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CONTENTS

Editorial

Essays

Reviews

Editorial: Arrive and Revive?

Jeffrey S. Lamp, Editor

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"You can't revive until you've arrived, and if you've truly arrived, you don't need to revive!" - Billy Joe Daugherty

The early years of my Christian walk, begun in 1980, were spent at Victory Christian Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma, under the pastoral leadership of the late Billy Joe Daugherty (may his memory be eternal!). Though my journey has taken some changes in direction since then, I'll always treasure those early days of my faith journey. Not having been raised in a Christian home, and having received Christ in my sophomore year of college at the University of Oklahoma, I was hungry and eager to learn and grow, and I count myself blessed to have been a part of Pastor Daugherty's flock in those days. He was a model of genuine Christian love and humility, and even though it has been decades since I attended Victory, to this day I miss him being among us.

Why this reminiscence? Way back in the early 1980s, when Victory was meeting in a remodeled car dealership on south Sheridan Avenue, near the end of one Sunday morning service Pastor Daugherty mentioned that someone had recently asked him why Victory didn't have revivals? The opening line of this editorial was his response: "You can't revive until you've arrived, and if you've truly arrived, you don't need to revive!" When I became a pastor in the 1990s, I quoted this line several times as justification for not organizing revivals in my rural Oklahoma pastorate.

I must confess, I do not know just how serious Pastor Daugherty was when he spoke this line (though I thought he was pretty serious at the time), nor do I know if he ever changed his views on revivals. But I have found myself recalling that line a lot in recent days.

As I write this editorial, another spontaneous revival has been ongoing at Asbury University in Wilmore, Kentucky. The campus became well-known for its 1970 revival that transformed that campus and indeed had a tremendous influence over the nation, though that was by no means the only such revival in Asbury's history. Others took place in 1905, 1908, 1921, 1950, 1958, 1992, and 2006. Given that the namesake of the university, Francis Asbury, was a part of Methodist revivalism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, this year's revival should surprise no one.

My musings here are not meant to be a critique or analysis of the recent revival. Every report I hear about it is positive, emphasizing the simple, heartfelt, and student-led atmosphere of this move of the Spirit. It has attracted a lot of attention and drawn many pilgrims from around the nation and the world. I recall one alumnus of Oral Roberts University Undergraduate Department of Theology several years ago labeled himself a "God chaser," traveling around the country to attend every wind of revival that was taking place. There's just something about the excitement of such moments that makes many faithful people want to be there to experience it. Each person has his or her own reasons for wanting to be there, I'm quite sure.

I have read some reflections on this recent Asbury revival that wonder if there might be something missing in the course of daily Christian discipleship in local churches that makes people yearn for revivals of this nature to take place more frequently. Thus my recollection of Pastor Daugherty's quip all those years ago. What can local church leaders learn from this most recent entry in the long line of revival movements to help those who have "arrived" not feel the need for these jumpstart moments to "revive" them? To be sure, a permanent state of revivalistic enthusiasm is not sustainable, nor should it be. An early name for the Christian movement was "the Way." The Christian life is a way of being in the world that encounters and inhabits each moment with the presence of Christ, led by the Holy Spirit in a way appropriate to that moment. It is "going into every person's world," to borrow a phrase from Oral Roberts. Maybe the lasting legacy of this Asbury revival, and others like them, is not to provide us a memory of that great move of the Spirit, but to help us cultivate a sustained life in the Spirit that is manifest in love, service, worship, and witness in the world. In other words, is there a way for us to know a life of "arrival" that would make such movements of "revival" unnecessary?

That might be the proverbial "perfect world," and we all know we don't live in a perfect world. So these movements of revival are probably necessary times of healing and renewal for the faithful until we arrive into the full measure of the stature of Christ.

I teach a course in basic biblical hermeneutics to undergraduate students at Oral Roberts University. In an early lecture in that course I share a quotation from St. John Chrysostom about the importance of reading the Bible.

> It were indeed meet for us not at all to require the aid of the written Word, but to exhibit a life so pure, that the grace of the Spirit should be instead of books to our souls, and that as these are inscribed with ink, even so should our hearts be with the Spirit. But, since we have utterly put away from us this grace, come, let us at any rate embrace the second best course (*Gospel According to St. Matthew*, Homily I).

The golden-mouthed Saint here is saying that in that "perfect world" there would be no need for the Bible, because disciples of Jesus would be so imbued with the grace-filled presence of the Holy Spirit that we would not need a book to tell us how to live. But since that is not our world, we need to avail ourselves of the gracious gift of God in the Holy Scriptures to help us become more fully conformed into the image of Christ. Perhaps that is where we are with revival movements. Because we have not truly arrived, we need to be revived. And we thank God that he condescends to our need to provide us with the grace to continue in the Way.

Perhaps that is the proper way to understand Pastor Daugherty's statement. We haven't truly arrived, so we need to be revived on occasion.

In this issue, the first of volume eight of *Spiritus*, we have an assortment of articles that all address life according to the Way. The issue opens with two biblical studies, one for each testament. Bill Lyons looks at Isaiah 61:1–3 as quoted by Jesus in Luke 4:18–19 to show that ministry to the oppressed poor is part of Jesus' Spirit-empowered mission and thus is appropriate for the ongoing ministry of the church. Rebekah Bled employs Dialogical Narrative Analysis to ascertain how Jesus' naming of Peter and Jesus' statement to Peter, "On this rock I will build my church," in the narrative of Peter's discipleship help prepare Peter for his role as spokesperson on the Day of Pentecost.

Jeremy Wallace follows with a discussion of how philosopher Jacques Maritain's thought on Traditional Natural Law contributed to the development of the United Nations' formulation of a Declaration of Universal Human Rights. Wallace demonstrates Maritain's conviction that universal rights must originate from a natural law grounded in divine reason for it to be obligatory and universal. Jonathan Cantarero examines Pentecostal responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and discerns a variety of responses to issues that arose pitting religious freedom against public health. His survey reveals a wide variety of public responses that mirrors the diversity of Pentecostalism on other fronts, leading to the conclusion that more work needs to be done to formulate a more coherent Pentecostal theology of political engagement.

Allan Varghese provides a fascinating study of a key figure in the growth of Pentecostalism in the state of Kerala in India, Annamma Mammen (1911–2002). Noting the rarity of women's leadership in Kerala Pentecostalism, Varghese argues that Mammen's primary theological significance lay in her role as a songwriter, disseminating her theology through the lyrics in her songs. Bill Buker concludes the issue with a study of Jesus' Farewell Discourse (John 13–17), from which he constructs a model of spiritual formation drawing on the imagery of "abiding in the vine" as fulfilling Jesus' new command for his disciples to love one another. In such a model, the Spirit is granted access and freedom to work within us at a deep level for increased fruitfulness, reflected in healthy relationships and loving communities that last.

One last note, this one on a more cosmetic level. You will notice as you read these articles that we have moved from citations in endnotes to footnotes. In the early volumes of the journal, we were constrained by software considerations to use endnotes. We apparently just got used to using them, because even once the constraints were removed, we continued with endnotes. But Daniel Isgrigg had a moment of insight and suggested using footnotes beginning with volume eight. We think this will prove useful to readers who may wish more immediate gratification in their search for a citation.

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What Does "Spiritual Anointing" Have to Do with Ministry to the Poor?

William L. Lyons

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Keywords *anoint, anointing, anointed, LORD God, poor, Isaiah, Luke, Spirit, sabbatical year, Jubilee*

Abstract

The Bible employs various tactics to draw readers' attention to its message. When something new is about to happen, the clearest, direct track is sometimes preferable: "I [the LORD] am about to do a *new* thing; now it springs forth; do you not perceive it?" (Isa 43:19; emphasis mine). Similarly, in Jeremiah: "The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a *new* covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah" (Jer 31:31; emphasis mine). Another method employed by biblical writers repeats carefully chosen words to garner attention: "'The LORD has done great things for them.' The LORD has done great things for us, and we rejoiced" (Ps 126:2–3). Isaiah 61 uses yet another editorial device: a unique phrase that attentive listeners would hardly miss. This article is about this third tactic, a unique phrase used to introduce Isaiah's equally unique message in chapter 61. Most Bible readers are familiar with the moment in the Gospel of Luke when Jesus began his ministry by quoting an ancient passage from Isaiah 61: "The Spirit of the LORD God is upon me, because he has anointed me. . . ." The introductory phrase surely captured attention in Isaiah's day and again hundreds of years later when Jesus repeated it when speaking about himself. Many modern readers may lack a clear understanding of what "anointing" means and may wonder why both Isaiah and Jesus chose to mention anointing and the poor in the same context. This article examines the ancient concept of "anointing" in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, and then considers what was meant by "the poor" and the "year of the LORD's favor" (also mentioned in both Isaiah and Luke). It demonstrates that in both Testaments anointed ministry to the poor is a core mandate for all people of faith, and that the vision of social reform has never changed.

