and North American countries. Similarly, the diaspora groups of Chinese, Koreans, Arabs, Armenians and others may be found all over the world. Most of them speak the vernacular languages of their countries of origin and share cultural and social values, dreams and longings. Their common origin defines the basic relationship of trust amongst them, which is so important for any evangelism and mission, as the American missiologist Marvin Mayers rightly claims.[27]

This transnational connectivity also defines the model for mission, largely eliminating issues of acculturation, since the target people in the mission field speak the same language and share the same cultural values, and yet at the same time they live fully integrated lives in their new homeland. Contextualization and inculturation of the gospel message become a less complicated matter. Chinese evangelize Chinese, Russians reach out to Russians, Arabs speak to Arabs. Those who have been evangelized in turn evangelize their fellow diaspora neighbours. By this means, long processes of missionary preparation become unnecessary.

Hospitality and culture of welcome

Diaspora groups are bound by the memory of their common home and shared culture, thus shaping a joint identity and generating a much higher level of inter-dependence on each other in their new homeland. One of the markers of contemporary diasporal communities is their culture of hospitality and sense of welcome, which they have no trouble in extending beyond their own people to neighbours in their host country.

Such a hospitality-driven social networking culture provides an ideal environment for the propagation of the gospel in an organic way. Hospitality was a key to the fast spread of the Gospel in the first century AD, and things are no different today. The correlation between a culture of welcome and effective evangelism has been thoroughly researched and established.[28]

Extended families

Diasporas develop around extended families and clans. Members of a given diasporal network are bound by extended family ties. In such networks, one readily feels accepted and at home. This seems to be another important key to evangelism, since the vast majority of people coming to faith in Christ do so via family networks. The family is obviously God´s most important agent of mission.[29] Nowhere

---

27 Marvin Mayers, *Christianity Confronts Culture: A Strategy for Cross-Cultural Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 32.
28 Johannes Reimer, *Hereinspaziert: Willkommenskultur und Evangelisation* (Schwarzenfeld: Neufeld, 2013).
29 See Johannes Reimer, *Familie—Zukunft der Kirche. Zur Korrelation zwischen Familie und Mis-*

else does the gospel travel the world so naturally as through family structures. This made the private house (*oikos*) the main conduit and place for mission during the apostolic era.

Flexicurity

Diasporas are by definition multicultural. They derive their identity from their original home and seek to establish a new identity in their new home. To use a metaphor of roots and wings, they nourish their roots (from their previous world) and learn to fly in the new world. Sociology speaks of a culture of 'flexicurity' in which both flexibility and security seem equally important.[30] Bi-cultural people are like that: they value tradition but at the same time seek to change and adapt to the new conditions around them.

This culture of flexicurity enables diasporas to adapt to new religious convictions and become open to the gospel. The diasporas' religious receptivity makes them a priority for Christian mission.[31] We must also recognize that many members of diaspora groups are strong, mature Christians who have much to offer to the host country, in terms of both contextualization and interpretation. Their ability to switch cultural frames gives them a unique perspective on the gospel and Christian missions.

Biblical pattern

The gospel spread through the ancient world through the Jewish diasporas. Followers of Jesus dispersed from Jerusalem as a result of persecution and were soon preaching his message in all corners of the Roman Empire (Acts 8:1–8; 11:9ff). Paul and Barnabas are excellent examples of missionaries who used the existence of the diaspora to plant gospel seeds. Soon churches were established around the Jewish diasporas in many cities of the Roman Empire.[32] Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:2) and Apollos from Alexandria in Egypt (Acts 18:24–28) established a church in Ephesus using the diaspora. Without question, diasporic communities offered the most important starting point for Christian mission in the first century.[33] Indeed, the practice of the ancient church might help us to orient modern-day missions to today's diaspora communities along similar lines.

Conclusion

These factors underscore the importance of an intense, intentional focus on diasporal mission. The Western missionary movement and enterprise has a lot to learn from the diaspora and from how global people movements are forcing

---

sion (Marburg: Francke), 2016.

30 Reimer, *Hereinspaziert*, 16–17.

31 'The New People Next Door'.

32 Robert Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962).

33 Craig Ott, 'Diaspora and Relocation as Divine Impetus for Witness in the Early Church', in Enoch Wan (ed.), *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology and Practice* (Portland, OR: Institute of Diaspora Studies, 2011), 101.

the church to rethink its approach to missions. Indeed, we are discovering that in an increasingly post-Christian and post-modern culture, the most effective 'sent ones' (i.e. missionaries) might be the members of the diaspora itself. This challenges our power- and privilege-based presupposition about missions being 'from the West to the rest' and moves us towards a more shared concept of missions. Consequently, we would do well to pay attention to the gift that God has given the church in the form of people on the move—today's unprecedented global diaspora—in the coming decades.

Appropriately, leaders of national evangelical alliances throughout the world have expressed a strong interest in diaspora mission. For most of them, the Lausanne initiatives have presented a perfect platform on which to act and shape diasporal mission. With the decision by the World Evangelical Alliance's leadership to form a Diaspora Task Force at the global level, working as closely as possible alongside the Lausanne Diaspora Network, a new phase in evangelical diasporal mission has begun.

We encourage regional and national alliances to create their own Diaspora Task Forces and promote this work as intensively as possible. A central leadership team, based in Toronto, Canada, has been formed to offer leadership in promoting and supporting diasporal ministries globally.

Interreligious Dialogue: Towards an Evangelical Approach

Simone Twibell

Engaging with people from other religious traditions, with respect and grace while also bearing witness to our faith, can be challenging for evangelical Christians but is also a crucial part of carrying out our mission. This article surveys various types and purposes of interreligious dialogue and offers practical guidance on how and why all of us should do it.

My doctor is Hindu; my neighbour is Muslim; my friend is Buddhist. Religious traditions that once were distant from each other now flourish side by side. The social fabric of society, now permeated by religious diversity, is rapidly changing and continually influencing how Christians think about their faith.

In many parts of the world, especially where Christians represent a minority, they have established a long history of friendly dialogue and cooperation with people of other faith traditions. However, in lands where Christianity has historically been a dominant cultural force, Christians have been compelled to think anew about what it means to witness in today's world. How should we love our neighbour if our neighbour is following a completely different set of religious guidelines and doctrinal understandings? Does loving our neighbour mean making them like us or converting them to our way of thinking?

The emergence of a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious world makes dialogue among religious traditions fundamental to dismantle patterns of misunderstanding that often lead to resentment and unnecessary hostility among adherents of divergent faiths. Evangelicals can and should try to construct bridges of careful and thoughtful discourse, making it a priority to engage the 'religious other' with deep respect, sympathy, and interest.

Although practices of interreligious dialogue are both ancient and modern, the last few decades have seen a plethora of new developments in this field, calling for the formation of authentic encounters between various religious traditions.[1] Such developments and conversations have presented a series of chal-

---

1   Among the most recent efforts is *A Common Word Between Us and You* (www.acommonword.com), which called Christians to dialogue with Muslims. It was published in 2007, signed by prominent Muslim scholars and endorsed by a large number of Christian leaders from all over the world. For a response to this document by the World Evangelical Alliance to this statement, see Geoff Tunnicliffe, 'We Too Want to Live in Love, Peace, Freedom and Justice' (n.d.), http://www.worldevangelicals.org/We_Too_Want_to_Live_in_Love,_Peace,_Freedom_and_Justice.pdf.   The World Conference on Dialogue, held in Spain in 2008, led to practical initiatives amongst Saudi

---

Simone Twibell (PhD, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) is Assistant Professor of Intercultural Studies at Olivet Nazarene University, USA. Originally from Sao Paulo, Brazil, she is an ordained minister in the Church of the Nazarene and previously served as a pastor and missionary.

lenges for evangelical Christians. Theologies of religious pluralism require an informed response from those who adhere to historic Christianity.

Is interreligious dialogue of any value to Christians who hold a Christ-centred view of reality? Is our only appropriate position one of proclamation? In a world that is constantly experiencing religious tension and conflict, should Christians adopt a more conciliatory attitude in their encounters with individuals of other religions? As Christians interact with people of other faiths, it becomes imperative to understand the intricacies of this important issue so that we can clarify our commitments in a globalized world.