Introduction

This article considers a simple question from a well-known biblical passage: how does "anointing" affect the ministry foreseen by the prophet Isaiah in 61:1–3?[1] The passage reads:

> [1]The Spirit of the LORD God is upon me,
> because the LORD has anointed me;
> he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
> to bind up the brokenhearted,
> to proclaim liberty to the captives,
> and release to the prisoners;
> [2] to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
> and the day of vengeance of our God;
> to comfort all who mourn;
> [3] to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
> to give them a garland instead of ashes,
> the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
> the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
> They will be called oaks of righteousness,
> the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.[2]

Although the pericope is simple, the topic is vast and has been the focus of committed Bible readers for millennia. For Christians, the author of Luke draws attention to this passage as quoted by Jesus at the beginning of his ministry (Luke 4:18–19).[3] It is a seminal passage in both the Old and New Testaments.[4] Each phrase and every word has been closely scrutinized, yet questions remain. Who is the speaker in Isaiah? What does it mean to be "anointed"? Why are those in most need mentioned as central to the ministry of the anointed person? Why did Jesus use this reference to begin

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[1] This article is a revised and expanded edition of "'Anointed by the Spirit' and Ministry to the Poor: The Core Biblical Mandate to All Generations," in *Good News to the Poor: Spirit-Empowered Responses to Poverty*, eds. Wonsuk Ma, Opoku Onyinah, and Rebekah Bled (Tulsa, OK: ORU Press, 2022), 11–22.

[2] Isa 61:1–3, NRSV. With one exception, all biblical references are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted and are formatted according to NRSV conventions. That exception is "Spirit," translated "spirit" in the NRSV but capitalized in this article as part of the longer, unique special name for God (רוח אדני יהוה) here adopted by the author of Isaiah. I prefer to read "Spirit" (not "spirit") as part of the divine name. Here and throughout the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, "LORD" and "Lord" translate different Hebrew words. "LORD" translates the tetragrammaton: יהוה (YHWH, understood as the covenantal name for God); "Lord" or "lord" translates אדני (*Adonai*, a common, general appellation for "master" or "lord"), as in Ps 110:1 and many other places in the Bible.

[3] Luke also draws upon Isa 58:6 in this pericope.

[4] Mariusz Rosik and Victor Onwukeme, "Function of Isa 61:1–2 and 58:6 in Luke's Programmatic Passage (Luke 4:16–30)," *Polish Journal of Biblical Research* 2 (2002), 68.

his ministry centuries later in Luke?[5] This article examines two central features of the passage, the words "anointed" and the "oppressed." It then considers current Christian practice in light of the prophetic mandate.

Isaiah 61 commences with a *hapax legomenon*, a word or phrase that is unique in the Bible and occurs only once.[6] By writing, "The spirit of the LORD God," which appears only here in the Hebrew Bible, the prophet effectively captures the attention of his audience with a neologism. It is reasonable to assume, then, that Isaiah's audience had never heard this specific phrase before (or at least not in biblical literature), and it effectively arrests the flow of the narrative momentarily and clearly marks the beginning of something new. Thus, along with ancient readers/listeners, we read special words announcing something equally special. Additionally, it should be noted that Jesus' words quoted by Luke also harken back to the entire scope of the servant passages in Isaiah 40–55. As Brevard Childs holds, "[A] case can be made that [in Luke 4] Jesus himself ushers in the acceptable year of the Lord,[7] and thus the citation of Isaiah 61 encompasses the entire mission of the servant, including his life, death, and offspring."[8]

Anointing

Following the unique reference to the Spirit of the LORD God, readers/listeners also learned that the speaker had been "anointed" for something unique. At its simplest, *to anoint,* משׁח, in the ancient Near East means essentially what it means for people today: to apply some type of ointment or oil on the skin for various purposes including

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[5] The author of Luke initiates his ongoing focus on the poor and needy in Mary's Song of Praise, the *Magnificat*: "He has brought down the powerful from the thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good tidings, and sent the rich away empty" (1:52–53). This canticle is traditionally included in liturgical services of both the Catholic and Orthodox churches and serves as a foundation for the ongoing Lucan focus on the poor throughout his Gospel: 6:20–49; 7:22; 12:13–21; 14:13–14, 21; 16:1–13, 19–31; 18:22; 19:8; 21:1–4.

[6] Mary J. Obiorah and Favour C. Uroko, "'The Spirit of the Lord God is Upon Me' (Is 61:1): The Use of Isaiah 61:1–2 in Luke 4:18–19," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 74:1 (2018), 1. Even the conventions of English translations of this phrase are unique. The phrase literally reads, "The Spirit of the Lord, LORD," (רוח אדני יהוה). A unique phrase like this requires an equally unique translation: "The Spirit of the Lord GOD" (see the NRSV and JPS translations). For an ancient testimony to the reading, see the Peshitta of Isa 61, which also has "the Spirit of the Lord God." For additional information on this intriguing Hebrew phrase and the varied attempts to render it accurately across the centuries see, Jason A. Staples, "'Lord, LORD': Jesus as YHWH in Matthew and Luke," *New Testament Studies* 64 (2019), 1–19. Staples notes that Ezekiel uses אדני יהוה frequently: 217 of the 319 times it appears in the Hebrew Bible (8). What makes it unique in Isaiah is the addition of רוח.

[7] Greek κύριος is not in all caps; it does not adhere to the divine name capitalization conventions of translations of the Hebrew Bible.

[8] Mark Gignilliat, "Theological Exegesis as Exegetical Showing: A Case of Isaiah's Figural Potentiality," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 12 (2010), 229–30. Gignilliat draws this material from Brevard Childs, *Isaiah* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 519.

medicinal,[9] cosmetic,[10] preparation for burial,[11] or even prior to cooking. It is a mundane action that here garners little attention. Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament (hereafter HB/OT), in what has been called "Jotham's fable,"[12] the trees discuss whom they might anoint as king over them in a vain attempt to find an appropriate leader (Judg 9:7–20, 57).

However, when used during special occasions, the act of anointing moves beyond a commonplace activity and assumes significant added nuances. In Genesis 28:18 (H16[13]), Jacob anointed a stone pillar to memorialize the LORD's presence with him, when he "rose early in the morning, and he took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it." Similarly, the tabernacle was anointed with elaborately prepared, expensive, and unique oil *only* used for consecrating the holy place and those serving in it. Shields were anointed prior to battle.[14] Bread was also anointed (usually translated as "spread" or "smeared" with oil[15]), and buildings could be anointed.[16] Additionally, in both Isaiah and the Psalms, the king is anointed with the "oil of gladness" (Isa 61:3; Ps 48:6–8; cf. Heb 1:9). Thus, in the Bible, anointing could refer to something mundane or as the mechanism of consecration for special service including both inanimate objects or places and people.

Beyond consecration of people or places for "holy use," anointing may assume added meaning, and the practice "served to convey power and ability to perform the function for which one was being anointed."[17] Early in the biblical narrative Moses anointed Aaron as the High Priest (Exod 29:7; see also Lev 8:12) and his sons as

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[9] Isa 1:6; Luke 10:34; John 9:6, 11; Jas 5:14.

[10] Ruth 3:3; Amos 6:6; Luke 7:46.

[11] See Matt 26:12; Mark 16:1; Luke 23:56. Although there are many references to burials in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (hereafter HB/OT), anointing is never mentioned as part of funerary preparations. It must have seemed insignificant or perhaps had been a later development, as we read in the New Testament. The HB/OT does show that people of high social or political rank were often dressed for burial in garments that were appropriate to their office or position in society. This included ornamentation (medals or symbols of position or accomplishments) along with weapons (1 Sam 28:14; Isa 14:11; Ezek 32:27; cf. Josephus, *Ant* 15.3.4; 17.8.3; 13.8.4; 16.7.1). Apparently, to be buried without garments or ornamentation was a disgrace. Even criminals (Deut 21:23) as well as an enemy (1 Kgs 9:15; Ezek 39:15) were afforded proper burials with appropriate attire. See also Ludwig Köhler, ed., et al., "משׁח," *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 2:643–44.

[12] Jotham was the youngest of Gideon's many sons.

[13] H stands for "Hebrew Bible" where the versification differs from the English translations.

[14] See also Lev 8:10; Num 7:10; 2 Sam 1:21; Isa 21:5. If anyone used the holy consecrated oil for profane purposes, they were to be excommunicated ("cut off from the people," Exod 30:33).

[15] Exod 29:2; Lev 2:4; 7:12; Num 6:15.

[16] Jer 22:14.

[17] Timothy B. Cargal, "Anoint," *Eerdmans Dictionary to the Bible*, eds. David N. Freedman et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 66.

priests.[18] Likewise, Saul was anointed to be king by Samuel (1 Sam 9:16), and subsequent kings are understood to be "the LORD's anointed" (24:6):[19]

1. David was anointed as king by the "men of Judah" (2 Sam 2:4–7); subsequently the "elders of Israel" also anointed him as king of Israel (5:3).
2. Absalom was similarly anointed as king (2 Sam 19:10).
3. Solomon was anointed as king by Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet. Only here do we read of "the priest Zadok and the prophet Nathan anoint[ed] him king over Israel; then [blew] the trumpet, and [said], 'Long live King Solomon!'" (1 Kgs 1:39, cf. 34 and 45). Like David, Solomon was also anointed a second time by the people: "they made David's son Solomon king a second time; they anointed him as the LORD's prince" (1 Chron 29:22).
4. Joash was anointed as king in 2 Kings 11:12 when Jehoiada, the Priest, "brought out the king's son, put the crown on him, and gave him the covenant; they proclaimed him king, and anointed him."
5. In 2 Kings 23:30, Jehoahaz is anointed as king "by the people of the land."