This article provides a brief overview of discussions and perspectives (primarily from sources in the United States) surrounding interreligious dialogue, so as to explore the concept thoroughly from an evangelical perspective. First, I describe the nature and various types of interreligious dialogue, seeking to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics involved. Second, I look at trends in the approaches that Christians have taken towards members of other religions. Finally, I propose some general principles that can guide Christians as they carry out dialogue as part of their commitment to bearing witness to the gospel and making disciples in all the world.

The essence of interreligious dialogue

Because interreligious dialogue has taken on different meanings, understanding its objectives is not a simple matter. Harold Netland has said, 'There is no general agreement today on just what is meant by dialogue.'[2] Evangelicals differ from Catholics and mainline Protestants with regard to the various assumptions and attitudes they bring to dialogue. As a result, many evangelicals have been hesitant to become involved in organized interreligious conversations at all.

Because some evangelicals tend to view non-Christian religions as examples of human blindness, the direct work of Satan, or distortions of the truth that threaten the church's mission, one common response has been a tendency towards disengaged withdrawal or inflammatory condemnation. However, for productive dialogue to emerge, the focus and point of departure should not be the other person's particular religious adherence, but the very 'otherness' of those who profess a different religious affiliation. Our deep concern to understand fellow human beings should beckon us to come to the table of dialogue.

What exactly constitutes interreligious dialogue? Leonard Swidler describes dialogue as a 'two-way communication' between individuals who hold differing views on a subject for the purpose of learning about the matter from

Arabian universities and the West. Moreover, the Ecclesiological Investigations International Research Network convened a gathering in 2012 exploring the theme 'Where We Dwell in Common: Pathways for Dialogue in the 21st Century' with more than 250 participants. A grant from the U.S. Department of Justice from 2003 to 2006 enabled Fuller Theological Seminary to develop partnerships, manuals and other resources for cooperation with Muslims. Various societies are also dedicated to programs of interfaith dialogue, such as the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies, the Islamic Society of North America and the Union for Reform Judaism.

2   Harold Netland, *Dissonant Voices: Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 285.

one another.[3] Terry Muck offers a broad definition, affirming that 'dialogue is an attempt to understand one another's faith traditions accurately.'[4] Likewise, John Stott's general vision of dialogue is 'an activity in its own right, whose goal is mutual understanding'.[5] The Cape Town Commitment affirms the importance of bearing witness to the uniqueness of Christ as well as being respectful while listening to others.[6] Thus, broadly speaking, interreligious dialogue encompasses discussion and shared activities between people who self-identify with different religious traditions, for the purpose of mutual understanding and bearing witness to the particularities of their faith.

Types, modes and levels of interreligious dialogue

Scholars have applied a wide array of approaches to elucidate the nature and possible content of interreligious dialogue. Roger Schroeder, professor at Catholic Theological Union, mentions four types of dialogue often emphasized in church documents. The first is the *dialogue of life*, which concerns adherents of a religious group who hold no official position within their tradition and simply interact with one another in the context of their daily life. Second, the *dialogue of action* brings Christians and non-Christians together to collaborate for humanitarian purposes, such as responding to natural disasters, relief efforts and common social concerns for the betterment of society. Third, the *dialogue of theological exchange* centres on doctrinal issues and can be entered into by either scholars or ordinary Christians as they to accurately understand each other. Fourth, the *dialogue of religious experience* enables participants of various traditions to come together for prayer, a symbol of interreligious friendship.[7]

In addition to these four types, other scholars have also emphasized *diplomatic interreligious dialogue*, in which religious leaders are the central figures in a formal encounter.[8] Clearly, depending on the context in which the encounter occurs, dialogue can take on completely different meanings and expressions.

In a similar vein, Eric Sharpe narrows the typology to four major kinds of dialogue: discursive, human, secular and interior.[9] In *discursive dialogue*, the primary concern is to learn about other religious traditions. *Human dialogue* takes the interaction a step further, seeking to form relationships between adherents of different religious traditions to gain a deeper understanding of the truth claims embedded in each belief system. *Secular dialogue* centres on socio-political con-

---

3   Leonard Swidler, Khalid Duran, and Reuven Firestone, *Trialogue: Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Dialogue* (New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2007), 7.

4   Terry C. Muck, 'Interreligious Dialogue: Conversations That Enable Christian Witness', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 35, no. 4 (2011), 188.

5   John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2009), 123.

6   *The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action* (https://www.lausanne.org/content/ctcommitment), III. 1.e, 203.

7   Roger P. Schroeder, 'Proclamation and Interreligious Dialogue as Prophetic Dialogue', *Missiology: An International Review* 41, no. 1 (2013): 56.

8   See Marianne Moyaert, 'Interreligious Dialogue', in David Cheetham et al. (eds.), *Understanding Interreligious Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 203.

9   Eric J. Sharpe, 'The Goals of Inter-Religious Dialogue', in John H. Hick (ed.), *Truth and Dialogue in World Religions* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), as cited in Netland, *Dissonant Voices*, 285–89.

cerns that bring people from various traditions together to focus on the struggles that humanity faces. Finally, *interior dialogue* concerns the subjective experiences and understandings of the divine that various religious individuals hold.[10]

In a recent article, Terry Muck affirms that dialogue has an important place in missiological commitments. However, Muck suggests that dialogue is 'only one of many possible ways of relating to people of other traditions'.[11] He introduces five other modes of interaction that should be utilized when appropriate: pronouncement, argumentation, discussion, apologetics and debate. Muck concludes that 'a missional theology of dialogue … must be built on the capacity for human beings to have meaningful conversations with one another.'[12] These are important considerations for constructing an evangelical approach to interreligious dialogue.

Furthermore, interreligious dialogue should be structured into levels of discussion to facilitate its practice. Jerald Gort proposes a fourfold structure for any interreligious encounter. The first level is the 'dialogue of histories', in which a serious analysis of previous socio-political and economic relations between dialogical partners is properly recognized. Such dialogue acknowledges the painful injustices and misguided objections that people have committed against each other in the name of religion. The second tier is the 'dialogue of theologies', which aims to foster respect amongst people of various faiths while removing faulty assumptions based on opinion rather than knowledge. The third level is the 'dialogue of spiritualities', which includes mutual interfaith witnessing of one's experiences of reality and the sacred. Finally, there is the 'dialogue of life', which involves aspects of social concern where various faiths should collaborate towards ameliorating social conditions.[13]

As another means of clarification, Harold Netland differentiates between formal and informal dialogue. The former consists of official events and consultations in which participants of various religious traditions come together to pursue defined objectives. The latter, on the other hand, occurs between two or more followers of different religions in unofficial settings. Netland argues that 'informal dialogue is not only an option for evangelicals but is essential if the proclamation of the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ is to be carried out effectively.'[14] Thus, careful participation in informal interreligious dialogue becomes a vital opportunity for evangelicals not only to broaden their own understanding of the religious other, but also to share their faith convictions and hope in the redeeming work of Christ.

I will conclude this section with a few evaluative remarks. First, the tiers provided by Gort are helpful parameters and principles for structuring interreligious dialogue. An awareness of the history of detrimental interactions between groups is vital for interreligious dialogue to occur authentically. Towards this end, David Shenk notes that, in light of the pain stored in a religious community's collective memory, extending and receiving mutual forgiveness is essen-

---

10 Ibid., 290.

11 Muck, 'Interreligious Dialogue,' 188.

12 Muck, 'Interreligious Dialogue,' 190.

13 Jerald D. Gort, 'The Search for Interreligious Convivance, Ongoing Challenge and Charge', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 29, no. 3 (2008): 758–61.

14 Netland, *Dissonant Voices*, 296.

tial before honest conversation can occur.[15] In fact, when Muslims were asked for ways to improve relations between the United States and Iran, the responses provided could be succinctly summarized in one sentence: 'Apologize for what you have done to us and respect us.'[16] Apologizing for the mistakes and failures of the past may be the first step in building a suitable bridge to proclaiming the hope and transformative grace of Christ in a hostile world.

Second, engaging in informal dialogue can be a healthy sign of one's interest and commitment to breaking down barriers of animosity and ignorance while coming face to face with individuals who need the reconciliation that only Christ can offer. As Netland affirms, 'Informal dialogue can be a demonstration of one's willingness to take the other person seriously as a fellow human being.'[17] Properly carried out, dialogue should not be a stumbling block to evangelicals, but rather an opportunity to witness to the power of the Spirit.

Finally, further discussions on the nature, tasks, objectives and purpose of interreligious dialogue should take place among Christians of all traditions and backgrounds. As will be discussed in the following sections, the debate has often centred on issues of revelation, truth and salvation. As such, evangelicals must resist both drowning in fundamentalist waves of disengagement and being swept up by the pluralist winds of relativity. As Netland wisely states, 'Evangelicals can and should make a contribution to this debate.'[18]

Theological discourse concerning dialogue

At this juncture, one must grapple with the theological question of how to approach interreligious dialogue while maintaining and sharing one's faith convictions. Without mitigating the complexity of the various positions held over time, a brief account of the major Christian perspectives on non-Christian religions helps to clarify the approach needed. Gerald McDermott and Netland distinguish three main approaches to other religions: exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism.[19]

In theological considerations of world religions, evangelicals have generally focused on questions of truth and salvation rather than on matters of revela-

---

15 David W. Shenk, 'The Gospel of Reconciliation Within the Wrath of Nations', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 32, no. 1 (January 2008): 8.
16 Shenk, 'Gospel of Reconciliation', 8.
17 Netland, *Dissonant Voices*, 297.
18 Netland, *Dissonant Voices*, 299.
19 Gerald R. McDermott and Harold A. Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions: An Evangelical Proposal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 12. I will describe only these three options in the paper, even though the traditional paradigm does not include the postmodern or acceptance option. The traditional terms assigned to these three models have received fervent criticism, resulting in various proposed revisions. See Craig Ott and Stephen Strauss, eds., *Encountering Theology of Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010) for further treatment of this issue. Other alternatives have also been proposed, such as Moyaert's particularism, which moves away from the soteriological approach and turns to hermeneutics as a way to appreciate the otherness of the religious other. See Marianne Moyaert, 'Recent Developments in the Theology of Interreligious Dialogue: From Soteriological Openness to Hermeneutical Openness', *Modern Theology* 28, no. 1 (January 2012): 26.

tion.[20] The issue of ultimate truth and salvation has become a point of contention between evangelicals and those holding to more liberal Christian views. Most evangelicals have taken the exclusivist position, affirming three 'non-negotiables'.[21] First, for evangelicals, the authority and final supremacy of Jesus Christ is the normative standard by which other claims to revelation must be assessed. Second, the Christian faith must be centred on the proclamation of the Christ-event. Third, salvation comes through repentance and faith in the redemptive work of Christ, and no one can be saved apart from him. While advocating for these three non-negotiables, exclusivists also hold that God provides truths about himself and humanity through general revelation which may be present in other world religions. Such general revelation may thus provide points of continuity as long as it is consistent with biblical revelation.[22]

Inclusivists, while affirming the first two aforementioned non-negotiables held by exclusivists, differ slightly in their understanding of the final point. For inclusivists, the redeeming work of Christ on the cross is ontologically necessary but not epistemologically necessary. In other words, one need not know about Christ to receive the grace offered through his work on the cross. As Timothy Tennent notes, the best-known articulation of this view comes from a Vatican II document called *Constitution on the Church*.[23] This view articulates a soteriology based on universal access, claiming that people who are not cognizant of the gospel of Christ can be saved if they are aware of God and move toward Him through general revelation.[24]

Pluralists, on the other hand, reject all three non-negotiables. While affirming that every world religion provides a path toward salvation, pluralists also maintain that conflicting truth claims can be reconciled by adopting an experiential rather than a normative vantage point. John Hick, for example, believes that religions 'embody different perceptions and conceptions of, and correspondingly different responses to, the Real from within the major variant ways of being human'.[25] Thus, according to pluralists, Christianity is just one of many religions that provide access to salvation and should not be perceived as holding any final authority over any other belief system.

When Christians are invited to the religious roundtable, discussions on how to approach the religious other can understandably become controversial. Some Christians believe their faith commitments would be compromised through engaging in interreligious dialogue because such conversations, if not closely circumscribed, could lead to syncretism. Others are afraid of offending the religious other by sharing their particular understanding of faith. What then should be the way forward?

20　Clifton Clark, 'Dialogue or Diatribe: Toward a Renewal Approach to Interreligious Conversation,' in Amos Yong and Clifton Clark, eds., *Global Renewal, Religious Pluralism, and The Great Commission* (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2011), 25.

21　Timothy Tennent, *Christianity at the Religious Roundtable* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 16–17.

22　McDermott and Netland have promoted this view in *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*.

23　Tennent, *Christianity at the Religious Roundtable*, 20. This view was also held by Catholic theologian Karl Rahner and Protestants John Sanders and Clark Pinnock.

24　Craig Ott, *Theology of Missions,* 298.

25　John H. Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 240.

One recent approach to interreligious dialogue is Amos Yong's 'pneumatological approach',[26] which goes beyond a Christocentric paradigm and locates the Holy Spirit as a cosmic divine presence that extends beyond the ecclesiastical boundaries of the visible church. Yong maintains that as opposed to framing the discussion around Christology, a 'foundational pneumatology' should guide interreligious dialogue. That is, one must see God, self, and the world in a way inspired by the movement of the Spirit.[27] In short, Yong argues that the particularities of the Christ-event should be heightened by the universality of the Spirit. This approach is beneficial in its emphasis on God's power to draw people to himself through the Spirit in ways we may not be fully aware or cognizant of. Ignoring this reality could lead to a fundamentalist perspective in which we become the arbiters and judges of finality. However, Yong's approach has also received a fair share of criticism, particularly due to his inherent lack of a Christocentric focus, which could ultimately open the door to relativism.

Tennent, on the other hand, keeps Christology at the centre of the discussion. He proposes that 'the way forward is to embrace our convictions regarding the truthfulness and uniqueness of the Christian gospel while fully engaging in honest, open interactions with members of other religious traditions.' Tennent suggests the term 'engaged exclusivist' as a preferred orientation for the evangelical seeking to dialogue with the religious other. That is, while affirming the three non-negotiables, Christians should also emphasize a 'more open stance regarding general revelation as a *preparatio evangelica'* and seek to become missiologically intentional and focused.[28] Without denying the complexities at play, Tennent argues that Christians can indeed maintain and express their faith without having to suspend or ignore their own convictions in the process.

Contrasting two divergent positions can help us draw some preliminary conclusions. Paul Knitter, a Catholic theologian and one of the leading voices among pluralists, describes 'interreligious dialogue as the confrontation with utter, bewildering, often threatening *differences* and at the same time, the *trust* that such differences are, for the most part, friendly rather than hostile'.[29] On the other hand, the late John Stott, a widely respected representative of the evangelical community and an exclusivist, believed that just as there is 'an important place for "dialogue" with men of other faiths … there is also a need for "encounter" with them, and even for "confrontation"'.[30] Interestingly, both leaders utilize the word 'confrontation' in their discussion of interreligious dialogue. Although this term may sound alarming in today's fragmented world, it also highlights an important point of departure for engaging credibly in interreligious dialogue.

Stott chose the word *confrontation* to imply that in dialogue one must not only listen to the other, but also seek to disclose the inadequacies and falsities of the non-Christian religion in order to demonstrate the truth and finality of the

---

26   Clark, 'Dialogue or Diatribe', 30.
27   Clark, 'Dialogue or Diatribe', 30.
28   Tennent, *Christianity at the Religious Roundtable*, 26.
29   Paul F. Knitter, 'Interreligious Dialogue: What? Why? How?' in Christoffer H. Grundmann (ed.), *Interreligious Dialogue: An Anthology of Voices Bridging Cultural and Religious Divides* (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2015), 25.
30   Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 105.