As with any ancient history, biblical history must be reconstructed carefully by modern readers. These stories of anointing occur over hundreds of years and display a great variety of procedural variations. Nevertheless, we can say that these stories put "clear emphasis on YHWH's initiative, election, and commission" acting through the people to anoint kings.[20]

Although there are multiple references to anointing the kings of Israel,[21] the Bible preserves only a single reference to an inaugural anointing of a prophet when Elijah anointed Elisha as his successor in 1 Kings 19:16.[22] Nevertheless, biblical prophets clearly understood their work to be anointed by God. Psalm 105:15 parallels "my anointed ones" with "my prophets" in the context of divine protection for the people of Israel.

> Do not touch my anointed ones;[23]
> Do my prophets no harm.

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[18] Elsewhere Lev 7:36 claims that the LORD anointed Aaron's sons, thus the ancient Israelites understood that the active agent in Moses' work of anointing in Exodus and Leviticus was the LORD.

[19] This list is only a selection of royal anointings in ancient Israel; many more could be added.

[20] Marinus de Jonge, "Messiah," *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, eds. David N. Freedman et al. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 4:778. De Jonge includes an extensive discussion of anointing in biblical and post-biblical texts.

[21] 1 Sam 10:1; 16:3; 1 Kgs 1:39; 2 Kgs 9:6; 11:12.

[22] Although the actual anointing process/event is not preserved, it may be assumed from the text. Attesting to the power envisioned in a prophetic royal anointing, the military commander Jehu's military leaders would not resist the anointing of their leader as king even though they abhorred the "anointer" Elisha; they nevertheless cried, "Jehu is king" (2 Kgs 9:4–13).

[23] Following the previous verses, "anointed ones" in Ps 105:15 refers to the ancient people of Israel, who though "few in number, of little account, and strangers, . . . wandering from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people" (vv. 12–13), were the object of the special attention of God, that is, "do not touch. . . ."

The most notable prophetic reference to anointing is the focus of this article, the anointing of the prophet for the unique tasks before him in Isaiah 61.

As 1 Samuel 10:1 attests, anointing was understood to be an act of God and served to bestow divine favor upon someone (Pss 23:5; 92:10) or to appoint someone to a special place of divine service (Ps 105:15; Isa 45:1).[24]

> **1** Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it on his [Saul's] head and kissed him; he said, "The LORD has anointed you ruler over his people Israel. You shall reign over the people of the LORD, and you will save them from the hand of their enemies all around" (1 Sam 10:1).

Implicit in the act of anointing was also an outpouring of God's Spirit,[25] and this aspect is picked up by the New Testament writers as worthy of note (Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38; 1 John 2:20, 27).

There are only two places in the HB/OT where non-Israelites are referred to as "anointed": 1 Kings 19:15 and Isaiah 45:1. In the first instance, Elijah, after being fed by ravens in the wilderness following his encounter with the prophets of Baal and Asherah on Mount Carmel (1 Kgs 18), was directed to anoint Hazael as king of Aram.

> **15** Then the LORD said to [Elijah], "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall *anoint* Hazael as king over Aram."[26]

The second instance involves Cyrus the Persian king, who liberated the Jews from Babylonian captivity and not only allowed them to return home but also provided for their needs along the way. In this passage, a non-Israelite king is called "God's shepherd (Isa 44:28) when Davidic kings fail."[27]

> **44:24** Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer,
> who formed you in the womb . . .
> **28** who says of Cyrus, "He is my shepherd,
> and he shall carry out all my purpose";
> and who says of Jerusalem, "It shall be rebuilt,"
> and of the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid."
> **45:1** Thus says the LORD to his *anointed*, to Cyrus, . . . (Isa 44:24–45:1; emphasis mine).

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[24] J. A. Motyer, "Anointing, Anointed," *New Bible Dictionary*, eds. J. D. Douglas et al., 2nd ed. (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1987), 50.

[25] See 1 Sam 10:1, 9; 16:13; Isa 61:1; Zech 4:1–14.

[26] Emphasis mine. The Syrian king Hazael is mentioned in the Tel Dan Stele, however, as with Elisha, his actual "anointing event" is not mentioned.

[27] De Jonge, "Messiah," 779.

Regarding this reference in Isaiah, J. A. Motyer highlights five characteristics of the anointed person that he gleans from the passage, and he claims that there is "no better summary of the OT view of the 'anointed' person."[28]

1. Cyrus was chosen by God (Isa 41:25[29]).
2. He was given dominion over the nations (Isa 45:1–3).
3. Throughout all the actions of the Persian king, the LORD is the *real* actor (Isa 45:1–7).
4. The king was appointed to set the exiles free and rebuild the city of the LORD (Isa 45:13).
5. Cyrus brought judgment upon the enemies of Israel (Isa 47).

Motyer is quick to note that "these five points are preeminently true of Jesus, who saw himself as the fulfillment of the OT Messianic expectations."[30]

The phrase, "the [LORD's] anointed" (or a cognate phase), deserves special attention. Saul is anointed by the LORD in 1 Samuel 10:1 by the prophet Samuel. In 1 Samuel 12:3–5 he refers to himself as anointed, and later David spared Saul's life because he was "the LORD's anointed" (1 Sam 24:6; mentioned three times for emphasis in the same verse). Later, when searching for Saul's successor, Eliab (then eldest son of Jesse) was mistakenly referred to as "the [LORD's] anointed" (1 Sam 16:6). Much later, the similar phrase appears in reference to David (2 Sam 19:21), and similar words appear in what the Bible calls the "last words of David," which begin with,

> Now these are the last words of David:
> The oracle of David, son of Jesse,
> the oracle of the man whom God exalted,
> *the anointed of the God of Jacob*, the favorite of the Strong One of Israel
> (Sam 23:1; emphasis mine).

Similarly in the Song of Hannah, the biblical poet twice exclaims, "The LORD! His adversaries shall be shattered; . . . The LORD . . . will give strength to his king, and exalt the power of his anointed" (1 Sam 2:10). In the same chapter and shortly before the death of Hophni and Phineas, the wayward sons of Eli who were priests at Shiloh, the theme of anointing continues:

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[28] J. A. Motyer, "Messiah," *New Bible Dictionary*, 764.

[29] In this verse, the phrase, God "stirred up one from the north," is generally understood as referring to Cyrus (cf. also 41:1 where "a victor is roused from the east"). Persia is located east of ancient Israel, but ancient travelers would have followed the traditional travel routes in the Fertile Crescent moving generally northwest from Persia and then southwest toward Israel, or from the northeast.

[30] Motyer, "Messiah," 764.

> I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind. I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before *my anointed one* forever" (1 Sam 2:35; emphasis mine).

Other references to "anointed" include Lamentations 4:20, "The LORD's anointed, the breath of our life, was taken in their pits," which is most likely a reference to the death of Zedekiah, the final king of Judah, at the hands of the Babylonians. Elsewhere, in Habakkuk's Song, the people of Israel were anointed when the LORD "came forth to save [his] people, to save your anointed [Israel]" (Hab 3:13).

Additional passages could be cited,[31] however, these are sufficient to demonstrate that the LORD's anointing highlights a special relationship between God and his anointed person or people. This relationship carries with it the authority and power to rule or work in God's name. Notably, this person/these people could move beyond the failures of previously appointed people (see 1 Sam 2:35 above) and accomplish God's purposes for his people. With the exception of Josiah, however, no biblical king—not even David—fulfilled God's plan for his leaders. It is only of Josiah that we read:

> Before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him (2 Kgs 23:25).

The biblical message on anointing is clear: anointing signifies divine blessing at the inauguration of a new initiative in the divine economy (God's plans for his people) or for unique work or service. However, it is eclipsed by covenant infidelity.[32] This study of anointing demonstrates that those who were anointed often failed. Even David, who certainly was anointed by God to be king, nevertheless failed, and his people bore the lasting consequences of his rebellious actions reiterated in the words of Nathan the Prophet:

> **7** Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul; **8** I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more. **9** Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. **10** Now therefore the sword

[31] For example, the theme of the "anointed one" is expanded and elaborated upon in the Royal Psalms (2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132, and 144). See de Jonge, "Messiah," 779–80.

[32] This is especially clear in 1 Sam 15:22: "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, [or rather] in obedience to the voice of the LORD? Surely, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams." Here cultic activities are eclipsed by covenant fidelity.

> shall never depart from your house, for you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. **11** Thus says the LORD: I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this very sun. **12** "For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun." **13** David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan said to David, "Now the LORD has put away your sin; you shall not die. **14** Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the LORD, the child that is born to you shall die" (2 Sam 12:7—14).

How someone conducts his or her life when empowered by the anointing is primary. Put another way, biblical anointing never condones covenant disloyalty, and the Bible anticipates the day when the "Davidic ideal" of an anointed king who acts according to "all the law of Moses" (2 Kgs 23:25) would be realized.

The "Oppressed" Poor

The primary job of the "anointed one," as conceived by Isaiah (61:1) and repeated by Jesus in Luke 4, was to "bring good news to the oppressed [poor]." Other responsibilities would follow and are listed by the prophet, but the priority of position is given to ministry to the poor. There are several different words for "the poor" in the HB/OT, including:[33]

1. אביון: the begging poor.
2. דל: the poor farmer.
3. מחסור: the lazy poor.
4. עני: the economically oppressed, exploited, or suffering poor.

Isaiah 61:1 uses ענוים (a derivative of "4" above) and reads, "The Spirit of the LORD G [יהוה אדני רוח] is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed. . . ." Here "oppressed" may be translated as "bowed down or dejected,"[34] or in the case of Isaiah, "the oppressed poor." The HB/OT preserves different perspectives on these people:[35]

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[33] J. David Pleins, "Poor, Poverty," *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, 5:403. A lengthy study of each of these terms follows with occasional references to similar words in cognate languages.

[34] "ענו," *HALOT*, 2:855. For more on ענוים see Bradley C. Gregory, "The Postexilic Exile in Third Isaiah: Isaiah 61:1–3 in Light of Second Temple Hermeneutics," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126 (2007), 481–84. In his new translation of the Hebrew Bible, Robert Alter translates simply "poor," but in the notes expands upon his translation and adds that it refers "to people in a state of wretchedness" (*The Hebrew Bible* [New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019], 2:826). I think "destitute" accurately captures the nuances of ענוים in English.

[35] Patrick J. Hartin, "Poor," *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, eds. David N. Freedman et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1070–71.

1. Biblical legal texts are concerned with the treatment of those who are poor and call for their protection.[36] Narrative literature in the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets (also called Historical Books) evinces little sustained consideration for the poor, but rather, focuses on the excesses of the kings that do not address the needs of the poor.
2. Prophetic literature, on the other hand, focuses on economic oppression of the poor by those who are wealthy. Isaiah chastises landowners who amass large portions of land but ignore the rights or needs of the poor.[37] Similarly, Amos repeatedly draws his readers' attention to the plight of the poor, "[The people of Israel] who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and push the afflicted out of the way . . ." are condemned.[38]
3. Wisdom Literature sees poverty variously: (a) as a consequence of someone's indolent lifestyle (Prov 6:10–11; 10:4, 15); or (b) as in Job, a result of political and economic exploitation. Job used his defense of the poor as an argument for his innocence (Job 29:12, 16).
4. The Psalms repeatedly present God as a defender of the עניים (e.g., Ps 22:26).

Moreover, it is not surprising that there were three groups in ancient Israelite society that were particularly susceptible to poverty: widows, orphans, and strangers. They were totally dependent upon others to help them and thus were susceptible to actions of unscrupulous people. Without a social network to assist them, or when legal protections designed to help them were ignored,[39] they suffered miserably, and the prophets are not averse to drawing attention to this need.

Later, the New Testament is not silent on the issue, and the book of James is foremost in its concern for the poor:

> Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: *to care for the infants and widows in their distress*, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.[40]

Thus John the Baptist, Jesus, and the disciples embraced a lifestyle of poverty, and it is not surprising that Jesus began the Beatitudes with "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matt 5:3), but Luke simply says, "Blessed are the poor" (Luke 6:20).[41] Other New Testament writings display continued concern for the poor and needy as the early church members sold their possessions to support those in need (Acts 2:45) and collections were received

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[36] Lev 19:9–10; 25:35.

[37] Isa 5:8; 10:2.

[38] Amos 2:7; see also 4:1; 5:11. Here Amos reverses the imagery of "dust of the earth"; instead of a blessing (cf., Gen 13:16; 28:14) it appears in a derogatory context. The reverse imagery is vivid.

[39] Leviticus reminds its readers or listeners: "When you harvest the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor [עָנִי] and the alien: I am the LORD your God" (19:9–10; see also 23:22).

[40] Jas 1:27 (emphasis mine); see also 2:6; 4:13–17.

[41] Hartin, "Poor," 1070.

to assist the poor.[42] The very first action of Jesus' disciples in Acts following the Day of Pentecost was to minister to a person in great need outside of the Temple (Acts 3:1–10),[43] and in short order members initiated an early ministry to the widows and orphans.

This trajectory did not cease with the end of the New Testament. Much later, after the Roman empire had become Christian under Constantine, Emperor Julian (ca., 360–363 CE; remembered as "Julian the Apostate") said: "It is disgraceful that, when no Jew ever has to beg, and the impious Galileans [the emperor's name for Christians] support not only their own poor but ours as well, all men see that our people lack aid from us."[44] By this time, the biblical mandate to care for the poor was a hallmark of faith in action.

Sabbatical and Jubilee Years

In addition to bringing "good news to the oppressed," the anointed person described in Isaiah 61 would also "proclaim the year of the LORD's favor" (61:2). The phrase is generally understood to refer to the Sabbatical Year or Year of Jubilee mentioned in the books of Exodus and Leviticus,[45] and may here be applying some of the core principles of the convention to the nation of Israel that lost everything during the Exile in Babylon (ca. 586–536 BCE).

Following six years of working the land, the Bible directs that the land was to lie fallow for a year and the dormant period was called a "Sabbatical Year" because "the land shall keep a sabbath" (Lev 25:2). Directives to allow the land to lie fallow appear in Exodus 23:10–11; Leviticus 25:1–7; and Deuteronomy 15:1–11. However, the special year is not mentioned again until Nehemiah 10:31, where the people forgo all debts in accordance with the biblical command.

The "Jubilee Year" was different. Following seven years with the Sabbatical Year ending each cycle, the fiftieth year was called a Jubilee Year—the land would continue to lie fallow for an additional year and all debts were cancelled. It is discussed at length

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[42] Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 8–9; Gal 2:10.

[43] William L. Lyons, "Extending the Right Hand: An Important Yet Overlooked Defining Action of the Nascent Church," in *We, the Church: Studies in Mission & Evangelization: Essays in Honor of Bishop Dr. B. S. Moses Kumar*, eds. Smitha P. Coffee and Donna Tracy Paul (New Delhi, India: Christian World Imprints, 2017), 167–74.

[44] Julian, *Works* 157.22.430.

[45] Rosik and Onwukeme, "Function of Isa 61:1–2 and 58:6 in Luke's Programmatic Passage (Luke 4:16–30)," 67, 71. See also Benjamin D. Sommer, "Isaiah," *The Jewish Study Bible*," eds. Adele Berlin and Mark Zvi Brettler, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 888. Marvin A. Sweeney, "Isaiah," *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with Apocrypha,* eds. Michael C. Coogan et al., 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1049.

in Leviticus 25:8–17 and 23–55.[46] Outside the Bible it is mentioned directly in Josephus *Ant* 3.280.3 and Sifra 8:2 (an early Jewish commentary on Leviticus). The Bible specifies the following:[47]

1. The blast of the *shofar* on the Day of Atonement to begin the year-long observations.
2. The return of all Israelites to their ancestral lands and families.
3. All land was to remain fallow (crops were not planted, fields not "worked").
4. Prices for the sale of land (except for houses in cities) remained fixed.
5. Ancestral lands that were previously sold were returned to the original owners.
6. The Levites were granted special land regulations.
7. All Israelite debt was remitted, and slaves were set free.

Moreover, the concept of a Sabbatical Year was not unique to ancient Israel, but was rather foreshadowed by Sumerian kings and their law codes that survived them. For nearly 800 years, these kings[48] directed a "fundamental restructuring of society," eliminating the sources of injustice and establishing concrete laws to restore equilibrium to the community "in which the weak were not oppressed or taken advantage of by the strong." Debt slavery was eliminated, and society was fundamentally recalibrated.[49]

Similarly, Israelite society was reset (or adjusted) during these unique years.[50] There would be no generational indebtedness or slavery as debt was cancelled. The Bible justifies the Sabbatical and Jubilee Year regulations with two important principles: (1) God owns the land and directs its use (Lev 25:23); and (2) God retains undisputed possession of all Israelites, and he may do with them as he wishes (25:55). David Lieber adds that these ancient conventions "represent a unique Israelite attempt to combat the social evils that had infected Israelite society and to return to the idyllic period of the desert union when social equality and fraternal concern had prevailed."[51] Similarly, Christopher J. H. Wright comments, the HB/OT

> laws and moral imperatives about loans, interest, debts, slaves, land wages, and justice in general indicate that the first concern of Israel was for human need, *not*

[46] See also Lev 27:16–25; Num 36:4; and perhaps Ezek 46:1.

[47] David L. Lieber, "Sabbatical Year and Jubilee," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, eds. Fred Skolnik and Michael Berenbaum, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA in association with the Keter Publishing House, Jerusalem, 2007), 624.

[48] Urukagina (d. 2371 BCE); Ur-Nammu (2112–2095); Lipit-Ishtar (1870–1860); Hammurabi (1728–1681); Ammisaduqa (1648–26).

[49] Noah Green, "(Social) Justice and Righteousness: The Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Conception of Social Justice and How It Was Enacted in Leviticus 25," unpublished paper presented at Oral Roberts University, 2022. This paper offers an extensive examination of social injustice in the ANE.

[50] See Isa 37:21–35; Lev 25:1–7; and perhaps in the background of Jer 34:8–22 and Ezek 11:15.

[51] Lieber, "Sabbatical Year and Jubilee," 625. I suspect that Lieber's "idyllic period of the desert wanderings" is untenable, however, his focus on rebalancing ancient Israelite society is on target.

> ownership. . . . The maintenance of property and possessions must come second to human need. Israelite law favored persons over property and possessions.[52]

It is easy to see how far the modern world has strayed from these biblical directives to help the most needy among us, and countless human beings suffer because of it.