Lord Jesus Christ. For Knitter, however, confrontation does not mean the bifurcation of truth into opposite polarizations. Rather, it should serve as a means of awareness that our knowledge and experience of God are only partial. Therefore, 'we must be open to discovering other parts'[31] in the quest for truth. In other words, Knitter argues that interreligious dialogue serves to complement one's perspective of reality since 'dialogue is not the conviction that you are lost without my understanding of truth, but that there is something missing in your life until you have seen what I have seen.'[32]

For the evangelical Christian, however, confrontation need not be understood as either an attack or an effort to complement what is missing in one's epistemological and theological self-understanding. Rather, confrontation should be considered as a prophetic encounter, an 'engaged exclusivism' that comes face to face with another to reveal the power, hope and glory found in Christ. In this confrontation, one remains open to discovering new insights from the dialogue partner but holds on to the non-negotiable commitment that the only path to salvation is through the redemptive work of Christ on the cross.

Ultimately, the *telos* or goal of all theological and doctrinal discussions should be to glorify God. To do so requires what Schroeder calls a 'prophetic dialogue',[33] entailing a 'spirit of listening, learning, respect, and empathy' along with 'honesty, conviction, faith, and courage to speak the truth as one knows it.'[34] In this way, prophetic engagement with the religious other centres on critiquing that which is contrary to God's reign in every cultural system.

This result is unlikely if we enter into dialogue with a hard-nosed exclusivism, with the sole purpose of bearing witness to our own faith. Rather, we should anticipate a dynamic exchange in which each party is enriched by interacting with the other, and through which all participants both give and receive and are mutually challenged. The benefit of such reciprocity is that stereotypes and misunderstandings are dispelled. Each time we engage in conversations with the religious other, we enter into an opportunity for both enrichment and challenge, delving more deeply into theological understandings that formulate better questions and offer more adequate answers.

By way of summary, first, a Christocentric approach should be at the forefront of the discussion for Christians in dialogue, but it should be positioned within a Trinitarian framework, as Tennent and Yong advise. Our affirmation of Christ as Lord and Saviour of the world must not be diluted (Jn 14:6), but we should also acknowledge the role of the sending Father whose prevenient grace works in people's hearts in ways of which we may not even be aware, continually drawing people to Himself (Jn 6:44). Finally, we must heed the Spirit who guides us into all truth, recognizing that the Spirit moves in ways and in places that are least expected (Jn 16:13–14).

Second, the use of apologetics is certainly necessary in any interreligious dialogue encounter. We should not only develop the skill of listening and seek-

---

31 Knitter, 'Interreligious Dialogue', 30.
32 Knitter, 'Interreligious Dialogue', 29.
33 Schroeder, *Proclamation and Interreligious Dialogue*, 57.
34 Schroeder, *Proclamation and Interreligious Dialogue*, 57.

ing to understand but should also acquire the proper tools that will help us 'give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have' (I Peter 3:15). McDermott and Netland contend that appropriate forms of apologetics are an essential part of Christian witness. However, they also advise wisely that 'given the deep ethnic, cultural, and religious tensions in our world today, those engaging in interreligious dialogue must be especially careful not to inflame such tensions unnecessarily.'[35] Thus, a defence of the gospel must be presented in a spirit of humility, patience and love.

Finally, our understanding of the way to salvation (soteriology) must not be divorced from a proper understanding of the church's function (ecclesiology). Focusing only on soteriology can become reductionistic and can imply that we are interested only in making converts, not disciples. Although maintaining the evangelical non-negotiables is essential, our approach must be engaging, prophetic, and dynamic in scope and must remain connected to the overarching mission of the church.

Missiological and dialogical implications

In a constantly changing world, Christians must learn how to 'surf the wave without falling into the ocean', as the Buddhist monk Khenpo Sodargye has said. We are called to the faithful exercise of theological reflection and interreligious dialogue in a world where faith claims and religious traditions often clash. I close this essay with reflections on the missiological implications of relating to and dialoguing with individuals who profess a different faith.

First, *everyone is worthy of respect and dignity, regardless of what they believe.* In a diverse and fragmented world, we must continually care for and love our neighbours. The fact that every human being has been created in God's image has serious implications for respecting and honouring others. As Richard Mouw has stated, 'In affirming the stranger, we are honoring the image of God.'[36] Affirming the religious other requires us to develop 'an attitude of empathy, repentance, forgiveness, and willingness to be forgiven, even for the things for which we do not feel responsible.'[37] Christians must make the most of every opportunity to dispel the stench of hostility ingrained in assumptions about the religious other. Instead, we should develop a sense of love for dialogue driven by 'many cups of tea—and the Holy Spirit.'[38]

Second, *to fail to understand the faith claims of other religions will prevent us from keeping up with the changing context of the modern world.* Not long ago, while visiting a mosque, I met a Muslim couple who gladly welcomed me into their place of worship. After spending nearly three hours in dialogue with this couple, seeking to learn more about Islam while sharing my personal faith, I felt both overwhelmed and enriched by the experience. I was reminded that my faith should not be locked up inside a vault but should be shared with others, includ-

---

35 McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 288.
36 Richard Mouw, quoted in McDermott and Netland, *A Trinitarian Theology of Religions*, 272.
37 J. Dudley Woodberry, 'Terrorism, Islam, and Mission: Reflections of a Guest in Muslim Lands', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 26, no. 1 (January 2002): 6.
38 Shenk, 'The Gospel of Reconciliation', 4.

ing those who adhere to a completely different belief system. As Tennent affirms, 'Christianity is a faith for the world. It flourishes when challenged by unbelief, ridicule, and skepticism.'[39] Ignoring the challenges inherent in our changing context snuffs out opportunities for us to grow in our own faith. It would be easier to remain isolated from other religious traditions, but this is a pathway to xenophobia. Christ has commissioned us to the higher calling of loving our neighbour, including the religious other.

Third, *interreligious dialogue calls for a deep sense of commitment and patience in listening to one another.* In the modern, fluid and globalized religious context, we need more than ever a humble spirit that engages the religious other with a commitment to listening and learning before seeking to be heard. With John Stott, we affirm that 'dialogue is a token of genuine Christian love, because it indicates our steadfast resolve to rid our minds of the prejudices which we may entertain about other people.'[40] As we strive to understand other faiths, we must be ready, as Netland asserts, 'to reject violence and the abuse of power in witness'.[41] We must also actively reject faulty, preconceived notions about others that are often accompanied by prejudice and discrimination, resulting in unnecessary misunderstandings. As Terry Muck notes, 'Dialogue cannot take place in a climate of hostility but only in a climate of love.'[42]

Finally, *despite the differences and the heterogeneity of religions around the globe, certain elements in each religion are worthy of respect and may help to renew our own faith commitments.* In Islam, for example, the motivation for worship clearly arises out of a deep sense of devotion and desire to connect with the divine. We can be inspired and challenged by Muslims' desire for unity, zest for uniformity, pursuit of purity, and passion for divine revelation. Similarly, the ideals most prominent in Buddhism—compassion, emptiness, selflessness and detachment—can remind Christians to more diligently take up their cross, deny themselves and follow Jesus more closely.

One does not need any special prophetic inspiration to realize that multiple religions will continue to exist. Finding ways to navigate the subtle streams of bigotry and the turbulent storms of relativism that surround us is imperative for evangelical Christians. We must continually remember that, regardless of the culture or climate around us, we are called to stand firm and 'hold fast to the teachings passed on' to us (2 Thess 2:15). This call, however, is not simply to stand up for what we believe. We must also stand in the gap on behalf of a globalized world that desperately needs the hope and peace offered only in Jesus Christ. Ultimately, interreligious dialogue is a means by which Christians can attempt to build bridges of mutual understanding as we travel along the 'narrow road'. Perhaps in this way we can help to tear down the walls we have constructed around our 'city on a hill' so that all may see the glory of our King.

---

39 Tennent, *Christianity at the Religious Roundtable*, 11.
40 Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 122.
41 Harold A. Netland, *Christianity and Religious Diversity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 241.
42 Muck, 'Interreligious Dialogue', 192.