How Might Modern Bible Readers Respond to Poverty?

Reiterating the words of James, this study convincingly demonstrates that "[r]eligion that is pure . . . is this: to care for the infants and widows in their distress" (1:26). Everything else is secondary. It is not unlike Jeremiah's much earlier prophecy regarding Josiah: "'He judged the poor and needy; then it was well. Is this not to know me?' says the LORD" (22:16; cf. Phil 3:10).

How then should modern Bible readers respond? The book of Deuteronomy offers a clear way forward:

> **7** If there is among you anyone in need, a member of your community in any of your towns within the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your needy neighbor. **8** You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need, whatever it may be. . . . **10** Give liberally and be ungrudging when you do so, for on this account the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. **11** Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, "Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land."[53]

Conclusion

This study of anointing in Isaiah 61 and the prophet's anticipated ministry among "the poor" has demonstrated that the passage is unique. Its distinctive wording, "The Spirit of the LORD God is upon me," captures the attention of listeners or readers and directs their attention to the new message that would follow. Beginning with legal texts and early biblical narratives, it is reiterated in the cries of the prophets, and echoes through the Psalms and Wisdom Literature and into the New Testament writings. It is arguably the core biblical mandate for all generations.

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[52] Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 148 (emphasis mine). Here Wright quotes Robert Gnuse, "Jubilee Legislation in Leviticus: Israel's Vision of Social Reform," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 15 (1985), 48.

[53] Deut 15:7–11. Similar words also appear in Lev 25. In *Old Testament Ethics*, Christopher J. H. Wright offers an in-depth analysis of "Economics and the Poor" and concludes with a helpful section on "Responses to Poverty" (172–79).

Anointing is nothing special in itself and was used for commonplace activities, including medicinal, cosmetic, and funerary needs. Places were also anointed and thereby set aside for special use or service. The word assumes special nuances, however, when used in the context of prophets, priests, or kings. Here, it announces a new beginning, inaugurates a new position, and signifies great blessing and empowerment on an anointed person or group of people. Moreover, it highlights a special and abiding relationship between God and the anointed one(s). Despite the special nuances of being "anointed," however, the Bible is also clear: anointing is initiatory and empowering, while covenantal fidelity or obedience is primary. It is as if covenantal fidelity continues the nuances of blessing into the future. Many of those who were "anointed" in the Bible failed in their ministry, including judges, kings, and priests who left a sad legacy to history and provide a cautionary tale that speaks volumes to later biblical readers—"be careful how you live."

Isaiah's choice of עניים(the "oppressed poor") for the focus of the anointed one's work is unforgettable. It would be a ministry to those in greatest need: the economically exposed, exploited, suffering poor, or destitute. This is not to say that the passage overlooks other ministry objectives, but Isaiah 61 and Luke 4 direct readers' attention first and foremost to the neediest people. As Julian the Apostate observed, caring for the poor and most needy is the hallmark expression of biblical faith.

Nowhere do we see this more clearly than in the fundamental restructuring of ancient Israelite society during the Sabbatical and Jubilee years. There, human economics meet godly design. Debts are cancelled, slaves set free, and society was to be readjusted according to godly dictates. It is certainly a far-reaching ideal, but it is not by happenstance that Jesus chose this passage to inaugurate his ministry in Luke. His vision, anchored in the HB/OT, is what marked biblical faith as clearly distinctive in his world, and that vision of social reform has never changed.

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Then Peter Stood Up

A Dialogical Narrative Analysis of Peter's Preparation for Spokesperson at Pentecost

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Abstract

Dialogical Narrative Analysis (DNA) asks, in brief, what work a story does in the context in which it is told and on the teller of the story itself. In applying DNA to Peter, this article assumes the premise that Peter's meaning-making, or construction of the dialogical self in dynamic relationship with Jesus, positioned him to be the spokesperson who narrated the events of Pentecost. Therefore, this article seeks to understand how Jesus' naming and accompanying statement to Peter that "on this rock I will build my church" and the unfolding narrative of Peter's discipleship uniquely prepare Peter for this role. This article is not about Peter's Pentecost speech itself, rather, it is about Peter's preparation to be the speaker. The article examines the movements of faith formation in the story Jesus told Peter about who Peter was in relationship to the Godhead, and then connects this first story with the act of Peter's storytelling at the inauguration of the era of the church, tracing the change process that the identity narrative given by Jesus works in Peter.

Introduction

In his book, *Letting Stories Breathe*,[1] Arthur W. Frank introduces Dialogical Narrative Analysis, or DNA, as the method one engages with socio-narratology, a form of inquiry that falls under the umbrellas of narrative inquiry and ethnography. Ethnography is the study of culture, interactions, and meaning, as these elements naturally unfold within a given context.[2] Such study takes place through interviews and observations over time and can be at least somewhat of an immersive experience for the researcher. Narrative research analyzes stories for their "content, themes, and structure," and has generally

[1] Arthur W. Frank, *Letting Stories Breathe: A Socio-Narratology* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2010), 13, 71–85.

[2] University of Virginia, "Ethnographic Research," *IRB-SBS*, https://research.virginia.edu/irb-sbs/ethnographic-research (15 December 2022).

been focused on personal narratives, or how individuals narrate and make sense of their own experiences.[3] While ethnography seeks to create thick descriptions[4] that provide rich interpretive contexts for subjects' actions and words, narrative analysis often examines specific storytellers for their effect on the narrative. Socio-narratology blends these two methods by studying the narrative itself as a dynamic and contextual actor, asking, in effect, "what work does the story do?"[5] This question breaks away from looking at the narrative or story in question through the lens of the storyteller him- or herself—though the storyteller plays a critical role in how the story is formed and delivered, and thus received and retold—and borrows from ethnography's thick description to view what the story itself does in the context in which it is told. DNA then is the line of inquiry that one pursues to practice socio-narratology. "Dialogical narrative analysis studies the mirroring between what is told in the story—the story's content—and what happens as a result of telling that story—its effects."[6]

Though not a stringent methodology, DNA nevertheless holds five commitments. These are, first, to recognize any one voice as a dialogue between voices.[7] This first commitment looks at how "a story is built up in conversation through a process of turns and talk, in which each speaker adds to what becomes the emerging story."[8] Frank describes the result of this commitment as many voices finding expression within one voice.[9] DNA's second commitment is a corollary to the first and that is to remain suspicious of the single voice or monologue, which Mikhail Bakhtin calls dialogue's opposite.[10] The third commitment is to "extend the dialogue further," either into possible trajectories of action, belief, or community, or into a re-telling of a narrative that encompasses new voices.[11] The fourth commitment comes from Bakhtin's own obsession with the unfinalizability of dialogue.[12] As a methodology based on a story's ongoing shaping and reshaping of a social context, DNA is both experiential and it is never done. That is, an experience or dialogue that will turn the trajectory or give nuance to the narrative is always possible and ever at hand. Fifth, though a research methodology, DNA seeks not to reach a finished point at which a narrative is pulled apart and analyzed in disparate pieces, but "to open continuing possibilities of listening

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[3] James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium, eds., *Varieties of Narrative Analysis* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2012), 2–3.

[4] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 24–28.

[5] Frank, *Letting Stories Breathe*, 67.

[6] Frank, *Letting Stories Breathe*, 71–72.

[7] Arthur W. Frank, "Practicing Dialogical Narrative Analysis," in *Varieties of Narrative Analysis*, 34.

[8] Frank, "Practicing," 34–35.

[9] Frank, "Practicing," 35.

[10] Frank, "Practicing," 35.

[11] Frank, "Practicing," 36.

[12] Frank, "Practicing," 36.

and responding to what is heard. . . . It seeks to show what is at stake in a story as a form of response."[13]

In applying DNA to Peter, this article assumes the premise that Peter's meaning-making, or construction of the dialogical self in dynamic relationship with Jesus, positioned him to be the spokesperson who narrated the events of Pentecost. Therefore, this article seeks to understand how Jesus' naming and accompanying statement to Peter that "on this rock, I will build my church" and the unfolding narrative of Peter's discipleship uniquely prepares Peter for this role. Though Peter's Pentecost speech is, of course, touched upon, this article is not about the speech itself. Instead, it is about Peter's preparation to be the speaker. This article will first examine the movements of faith formation in the story Jesus told Peter about who Peter was in relationship with the Godhead and then connect this first story with the act of Peter's storytelling at the inauguration of the era of the church. Frank's work provides invaluable instruction in methodology, while Sharon Daloz Parks' work on the construction of the dialogical self in the presence of a mentoring community[14] provides a framework from which to ask the questions DNA's commitments require.

Peter Meets Jesus

The character of Peter is introduced to the reader of the New Testament in the Gospels. Matthew's and Mark's accounts are almost identical, Luke's differs slightly, though the setting remains similar, and John's account is entirely new. In Matthew, Jesus is walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee and sees Peter fishing with his brother Andrew (4:18). Matthew notes two additional details in the first verse of his introduction. First, while he calls Peter by this name, he notes parenthetically that Peter's other name was Simon. Matthew also clarifies that Peter and Andrew were fishing as a profession rather than a hobby. Jesus walked by these two adult brothers at work in the family business. Jesus called to them both, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men!" (4:19).[15] "Immediately they left their nets," that is, the tools of their profession, "and followed him" (4:19). Mark's Gospel also has Peter and Andrew fishing in the Sea of Galilee, though Mark simply calls him Simon with no clarification (Mark 1:16–20).

Luke also has Jesus positioned by a shore, but in Luke, it is the Lake of Gennesaret, and instead of actively fishing, the fishermen, including Peter and Andrew, were cleaning their nets (5:2). Luke's introduction consistently uses the name Simon to refer to him, thus so will this paragraph. Luke's Gospel does not have Jesus simply call

[13] Frank, "Practicing," 37.

[14] Sharon Daloz Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000).

[15] Unless otherwise noted, all scripture is taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

out to Simon like in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. Rather, Jesus gets into Simon's boat, instructs him to go out on the water, and teaches the gathered crowd from the boat (5:3). Only when he has finished teaching is Jesus recorded as turning to Simon again. Jesus instructs him to go to deeper water and let down the now-clean nets. Simon responds first as a knowledgeable worker in his profession, followed by a statement of active faith. "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing," the fisherman who has just finished cleaning his nets after a night of fruitless endeavor explains. "But at your word, I will let down the nets," concludes the soon-to-be disciple (5:5). The nets filled to the breaking point, requiring a quick response from the other fisherman on the shore. Even so, the boats of Simon, as well as the additional boats, filled to the sinking point with fish (5:6–7). Simon's response then is an entreaty from his knees: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man" (5:8). Instead of departing, Jesus invites Simon into a journey of becoming that will change the trajectory of his life. '"Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.' And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him" (5:8, 10–11).

John's account takes place "in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing" (1:28). In leading up to the calling of the disciples, including Peter, John dedicates significant space to John the Baptist's identifying of Jesus as the Son of God, as proven by the anointing of the Holy Spirit (1:32–34). Gary M. Burge notes that through John the Baptist, the author of John is making sure the reader sees that the Spirit's anointing came and remained on Jesus. This is in contrast to Old Testament temporary anointings for the sake of completing a specific task. Jesus' permanent anointing is thus an identity element, confirming that he is indeed the son of God.[16] It is in this understanding that the day following this testimony, John the Baptist stood with his disciples, saw Jesus passing, and announced him to be "the Lamb of God" (1:36). Andrew heard John the Baptist's pronouncement, followed Jesus as a result, and found his own brother (here called Simon Peter), and invited him to also follow Jesus, saying, "We have found the Messiah" (1:41).

While Luke emphasizes Peter's response, John does not mention one. John's text simply states, "He [Andrew] brought him to Jesus." Again, there is silence from Peter and Jesus talks next, naming Peter: "'You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas' (which means Peter)" (1:42). D. A. Carson notes that in John's Gospel, Jesus naming Peter from the very beginning of their relationship connotes Jesus' "declaration of what Peter will become," not because of Peter's vision or initiative, but because of "what Jesus will make of him."[17] Thus, whether in the company of fishermen or

[16] Gary M. Burge, "The Gospel of John," in *A Biblical Theology of the Holy Spirit*, eds. Trevor J. Burke and Keith Warrington (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 105.

[17] D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 156.

disciples, in a boat or on land, noted as Simon, Peter, or Simon Peter, Peter's story with the permanently Spirit-anointed Jesus begins.

In describing how to practice DNA, Frank notes the necessity of "practicing *phronesis*," that is, looking for the stories among the whole that "call out as needing to be written about."[18] In the Gospels, there are many themes or collections of stories that call out. Even imposing the limitation of those stories only involving Peter and Jesus raises questions of power, power encounter, healing, identity, courage and cowardice, and many more. For the sake of this article, I turn to Richard R. Niebuhr's framework of shipwreck, gladness, and amazement and theologian Sharon Daloz Parks' interpretation of these movements as they apply to faith formation.[19] I will use these as the boundaries with which to select among the stories that "call out."

Shipwreck

Parks uses Niebuhr's framework of shipwreck, gladness, and amazement as a metaphor or story outline through which to view experience as it relates to the process of maturing in faith.[20] As Niebuhr poignantly states, "Believing belongs to experience. It does not generate itself."[21] Therefore, these metaphors are necessary to make sense of the categories of experiences from which belief emerges. The first of these, shipwreck, perhaps counterintuitively, involves a loss of faith. This loss need not be accompanied by dramatic events, though it may be. It is simply the erosion, sudden or gradual, of the foundations of life as the person has perceived them. As Parks notes, "In shipwreck, what has dependably served as shelter and protection and held and carried one to where one wanted to go comes apart. What once promised trustworthiness vanishes."[22] Indeed, Peter's shipwreck is quickly identified as the night and following two days in which his colleague, Judas, betrayed the beloved leader, friend, and mentor on whom their hopes and future rested, to his death and Judas' suicide. We see the graphic unraveling of Peter's stability as he first jumps to protect Jesus with his strength, cutting off the ear of the servant of the Sanhedrin in the Garden of Gethsemane, then, as the night wears on, is reduced to denying any affiliation with Jesus under the comparatively non-threatening questions of a slave-girl. The rooster crows. Peter has broken allegiance with the one for whom he said he would die. Jesus meets Peter's eyes. By the next day, Jesus will have been murdered. Peter's shipwreck is complete. Again, Parks is eloquent:

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[18] Frank, "Practicing," 43.

[19] Richard R. Niebuhr, *Experiential Religion* (New York: HarperCollins, 1972), 42–43, cited in Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*, 28.

[20] Niebuhr, *Experiential Religion*, 42–43, cited in Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*, 28.

[21] Niebuhr, *Experiential Religion*, 78.

[22] Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*, 28.

> The power of the experience of shipwreck is located precisely in one's inability to immediately sense the promise of anything beyond what has been secure and trustworthy. Until our meaning-making becomes very mature, in the midst of shipwreck there is little or no confidence of survival. The first time we are shipwrecked is, after all, the first time; how could we know that even this might be survived?[23]

You Are Peter

Before this night, Peter was learning a new storyline that began with the pivot from fishing for fish to fishing for men at the call of Jesus. Peter had experienced power encounters (Mark 1:21–28; 5:1–13; Luke 11:14;), divine healings (Matt 14:34–36; Mark 5:25–34; Luke 4:38–40;), miraculous multiplication of food (Matt 14:15–21; 15:32–39; Mark 6:30–44), the transfiguration (Matt 17:1–8; Mark 9:2–8; Luke 9:28–36), the resurrection of the dead (Mark 5:21–24, 35–42; John 11:1–44), and teachings on the kingdom of heaven (Matt 5:3–12; Luke 11:1–13; 16:20–23); in short, the manifestations of the kingdom of heaven breaking in on the earth. Peter had been strengthened (Luke 22:31–32), rebuffed (Matt 16:23), and empowered (Matt 10:1–20; 14:16; Luke 8:22–25) in the mentoring community of the disciples in the presence of Jesus. Even en route to Jerusalem for Jesus' crucifixion with Jesus foretelling the events of that night Peter and the other disciples refused to believe it. No one anticipates shipwreck.

During the disciples' journey to Jerusalem, Peter had confessed his faith in answer to Jesus' questions: who do people say that I am; who do you say that I am (Luke 9:18–20; Matt 16:13–15)? Here, Peter names Jesus "the Christ, the son of the living God" (Matt 16:16; Luke 9:20). Jesus, in turn, calls him blessed, explains that it is the Father in heaven who has revealed this to him, and names him Peter (Matt 16:17). "I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." Jesus continues with an extended promise: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt 16:17–19).

Notably, in this conversation, Peter identifies Jesus by the name Jesus already bears, though it has not been used up to this point in their relationship. Inherent in this name is a promise of relationship that confers identity. That is, Christ is identified as the son of the living God, a sonship that is unending. Thus, as previously noted, Jesus is identified first by John the Baptist as anointed by the Holy Spirit (John 1:32–34) and now by Peter as belonging to the Father in heaven. In this same conversation, Jesus also names Peter. But in contrast to Peter's naming of Jesus, Jesus gives Peter a new name.

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[23] Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*, 31.

This name also comes with a promise of lasting relationship, a name complete with a narrative of dynamic action and of promised victory as Jesus builds *his* church on Peter. In describing the Greek use of the word "name," James Shelton explains, "The Greek word for 'name' (*onoma*) could mean 'to have a reputation,' because to know a name was to know the person."[24] In the case of Jesus naming Peter, Peter had not yet become the rock to whom his new name referred. Jesus was conferring a promise of Peter's becoming, a promise in which the weight of potential rested in the dialogical relationship with Jesus. Leon Morris explains it thusly: "The giving of a new name is an assertion of the authority of the giver. . . . Jesus' renaming of the man points to the change that would be wrought in him by the power of God."[25] It is notable too that the vignette immediately following Peter's naming has Jesus showing the disciples that he must die. Peter protests what must surely seem like a contradiction to the promise Jesus had just made to build his church with Peter. Jesus' answer is a rebuff that leaves no room for negotiation: "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me" (Matt 16:23a). Jesus continues, explaining the cause of the hindrance: "For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man" (Matt 16:23b).