Faith, Hope, Love and Jesus' Lordship: A Simple Synthesis of Christianity

Andrew Messmer

Capturing the essential nature of the Christian faith in a simple phrase or set of ideas is valuable for several reasons: to keep our Christian life balanced, to evaluate our behaviour, and to explain to inquirers or new Christians what we believe and how we live out Christian obedience. Drawing on a series of illustrations from Scripture and church history, Andrew Messmer suggests describing Christianity in terms of a familiar triad: faith, hope and love.

As Christians, we do and believe many things: we go to church, interpret Scripture, meditate on Jesus, seek to serve and witness to those around us, and so on. For many of us, these can become isolated beliefs and practices that are not fully integrated with each other. When we approach Christianity in this way, we fail to see it as a coherent and comprehensive system of inter-connected beliefs and practices. Accordingly, I believe it is beneficial for us to seek ways to synthesize the Christian faith in simple fashion.

In this article, I suggest that beneath Christianity's multi-faceted realities lies a very satisfying and simple logic: much of what we believe and do can be summarized by the three theological virtues of faith, hope and love, which are themselves encompassed in one of the earliest and simplest confessions of faith: 'Jesus is Lord!' I will define these three virtues, show how they appear in different Christian beliefs and practices, and demonstrate their internal unity as different aspects contained in our confession of Jesus' lordship. My aim is to help Christians and churches comprehend and communicate their Christian faith more clearly, and to open up new avenues for theological reflection and synthesis.

Theological virtues

Although many Protestants—especially those of the low-church and evangelical variety—do not realize it, for several centuries most Christians have recognized that the three theological virtues of faith, hope and love lie at the centre of the Christian faith. The key biblical text in support of this set of virtues is 1 Corinthians 13:13, 'So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love' (ESV), but there are many other similar texts as well.[1]

---

1   For other triadic texts (although some with expansions), see Rom 5:1–5; Gal 5:5–6; Eph 4:1–6;

Andrew Messmer (PhD, Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Belgium) is associate professor at the Facultad Internacional de Teología IBSTE (Barcelona, Spain) and academic dean of the master's program at Seminario Teológico de Sevilla (Seville, Spain).

As a step towards defining these virtues concretely, let us note an interesting feature that they all share. Faith, hope and love can all be understood from the perspective of the subject or from the perspective of the object. That is, they can refer to the person who is believing, hoping and loving or to what we place our faith, hope and love in. This subject–object ambiguity (or better, fulness) appears in Scripture in expressions such as "the righteousness of God" (Rom 1:17) and "the love of Christ" (2 Cor 5:14). Thus, each virtue contains two poles that exist in a dynamic relationship, and the specific meaning of each term depends on the particular context.

Faith can refer to the act of belief (what we do) or the object of what one believes (God and his gospel). Hope can refer to confident expectation and steadfast persistence (what we do), or the object of what one hopes in (God and his promises). Last, love can refer to a disposition towards, or preference for, something or someone (what we do) or the object that one's love desires to achieve (God himself).

Dividing Christian belief and practice into faith, hope and love does not mean that the three are isolated from one another. On the contrary, they can lead to and depend on each other. Perhaps it would be helpful to understand these virtues within a *perichoretic* light, just as we think of the three persons of the Trinity—in other words, they can be distinguished from each other but are also characterized by inter-penetration.

I will now show how this set of theological virtues can provide the basis, unity, and logic of many aspects of Christian faith and life.

Traditional catechetical texts

In his *Enchiridion*, Augustine argued that the three theological virtues correspond to three well-known texts: faith to the Apostles' Creed, hope to the Lord's Prayer, and love to the Ten Commandments. The genius of this system lies in the fact that each article, petition and commandment of these texts functions *synecdochally*—in other words, each part stands for a greater whole. Thus, the whole of Christian doctrine, spirituality and ethics can be subsumed under these three texts, allowing both the simple and the more advanced to meditate on the same texts and apply them as their respective abilities and maturity levels allow. This approach became the basis for catechetical instruction in the West and has continued into the present for many Christian traditions. We will look briefly at these virtue–text pairings.

Faith corresponds to the Apostles' Creed, because this creed can be seen as a systematic and comprehensive (although not exhaustive) presentation of the New Testament proclamation (Greek *kerygma*), which is nothing less than the gospel itself.[2] Therefore, faith can be described as believing in the God whose person and work are described in the Apostles' Creed.

Col 1:4–5; 1 Thess 1:3; 5:8 (cf. Is 59:17); Heb 6:10–12; 10:22–24; 1 Pet 1:3–8, 21–22. Since the triad is so widely used, some have argued that it is a very early formula that could go back to Jesus himself; see e.g. A. M. Hunter, *Paul and His Predecessors* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1961), 33–35.

2   For a fuller explanation of the connection between the Apostles' Creed and the New Testament *kerygma*, cf. my 'The Apostolic *Kerygma* and the Apostles' Creed: A Study in Compatibility,' *St. Vladimir's Theological Journal* 62, no. 4 (2018): 373–81. Others have expressed a similar view; for example, Alister McGrath writes, 'The Apostles' Creed is a splendid summary of the apostolic teaching concerning the gospel.' McGrath, *I Believe: Exploring the Apostles' Creed* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 1997), 12.

Similarly, hope corresponds to the Lord's Prayer, which is structured around six or seven[3] petitions that express biblical hope in different ways. What unites them is their confident expectation in God and his promises. Although all prayer is an expression of hope, this prototypical prayer, the one given by Jesus to teach believers how to pray (cf. Lk 11:1), provides us with the best expression of biblical hope.[4]

Finally, love corresponds to the Ten Commandments. As Jesus and his apostles stated, the whole Law can be summarized in two commandments: love God and love others (e.g. Mk 12:29–31; Rom 13:8–10; Jam 2:8). Although eight of the ten Commandments are stated negatively as prohibitions, Jesus and his apostles understood love to be a positive requirement, thereby allowing each of the Ten Commandments to be understood both negatively and positively (e.g. Matt 7:12; Eph 4:20–32).[5]

Early church life

Although I would not want to press the imagery too far, I think it is fair to suggest that the elements of faith, hope and love are found in the summary statement of early church life in Acts 2:42. Teaching corresponds to faith, prayers (and possibly the breaking of bread) to hope, and fellowship to love. The benefit of this connection is that it unites catechetical instruction with church life in a very practical way: catechizing can be seen as teaching people about church life.

Prosper of Aquitaine's formula

Beginning in seminal form with Prosper of Aquitaine (a follower of Augustine), it has been custom to use the formula *lex orandi lex credendi*, which roughly means 'what we pray (or how we worship) is what we believe'. Later, the formula was amplified by some to include a third component, *lex vivendi*, thereby making the whole phrase mean 'what we pray is what we believe, which in turn guides how we live.' The point is that there is an inherent connection between the Church's praying, believing and living. The connections between this formula and the three theological virtues are clear: faith refers to *lex credendi*, hope to *lex orandi*, and love to *lex vivendi*.

Spiritual interpretation of Scripture

From the earliest times of the Christian church, many believers have interpreted Scripture in other than strictly literal ways (see e.g. Gal 4:21–31). By the Middle

---

3   Enumerations differ, depending on whether 'lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil' is treated as one request or two.

4   Some have attempted to demonstrate that the Psalms can be organized under the different topics treated in the Lord's Prayer, which would be a good argument in favor of incorporating them into the catechetical process as well. Although this works well for some psalms, I understand the Psalms as more than just prayers, embracing other functions such as teaching.

5   Some have argued that the Sermon on the Mount is a useful complement to the Ten Commandments, since it explicitly internalizes what many see as an externalizing tendency in the Ten Commandments. Like the Psalms, the Sermon on the Mount is thus a particularly valuable component of catechetical instruction.