There is a long history of controversy regarding on what, specifically, Christ is promising to build his church: Peter or Peter's confession.[26] Patrick Schreiner compares Matthew 16 to Daniel 2, interpreting "this rock" as the kingdom of God. In this case, the emphasis is neither on Peter nor his confession itself, but on the kingdom realized in Jesus, with whom Peter is in close enough proximity and relationship to make his confession.[27] This article takes the position that it is Peter, the man, who makes the confession and on whom Christ will build his church.[28] As Schreiner states, "From the context, it seems the thrust of this passage is the revelation of the Messianic Savior and Peter's relationship to him."[29] Peter's relationship with Jesus is the most important thing about him. Whether confessing Christ's identity as the Messiah (Luke 9:20; Matt 16:16), or recklessly and assertively misinterpreting what this messiahship means (Matt 16:22), Peter does so in the context of the dialogical relationship with Jesus. Whether

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[24] James B. Shelton, "The Name of Jesus in Luke-Acts with Special Reference to the Gentile Mission," in *Proclaiming Christ in the Power of the Holy Spirit: Opportunities and Challenges*, eds. Wonsuk Ma, Emmanuel Anim, and Rebekah Bled (Tulsa: ORU Press, 2021), 12.

[25] Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdman's, 1995), 140–41.

[26] T. S. Ferda, "The Seventy Faces of Peter's Confession: Matt. 16:16–17 in the History of Interpretation," *Biblical Interpretation* 20 (2012), 422; Henry Andrew Corcoran, "Viewing Biblical Narratives through a Literary Lens: Practicing Narrative Analysis on Matthew 16: 16–20," *Christian Education Journal* 7:2 (2010), 306.

[27] Patrick Schreiner, "Peter, the Rock: Matthew 16 in Light of Daniel 2," *Criswell Theological Review* 13:2 (Spring 2016), 101, 104.

[28] Ferda, "The Seventy Faces," 445–50; Michael Patrick Barber, "Jesus as the Davidic Temple Builder and Peter's Priestly Role in Matthew 16:16–19," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 132:4 (2013), 944.

[29] Schreiner, "Peter, the Rock," 107.

Jesus is saying he will build his church on Peter or Peter's confession, the church is built by God in the context of dynamic relationship.

Corcoran notes that Peter's confession, as the "first unambiguous declaration of Jesus' identity by a disciple in Matthew,"[30] presents a narrative turning point in the story. "With Peter's confession, Jesus' task as teacher of the disciples shifts from demonstrating his messianic identity to clarifying its nature."[31] It is the nature of the suffering Messiah that Peter immediately objects to. Whether Jesus is promising to build his church on Peter or Peter's confession, it is critical to note that here, the confessor is not yet ready to stand by the implications of his own confession. Peter's faith is not yet mature or robust enough to bear the weight of identification with the name that he himself has declared to belong to Jesus. At this point in the story, Peter's confession is a brief, though accurate, "flash in the pan," to use the colloquial expression. Jesus' identity has been named by Peter, and now Jesus will take Peter and the other disciples on a journey of deepening understanding as to the nature of that name.

DNA continually asks the observer of the story, what does the story do? What are the story's effects on the environment? Peter's dialogical relationship with Jesus allows ample space for the trying on or practicing of different storylines. Here, for example, Jesus names Peter and confers a promise that seems to come with stature and power. "Jesus is going to build his church on me," Peter may have thought, and following that story's assumed trajectory, immediately protests Jesus' foretelling of suffering and death. Indeed, R. T. France notes Peter feeling "let down" and "shamed" by the narrative of the Messiah's apparent public failure.[32] However, Peter misunderstands the terms. Prestige, stature, and visibility are not the effects or the work of Jesus' story. Jesus corrects Peter. Jesus tells Peter both where his storyline is branching away from Jesus' story (Matt 16:23b) and what the corrective is (Matt 16:24–28). In this case, the corrective is the opposite of what Peter had assumed. France notes, "As long as Peter holds such a view, the 'rock' on which the church is to be built proves instead to be a stumbling block."[33] But Peter and Jesus are still in relationship. Neither the promises of Jesus' name nor of Peter's name have been revoked. In the mentoring community that is Jesus' band of disciples, dialogue is safe. Parks explains how dialogue in the setting of a mentoring community functions as a valuable tool in the process of meaning-making or growing up in faith:

> When one speaks and then is heard—but not quite, and therefore tries to speak yet more clearly—and then listens to the other—and understands, but not quite

[30] Corcoran, "Viewing Biblical Narratives," 307.
[31] Corcoran, "Viewing Biblical Narratives," 307.
[32] R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdman's, 2007), 634.
[33] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 635.

> and listens again—one becomes actively engaged in sorting out what is true and dependable within oneself about one's world. How one makes meaning is composed and recomposed in this process.[34]

Here, of course, Jesus does hear and perfectly comprehend Peter. Yet, he does not cut Peter off from the dialogical relationship because of this comprehension. Rather, he points him to what is "true and dependable," reorienting Peter and the other disciples to the storyline of the kingdom of heaven. In other conversations, too, Jesus' disciples, including Peter, hear but do not understand, and so listen again (Matt 13; Mark 12:1–12; 13:34–37; Luke 10:29–37; 15:8–32). Their meaning-making happens because of and in the company of Jesus. N. T. Wright says about the stories Jesus told, "His stories, like all stories in principle, invited his hearers into a new world, making the implicit suggestion that the new worldview be tried on for size with a view toward permanent purchase."[35] The story Jesus was telling Peter about his identity in relation to the Godhead and the church was different enough to require active dialogue as Peter "tried on the worldview" this kingdom story encompassed. It was also sturdy and grand enough to outlast the devastating shipwreck of Peter's temporary loss of self, faith, and of Jesus himself.

Gladness and Amazement

As previously noted, shipwreck, gladness, and amazement are all metaphors of experience. Parks describes the experience of emerging from shipwreck as amazement that shipwreck has been survived, combined with gladness that life still has meaning, even though earlier understandings of this meaning may have collapsed.[36] Indeed, shipwreck is not always survived. All of the disciples experienced the wreckage of Judas' betrayal and Jesus' death. For Judas, the betrayer, shipwreck became the final word, and he ended his own life (Matt 27:5). "So, gladness emerges in its distinctiveness most fully when it stands contrasted, through memory, with the presence of despair."[37]

John's Gospel records Peter's emergence from shipwreck into gladness and amazement in dialogue with the resurrected Jesus (21:15–19). Peter has returned to his former profession and is fruitlessly fishing when a stranger appears on the beach (vv. 3–4). In a story mirroring Luke 5:2–11, Peter lets down the nets at Jesus' instruction, receiving a catch so abundant that it required the men to drag the full net behind the boat rather than pull it in (v. 8). While the other disciples in the boat struggle with the

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[34] Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*, 142.
[35] N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 77.
[36] Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*, 29.
[37] Niebuhr, *Experiential Religion*, 97.

catch, John records Peter's emergence from shipwreck into gladness and amazement: "When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment . . . and threw himself into the sea" (v. 7). Frederick Bruner observes about this passage: "When Jesus reveals himself through his Word and words, he empowers his receivers to respond to him; his self-revelations are rarely ends in themselves."[38] Jesus re-enters the dialogical relationship with Peter empowering Peter to respond to him. Though John records several disciples bringing the boat with the large haul of fish to shore, only Peter is recorded as unloading the 153 fish (v. 11). One can imagine the energy, strength, vitality, and perhaps even laughter Peter's immense relief at having survived shipwreck produced. Niebuhr provides a helpful description of Peter's state: "The suggestion of motion, energy, power, together with the directionality of this energy as the felt content of the mood of rejoicing is unmistakable."[39] While the joy of emergence from shipwreck is more substantive than a "mood of rejoicing," such a mood is nonetheless recorded in Peter's transformation from the terse fisherman reporting on a failed night's work (v. 5) to ebullient dockhand, perhaps singlehandedly unloading the surprise catch.

Witnessing Peter being pulled back into the dialogical relationship with the resurrected Savior, the reader shares in Peter's amazement that his story with Jesus is not complete. Indeed, as previously noted, within DNA's structure is a commitment to unfinalizability. An experience or dialogue that will turn the trajectory or give nuance to the narrative is ever at hand. Again, Parks is worth quoting at length in her valuable elaboration on Niebuhr's metaphor:

> It is gladness that pervades one's whole being; there is a new sense of vitality, be it quiet or exuberant. Generally, however, there is more than relief in this gladness. There is transformation. We discover a new reality beyond the loss. . . . We rarely experience this as a matter of our own making. As the primal, elemental force of the promise stirs again within us, we often experience it as a force acting upon us, beneath us, carrying us—sometimes in spite of our resistance—into new meaning, new consciousness, new faith. . . . There is deeply felt gladness in an enlarged knowing and being, and in a new capacity to act.[40]

It is into this new capacity to act that Jesus draws Peter, again through conversation. Calling Peter by his old name of Simon, Jesus asks, "Do you love me more than these?" Peter, addressing him by the formal title, answers, "Yes Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus responds with a command, "Feed my lambs" (v. 15). This scene is repeated twice more, with Peter "feeling grieved" and appealing to Jesus' knowledge of all things in his

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[38] Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2012), ebook location 21:6c.

[39] Niebuhr, Experiential Religion, 98–99.

[40] Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*, 29.

third answer: "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you" (v. 17). Jesus replies a third time with instructions to care for his sheep. Then Jesus continues, reminding Peter of and commissioning him into the suffering interwoven in the narrative of the kingdom. The same suffering of which Peter had tried to call Jesus out in Matthew 16 (John 21:18–19). Then, as a benediction on Peter's story, which was anchored in relationship with the Godhead, Jesus said, "Follow me" (v. 19).