Ages, biblical interpretation was systematized and divided into its 'literal' and 'spiritual' senses, with the latter containing three distinct aspects: allegorical, tropological and anagogical. Allegorical interpretation referred to the theological meaning of a text and told Christians what to believe (faith), often finding its fulfilment in Christ or the church; tropological interpretation referred to the moral or ethical meaning of a text and told the church how to live (love); and anagogical interpretation referred to the eschatological meaning of a text and told the church what eternity would be like (hope).[6]

Christ's offices

Beginning with John Calvin's 1545 edition of his *Catechism*, it has been customary to speak of Christ in terms of his threefold office as prophet, priest and king. Christ as prophet means that he is our new lawgiver and teaches us how to live. Christ as priest means that he is our intermediary between us and God and our mutual representative. Christ as king means that he rules over all (including his primary enemies—Satan, sin and death), and that we owe him our allegiance as citizens of his kingdom. Once again, I believe there are parallels to our three theological virtues: faith corresponds to Christ's kingship as we declare our allegiance to him and his gospel, hope to Christ's priesthood since he is the true pray-er and intermediary between us and God, and love to Christ's prophetic office since he teaches us how to live according to the law of love.[7]

One could also suggest that the three traditional theories of the meaning of Christ's atonement can correspond to faith, hope and love. The *Christus victor* theory, which refers to Christ's kingly victory over evil forces, corresponds to faith in that he frees us from bondage and slavery and allows us to confess allegiance to him. The penal substitutionary theory, which emphasizes Christ's priestly satisfaction of God's wrath, embodies hope in that we have a firm confidence in God's promises to forgive us through the intermediary work of his Son. Finally, the moral influence theory, which features what Christ's death prophetically teaches us about the love of God, corresponds to love.

Church practices

Although I will not enter the debate over how many 'sacraments' or 'ordinances' there are, we can agree that many Christians acknowledge three practices as lying near the centre of church life: baptism, the Eucharist, and confession (or repentance). In baptism, one expresses one's faith in the triune God—normally in the form of a recitation of the Apostles' or Nicene-Constantinople Creed—and is received into the church.[8] The Eucharist is where one identifies with and receives the ben-

---

6   Incidentally, I believe that we could benefit from applying this same ancient (or better, apostolic) hermeneutic today.

7   Christ's three offices also roughly correspond to three key components of his incarnational work: his life corresponds to his prophetic office as teacher (love), his death corresponds to his priestly office as sacrifice (hope), and his resurrection corresponds to his kingly office as victorious king (faith).

8   It should also be remembered that beginning early in church history, exorcism was connected

efit of Christ's death. In confession, we forsake sin and turn again to righteousness.

We can capsulize the significance of these practices in terms of the three theological virtues: faith corresponds to the belief in and commitment to the Christian faith that are expressed at baptism;[9] hope corresponds to the Eucharist through its connection to Christ's second coming and as an anticipation of the eschatological meal we will have with him at his return; love corresponds to the penitent's confession of having broken God's law and of desiring to turn back to the path of love.

Summary and further unity

I believe there are still more ways in which faith, hope and love can illustrate the basis, unity and logic of different aspects of Christian faith and life,[10] but the examples given above should illustrate the point well. However, if you are like me, perhaps you are wondering if faith, hope, and love can be unified further into a single reality. I think they can be, and I think that what unifies them is one of Christianity's oldest confessions: 'Jesus is Lord!' (Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 8:6; 12:3; 2 Cor 4:5; Phil 2:11). Briefly, I would like to show how this confession includes aspects of faith, hope and love.

To confess Jesus is Lord is a theological declaration of faith. As Oscar Cullmann and others have shown, this confession and others like it in the New Testament summarize Christian doctrine as it developed within the first century.[11] This simple confession, and all that it implied with respect to God, Jesus' death and resurrection, the sending of the Spirit, and the formation of the Church, can be seen as the backbone of the New Testament *kerygma*, which itself finds expression in the Apostles' Creed. The confession 'Jesus as Lord!' is the gospel in its most succinct form.

To confess Jesus is Lord is also an expression of hope. This Jesus was crucified and accursed of God, but Christians proclaim him as the resurrected one and await his second coming! The entirety of Christian hope is based on the sure belief

---

with baptism, which evokes the idea of authority and kingship.

9   I do not mean to imply that baptism is *only* a subjective expression of faith; it can also be seen as an objective reception of God's grace. Also, whether one believes in the practice of infant baptism or believers' baptism, the point remains that *someone* is confessing *something* at baptism, thereby making faith present somehow.

10   For example, three of the historical Protestant traditions can be viewed through the lens of their predominant tendencies with respect to the three theological virtues: the Reformed tradition focused on doctrine, and thus on faith; the Lutheran tradition focused on justification, and thus on hope; the Anabaptist tradition focused on Christian living, and thus on love. Taking a broader perspective, the Christian traditions can be seen through the same lens: Protestants focus on confessions of faith and biblical exposition, and thus on faith; Catholics focus on the sacraments, and thus on hope; and Orthodox focus on deification, and thus love. (For an understanding of deification as 'Christians shar[ing] in the Son's relationship to the Father', see Donald Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity: An Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009], xiv; cf. 6–9). Finally, there may be some connection to three typical personalities in the church: teachers focus on doctrine, and thus faith; mystics focus on the beatific vision, and thus hope; pastors focus on shepherding people, and thus love.

11   Cf. Oscar Cullmann, *Les premières confessions de foi chrétiennes* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948); Ethelbert Stauffer, *Die Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1948), 212–34, 316; Vernon Neufeld, *The Earliest Christian Confessions* (Leiden: Brill, 1963).

that, even though we do not see his kingdom in its fulness, God has raised him from the dead and made him the first fruits of our resurrection as well as the restoration of the whole of creation. To confess Jesus is Lord is to proclaim that our reality is connected to Jesus' reality, no matter what the current situation may be.

Finally, to confess Jesus is Lord is an expression of love. If he really is Lord, then we are his servants, called to imitate his life. As the New Testament amply demonstrates (e.g. Jn 13:1), Jesus' life, teachings and death had love as their source and goal. If Jesus fulfils the Law, and if the Law is love, then Jesus is the fulfilment of love itself, and we are called to follow our Lord by imitating him.

Thus, the three theological virtues of faith, hope and love are simply different applications of the one, singular confession of the Church, that Jesus is Lord. This is, in my opinion, what unites Christian belief and practice.

Summary chart: faith, hope and love throughout Christian thought and experience

1 Cor 13:13	Catechetical texts	Acts 2:42	Prosper of Aquitaine	Spiritual interpretation	Christ's offices	Atonement theories	Church practices
Faith	Apostles' Creed (and other creeds)	Teaching	*lex credendi*	Allegorical (Christ/church)	King	*Christus victor*	Baptism (and exorcism)
Hope	Lord's Prayer (and the Psalms)	Prayers (breaking of bread?)	*lex orandi*	Anagogical (future)	Priest	penal substitutionary	Eucharist
Love	Ten Commandments (and Sermon on the Mount)	Fellowship	*lex vivendi*	Tropological (moral)	Prophet	moral influence	Confession (repentance or penance)

Other possibilities (see note 10 for explanations of the last three):
- Christ's incarnational work: life = prophet (love); death = priest (hope); resurrection = king (faith)
- Protestant traditions: Reformed = faith; Lutheran = hope; Anabaptist = love
- Christian traditions: Protestant = faith; Catholic = hope; Orthodox = love
- Church offices/personalities: teacher = faith; mystic = hope; pastor = love

Books Reviewed

Michael W. Goheen, *The Church and Its Vocation:*
Lesslie Newbigin's Missionary Ecclesiology

Gene L. Green, Stephen T. Pardue, and K. K. Yeo (eds.),
All Things New: Eschatology in the Majority World

Patrick Gray and Amy Peeler, *Hebrews: An Introduction and Study Guide*

Samuel T. Logan, *The Good Name*

The Church and Its Vocation:
Lesslie Newbigin's Missionary Ecclesiology
Michael W. Goheen

Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018
Pb., 220 pp.

Reviewed by Jem Hovil, associate mission partner,
BCMS/Crosslinks and director, BUILD Partners

How can the church awaken from the spell of cultural enchantment and announce the true gospel? The great missiologist Lesslie Newbigin (1909–1998), whose works spanned six decades, was perhaps more capable of answering that question than anyone of his time.

Michael Goheen could be Newbigin's most competent interpreter. Goheen claims to have read all Newbigin's writings at least once and in chronological order, along with much of what Newbigin himself read.

The book title might suggest that Newbigin's 'missionary' ecclesiology is one part of a broader repertoire, but it quickly becomes clear that this was not only his singular view of the church but also the centre-piece of his praxis. Goheen provides an outstanding distillation of and introduction to Newbigin's thought, as well as an entry point to the discussions triggered by the Gospel and Our Culture movement (which Goheen proposes to address in a subsequent publication).

Because Newbigin insisted 'that the church may only be understood in terms of God's mission' (p. 7), the topic of this study is approached as a life-and-death matter for our churches. Six of the seven chapters are paired together to elucidate that conviction. Chapters 1 and 2 consider Scripture and gospel, presenting Newbigin's insistence that the biblical story is universal, cosmic history—the one true story of the world.

Forged through missionary experience, Newbigin's understanding of the nature and shape of the Bible is informative and challenging. He critiques both liberal and evangelical hermeneutics and draws attention to the Bible as story in the ultimate sense. His discussion is provocative, calling for the rethinking of key themes such as election.

Newbigin had a broad but tightly focused understanding of the gospel, according to which Jesus revealed God's kingdom purposes in ways that created a set of tensions (for example, 'hidden in the present … manifest in the future', p. 46). Goheen offers useful mini-frameworks that allow readers to explore specific sub-topics, such as Newbigin's view of the Holy Spirit and his five images for considering the cross. All these depictions move the work forward, reinforcing the church's witness to the presence of the kingdom as defining 'its very existence as missionary'.

Chapters 3 and 4 consider the life of the church, in the world and together as a community. Goheen places Newbigin on the scene during the development of the *missio Dei* language, with an insistence on mission as proceeding from the triune God. His clear thinking set him apart from others who were less Christ-honouring and more vulnerable to cultural winds. Newbigin stressed that the articulation of God's mission and that of the church must be kept in close relation to the biblical story.

Newbigin was magisterial in his ability to speak decisively on specifics, bridge tensions, and maintain breadth. Goheen explains how Newbigin navigated the threats to evangelism posed by the broadening understanding of mission. In doing so, he makes a helpful distinction between mission as a *dimension* of the church's whole life and as the *intention* of certain activities. Newbigin's insistence on verbal communication of the gospel in evangelism guards against mission drift whilst we still maintain 'all kinds of witness' (p. 78).

Goheen outlines how Newbigin believed such missional life can be nourished: the internal life of the church should lead to external witness. Newbigin held in tension the relationship between the church gathered and scattered, assessing the role of ecclesial structures on the basis of the church's new situation in the West—as a mission field—and contending that the structures of Christendom must be reformed to serve that mission. (In one of his occasional respectful criticisms, Goheen calls into question Newbigin's rather general discussion of this proposed transformation of structures.)

Chapters 5 and 6 turn to the missionary encounter with culture—first through Newbigin's decades in India, then in relation to Western culture. How can churches witness within their own cultures, each of which have their own story that differs from the Bible's one true story? If authentic, that encounter leads to tension and conflict, which means considering how churches can be both *for* and *against* the world. Newbigin's experience of returning to the West warns us against restricting such reflection and action to non-Western cultures. Accordingly, chapter 6 equips us to recognize idols in our own cultures, including Western ones.

Finally, Goheen considers Newbigin's legacy in eight areas, culminating with a call for the much-needed 'unanxious witness' that flows from Newbigin's understanding of the mission of the triune God: 'following in Christ's way, with the same trust in the work of the Father throughout history and the same faith in the power of the Spirit working in his words and deeds' (p. 216).

The book is a dense read and at times readers might wish for more biography, detailed exposition or critique, but one strength of this work is its compactness—especially when compared to Goheen's 250,000-word doctoral dissertation, which

certainly reinforces his candidacy to be the foremost living interpreter of this crucial modern Christian figure.

All Things New: Eschatology in the Majority World
Edited by Gene L. Green, Stephen T. Pardue, and K. K. Yeo

Cumbria, UK: Langham Global Library, 2019
Pb., 159 pp., index

Reviewed by Peirong Lin, Research Coordinator of the
Theological Concerns Department, World Evangelical Alliance

This book is the newest addition to the Majority World Theology series. The twentieth century saw a focus on eschatology (i.e. understanding of the end) as well as an explosive growth of Christianity in the majority world. The editors of this series argue that in many ways, the growth, dynamics and self-understanding of Christians in the majority world are related to the eschatological thinking they embrace. However, literature on eschatology has generally been centred on the West, and contextualized reflection on the topic in the majority world has been lacking.

This volume seeks to respond to that omission, containing essays by theologians in Africa, Asia and Latin America who reflect on eschatology in their different contexts.

First, D. Stephen Long provides an overview of the impact of Christian eschatology in modern society. While outlining the perceived failures and controversies involved, he argues that eschatology remains necessary for ethics. One's eschatology should be the result of an understanding of the end that is based on the 'fullness of a worshipful vision'. Such a vision is not about escapism, indifference of withdrawal, but rather offers new possibilities for acting consistently with the vision that has been partially unveiled.

James Henry Owino Kombo attempts to apply an African worldview to eschatology. Key aspects of the African worldview relevant to eschatology, in Kombo's opinion, include (1) the approach to death, dying and living on; (2) ancestors, spirits and divinities; and (3) the understanding of time. Taking seriously these cultural traditions will allow them to '(1) see how pre-Christian Africans responded to these categories, (2) to view these notions and experiences as worthy ideas that are capable of being submitted to theological reflection in any forum, and (3) to bring unique African questions and responses to the global theological conversation.'

John D. K. Keam critically examines Revelation 21:1–4 from an African perspective. After doing exegesis on this text, he evaluates the impact of these verses on the Ghanaian/African terrain and argues for an interpretation that takes one's reality seriously, moving beyond mere anthropocentric concerns. He argues for an approach that is 'ecocentric and deeply rooted in the agenda of the sovereign triune God'. One implication of this is the understanding of eternity from a cyclical perspective. The 'sovereign God holds the past, present and future, bringing them together in a relationship of mutual interdependence.'

The fourth essay shifts to Latin America. Alberto F. Roldan traces the development of eschatology from classic dispensationalism to Jurgen Moltmann's theology of hope. Interestingly, he does so by reviewing music as well as texts. For him, a futuristic understanding of eschatology should result in the transformation of present situations of injustice, poverty and marginalization into justice, human dignity and solidarity.

Next, Nelson R. Morales Fredes considers how understandings of the kingdom of God influence the functions of the church in Latin America. Using Mark 1:14–15 and the Nicene Creed as his starting points, Fredes focuses on four important Latin American theological viewpoints: traditional Catholicism, liberation theology, the Latin America liberation fraternity (in which the kingdom of God is a central and unifying theme for eschatology), and dispensationalism. He concludes that 'the kingdom of God is present and manifest today through the ministry of Jesus' disciples who are empowered by the presence of the Holy Spirit.'

The last two essays come from Asia. Aldrin Peñamora argues that asking the question 'Who is Christ for us today?' is particularly useful for Christians in Asia as they engage with issues of public or socio-political relevance. Jesus and his life and death form the centre of God's eschatological kingdom. As he dies on the cross, a symbol of 'periphery', the church should do likewise and 'stretch out their hands in defense of the poor and vulnerable'.

Finally, Shirley S. Ho explores the prevalent eschatological inclinations in Taiwan, pointing to the prominence of Jewish-centred eschatology. For her, this means the inclusion of elements such as literal fulfilment of Scripture and a privileged status for the Jews. As an alternative that takes the Taiwanese context seriously, Ho suggests the use of 'ta-tung', a concept of harmony that permeates Taiwanese culture. She provides a reappropriation of this concept, infusing it with Christological and ecclesiological underpinnings.

This book provides many valuable contemporary examples of the varied ways in which eschatological beliefs affect Christian thinking and action in the majority world. It is a good starting point for a truly contextualized understanding of eschatology. The book should inspire readers to evaluate critically their personal eschatological understandings and the impact of those views on how they live.

Hebrews: An Introduction and Study Guide
Patrick Gray and Amy Peeler

London and New York: T&T Clark, 2020
Pb., vi + 105 pp., bibliography, index

Reviewed by Abeneazer G. Urga, Ph.D. candidate,
Columbia International University, USA

Patrick Gray, professor of religious studies at Rhodes College, and Amy Peeler, associate professor of New Testament at Wheaton College, provide a helpful contribution as part of the *T&T Clark Study Guides to the New Testament* series.

The authors begin with the perennial question of authorship. Luke and especially Paul stand out, in the opinions of early church fathers, as the most likely candidates. Since the Reformation, however, Pauline authorship has been a minority view. Although both Hebrews and Paul highlight Jesus as creator and the importance of faith, their style, language and theological motifs are at variance with each other. Moreover, the lack of Jewish-Gentile tensions in Hebrews and the absence of internal evidence for Pauline authorship make this option unlikely. However, the author was likely a second-generation, Jewish male Christian who was highly educated in the Hellenistic setting.

The addressees are not explicitly mentioned in the letter, but one early manuscript (P46) contains a superscript indicating that it was written 'to the Hebrews'. Gray and Peeler conclude that the recipients were a second-generation, mixed Jewish and Gentile audience, probably at Rome, who had endured persecution in the past but were struggling to mature. A likely reason for writing the letter was that the addressees were falling into a 'spiritual lethargy' and needing to be reminded of 'the gravity of their situation' and that Jesus is better than their struggles (p. 11).

The commentary focuses on God as the main speaker in the epistle's first six chapters. Hebrews 1:1–2:18 paints Christ as the Word and the Son, superior to the antecedent Scriptures and the angels. As a result of his mediatorial suffering, Jesus identifies with the seed of Abraham and is able to offer assistance. Hebrews 3:1–4:13 delineates Jesus' superiority to Moses. Israel's journey in the wilderness is discussed so as to warn the audience not to repeat the mistakes of the wanderers by hardening their hearts. Heeding the Spirit's voice will enable them to enter God's rest and avoid God's wrath.

Hebrews 4:14–5:10 presents Jesus as the great high priest who has made a way for believers to access God's throne with confidence. The authors echo David Moffitt's argument that the resurrection brought about Christ's perfection. Contrary to the imperfect Levitical priestly order, Jesus' superior priesthood is in 'the order of Melchizedek.' In Hebrews 5:11–6:20, the immaturity of the audience comes to light. The author highlights that they are children feeding on milk instead of consuming solid food as mature believers. He urges them to grow up and be faithful in their pilgrimage with Christ and become discerning. If the believers continue to be immature and become apostate, they are attempting to crucify Jesus again by mocking the 'once-for-all efficacy of [his] sacrificial death' (p. 35). Instead, believers should mimic the example of Abraham, who was faithful during unfavourable times.

From chapter 7 onward, the commentary features the themes of priesthood and covenant. Hebrews 7:1–28 presents the superiority of the priesthood of Melchizedek over the Levitical one, thus demonstrating that Jesus' priesthood is superior because he is of the order of Melchizedek. Hebrews 8:1–10:18 intimates that Jesus is a superior high priest who ministers at the right hand of God because the covenant he mediates is more perfect than the first covenant. Also, Jesus' sacrifice was unique compared to the repetitions and imperfect sacrifices of the previous order. Hebrews 10:19–11:30 stresses the need for active fellowship with one another and approaching God with faith. Neglecting fellowship in the end leads to apostasy, whereas faith and fellowship enable believers to

persevere. In Hebrews 12, the author introduces the motif of perseverance, using a race metaphor to encourage his audience to follow Jesus the trailblazer. Finally, Hebrews 13:1–25 describes what worship should look like, highlighting 'moral probity, community solidarity, and … sacrifice' (p. 60).

Gray and Peeler then examine the theme of the Holy Spirit in Hebrews. After a brief overview of scholars' contribution on this topic, they explain that the author of Hebrews depicts the Spirit as the one who communicates Scripture to us and participates in the act of salvation.

Finally, the authors survey the history of the interpretation of this epistle, noting that it has been the centre of theological controversies over Christology, repentance, the mass, the nature of priesthood, supersessionism, the gifts of the Spirit, anti-Semitism and child discipline among other topics.

Questions on each chapter of the epistle, provided for further study, are helpful to encourage users to read Hebrews proactively and penetrate to the heart of its message.

Although Gray and Peeler's reading that Jesus' priesthood began *after* the resurrection may be unconvincing, they deserve praise for addressing the oft-overlooked motif of the Spirit in Hebrews. This book will be valuable to both entry-level students and those in the inner sanctum of the epistle of theological discourse.

The Good Name
Samuel T. Logan

Greensboro, NC, USA: New Growth Press, 2019
Pb., xiv + 178 pp.

Reviewed by Bruce Barron, editor of the *Evangelical Review of Theology*

Samuel Logan, associate international director of the World Reformed Fellowship and former president of Westminster Theological Seminary, is a transparent man. Not only does he tell, in this book, of the instance of "shading the truth" that led to his resignation from Westminster, but he admits to speaking ill at times of other evangelical seminaries that were Westminster's competitors.

Most Christians would probably classify Logan's behaviour as minor peccadillos. But that's exactly the problem that justifies this book. We tend to think of criticizing fellow believers as normal, not as false witness.

Logan argues that the warning about bearing false testimony is in the Ten Commandments for good reason, and that its application extends far beyond untrue statements. He backs up this expansive view with many sources, especially the Westminster Larger Catechism, according to which the Ninth Commandment calls us 'to have a benevolent regard of our neighbors' (p. 32).

After demonstrating the power of words (both God's and ours) in the opening chapter, Logan examines the meaning of true and false witness in detail in chapter 2. Here he grapples with the problem of when and how to speak words of judgement, noting two opposite dangers: 'undue reticence' and 'graceless harsh-

ness'. The latter error is more readily noticed by the non-Christian public, causing Christians to be perceived as mean and hypocritical.

In chapter 3, Logan accumulates evidence of the damage caused by false witness, starting with Satan's lie to Eve. Jacob's deceptive concealment of his identity led to centuries of division between the descendants of Jacob and Esau. In the fourth century, division amongst Christians helped the emperor Julian to reintroduce pagan worship in the Roman Empire. The Protestant Reformation splintered because many of its leaders were 'more critical of each other than they had ever been of the Catholic Church' (p. 58). Additional negative examples come from the English Reformation, the Great Awakening in the USA, and the contemporary church. Logan offers Jonathan Edwards' response to criticisms of the Great Awakening as a positive model. Logan's own writing is always calm and gracious—an important trait when one is criticizing others for being too critical.

Chapter 4 suggests practical guidelines to keep us on track, such as recognizing our limited knowledge of others' hearts, avoiding labels, and treating everything we say as if it will be heard across the world. Logan differentiates our position from that of Jesus (who treated the Pharisees quite harshly in Matthew 23) and Paul (who referred to the Galatians as 'foolish') by arguing that we lack the specific inspiration granted to the biblical writers. He devotes considerable space to the problem of 'online disinhibition' (p. 83) on social media, which encourages people to make unkind statements that they would never utter face to face. 'Christian organizations', he affirms, '[should] pay more attention to what their members say on the internet.'

The last and longest chapter is entitled 'So Can We Talk at All?' Here Logan articulates several principles for engaging with differing opinions—such as casting no aspersions, caution about making slippery-slope inferences, and examining one's motives—and then demonstrates their application to often-heated conversations about abortion, evolution, women in ministry, social justice, and same-sex marriage. These examples display his remarkably methodical approach to sympathetically understanding the logic of sharply opposing views.

Logan may overstate his case occasionally. His preference for criticizing heresy *without* naming heretics (pp. 47–48) seems to run counter to New Testament practice (e.g. 1 Tim 1:20) and could generate confusion, since the actual expressions of heresy are often deceptively clothed and hard for the average believer to identify. Logan does not account adequately for the problem that Christian writers usually lack direct access to the prominent pastors and teachers they write about (and the famous teachers don't have time to respond to personal e-mails). His rejection of labels like 'gay agenda', though relevant to personal interactions, may be unrealistic and too passive for public discourse about organized political movements inimical to Christian faith.

But these weaknesses should not obscure the importance of Logan's core message, for Christians cause far more harm by being too harsh than too gentle in their discourse. All Christians should reflect as intensely as Logan has done on the dangers of false witness. I hope that the *Evangelical Review of Theology* always lives up to his standards.