Peter at Pentecost

When a community experiences a common shipwreck, there is an intimacy of having both been immersed in and then of surviving the wreckage. This intimacy of survival can be expressed in a deepening of knowledge and of questioning, an expanded sense of meaning-making that now encompasses and must reckon with the knowledge of the experience of suffering.[41] I suggest that those in the upper room formed such a community as they waited together for the promise of the Spirit (Acts 1:13–14). "The questions that suffering and death pose to us are questions of faith: is there any form of meaning, and faith, that can *without delusion* embrace both our small and great sufferings?" Parks asks (emphasis added).[42] On Pentecost, Peter stands up and narrates to the gathered crowd a story that provides a resounding yes to the question Parks poses.

DNA's first commitment describes the many-voiced-ness of stories, assuming that in each voicing or telling of a narrative, many are finding voice through the storyteller, or what Bakhtin calls *polyphony*.[43] Frank describes this many-voiced-ness within a single narration as "emphasizing how one speaker's voice is always resonant with the voices of specific others—people whom the speaker listens to and whose response she or he anticipates."[44] Thus, when Peter stands up, he does not do so alone. Standing "with the eleven" (Acts 2:14) he addresses his "fellow Jews" (v. 14, NIV) with a shared narrative that both encompasses their shared history and requires present, active, and individual response. Here, Peter exemplifies DNA's third commitment of extending the dialogue further, wrapping new voices and possible trajectories into the unfolding narrative.[45] Indeed, the "yes" of Peter's narration reverberates throughout the Jewish landscape, with 3,000 Jews from "every nation under heaven" accepting Peter's message as their own and receiving baptism that day (2:5, 41). DNA asks what work the story does, then stories of faith without delusion do the work of active memory, recomposing the pieces of what the hearers know to be trustworthy into a narrative that both

[41] Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*, 30.
[42] Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*, 30.
[43] Frank, "Practicing," 34.
[44] Frank, "Practicing," 35.
[45] Frank, "Practicing," 36.

includes the present and points to a good future.[46] Scott Cormode calls these communal narratives "shared stories of future hope."[47]

Peter is no glib spokesperson defending a passing emotion or an illusion. He has experienced the shipwreck of the world as he understood it and survived, not through his own grit, but through Jesus' unyielding faithfulness to him. As David Bosch states, "If human distress takes many forms, the power of God does likewise."[48] Finally, Peter understands the story, and he cannot now be deluded as to the kind of faith this story entails. Nor will he narrate a fragile story for others. Through the movements of faith formation in dialogical relationship with Jesus, Peter has become solid. The words, "Then Peter stood up" (Acts 2:14, NIV), provide a striking contrast to an earlier Peter. Of the earlier Peter, the following could be said: then Peter reacted with violence (John 18:10); then Peter denied Jesus (Luke 22:56–61); then Peter returned to his profession as a failure (John 21:2–3). At Pentecost, Peter stands up and speaks to the gathered crowd "words of sober truth."[49] R. C. Tannehill emphasizes the narrative positioning of the narrator and audience at Pentecost, calling it "a critical situation."[50] Tannehill describes Peter and the disciples' understanding that Jesus was rejected in Jerusalem and that this is a central plot point in the story of Jesus as Messiah; however, the audience of Jews that they are surrounded by has not yet reckoned with this.[51] Therefore, when Peter stands up in the power of the Holy Spirit, it is first to confront a crowd of devout Jewish men gathered in Jerusalem from every nation (Acts 2:5). This is no servant girl or individual bystander inquiring about an accent, before whom a Peter tumbling quickly into shipwreck capitulated (Matt 26:69–73). Everything has now changed for him. George Beasley-Murray comments, "By reason of his devastating experience of fall and restoration to the fellowship of his Lord, Peter is particularly fitted to carry out that aspect of the pastoral office referred to by Jesus in Luke 21:32: 'Once you have recovered, you in your turn must strengthen your brothers.'"[52] Peter, now the rock, stands before a crowd of devout men, some of whom are already mocking the move of

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[46] Frank, *Letting Stories Breathe*, 83. See also Laurel J. Kiser, "Who Are We but for the Stories We Tell: Family Stories and Healing," *Psychological Trauma* 2:3 (September 2010), 243–49.

[47] Scott Cormode, "The Next Faithful Step: A Shared Story of Future Hope," *Fuller Theological Seminary*, https://www.fuller.edu/next-faithful-step/resources/a-shared-story-of-future-hope/ (31 July 2021).

[48] David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 33.

[49] Jerry Horner, "The Credibility and the Eschatology of Peter's Speech at Pentecost," *Pneuma* 2:1 (January 1980), 26.

[50] R. C. Tannehill, "The Functions of Peter's Mission Speeches in the Narrative of Acts," *New Testament Studies* 37:3 (1991), 402.

[51] Tannehill, "The Functions of Peter's Mission Speeches," 402.

[52] George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 407.

the Spirit (Acts 2:13), and lifts his voice in provocative, unapologetic narrative. In doing so, Peter becomes the spokesperson, prophetically[53] narrating the events as an unfolding story, rooted in history, pointing to the future, encompassing each one who hears and receives both story and Spirit.[54]

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[53] R. C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 30.

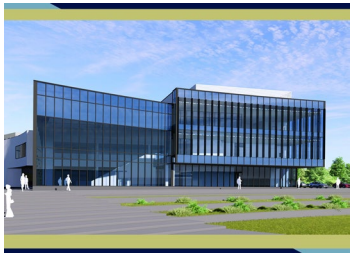
[54] Amos Yong, *Who Is the Holy Spirit? A Walk with the Apostles* (Brewster: Paraclete Press, 2011), 115–18.

The ORU Center for Spirit-empowered Research

Oral Roberts University (ORU) recently named Dr. Wonsuk Ma, Dean of the College of Theology and Ministry, as the Executive Director of the new Oral Roberts University Center for Spirit-empowered Research. He will assume his role on May 1, 2023, and a search will begin for a new dean for the College of Theology and Ministry.

Dr. Ma has served for the past five years as the Dean of the College of Theology and Ministry at ORU. During his tenure, Dr. Ma strengthened the college's research infrastructure. He launched a new Ph.D. in Theology program, two journals, and the annual publication of the Empowered21 academic books. He also increased research distribution, including faculty and students in various publications.

The new Center will enhance ORU's global leadership as a Spirit-empowered university with the addition of academic research, publishing, and global networking. In addition, the Center will provide oversight for ORU's Theology Ph.D. programs and partner academically with Empowered 21, a global relational network for the Spirit-empowered movement. As part of this new addition, ORU's world-renowned Holy Spirit Research Center, which houses one of the most extensive collections of Holy Spirit resources, will be renamed the Holy Spirit Resource Center, with a focus on archives and publications.



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On Making "Universal Human Rights" *Universal*

The Intelligibility of Human Rights in Jacques Maritain's Natural Law Theory

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Abstract

This article examines the thought and influence of Jacques Maritain, specifically his application of Traditional Natural Law (TNL) theory to the vexing challenge of what makes universal human rights universal. The author shows how TNL satisfies the preconditions for the "universality factor" needed for making human rights truly universal where rival theories such as legal positivism, New Natural Law, and Empirical Natural Law fall short.

Introduction

Perhaps no event in human history has had as great an impact on a global scale as the Great Wars of the twentieth century. In the wake of devastation incurred by the Great Wars, people recast their vision toward the value of human life. Not long after World War II, pains were undertaken by nations to collaborate and explore the feasibility of a unified international body to draft a Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). What began as an inquiry as to its plausibility became a reality in 1948. Whereas discussion of "rights" is not a new discussion, rooted in centuries of philosophical and legal thought, contemporary American society swims in the sea of "rights talk." Max Hocutt claims America has become an "entitlement culture" and argues that "talk of rights has gotten completely out of hand."[1] This burgeoning "rights consciousness" has, in his view, become unbalanced, for now "rights lists have become wishlists."[2] So, what are the limits of "rights talk"? What role can and should human rights play in society today? How can one make sense of "rights" and what further is needed such that

[1] Max Hocutt, "Rights: Rhetoric versus Reality," *The Independent Review* 17:1 (2012), 51.
[2] Hocutt, "Rights: Rhetoric versus Reality," 51.

the notion of universal human rights is not only coherent and compelling, but truly intelligible? These questions and more will garner the primary focus of this present essay.

In search of a coherent explanation and justification of universal human rights, scholars in the fields of jurisprudence and moral philosophy have posited divergent theories. This essay seeks to determine which theory best explains the justification of universal human rights; in other words, which view, if any, can provide a consistent, coherent, and intelligible rationale for how "universal human rights" can justifiably be considered "rights," and how these rights can truly be "universal" in scope? The essay will, therefore, first examine the life, thought, and influence of Jacques Maritain in the realization of the UDHR, followed by analysis of his Natural Law (NL) theory and how NL has historically answered the question of Natural Rights (NR). After alternatives to NL are examined, the author will demonstrate how these alternatives have, to some degree, explanatory power in addressing the functional dimensions of law making, yet fail to provide the sufficient grounds for what is necessary to justify the *universality* of human rights, which alone can be vindicated in Traditional NL (TNL) theory.

The Life and Thought of Jacques Maritain

Jacques Maritain was born in Paris in 1882. He grew up viewing life as basically hopeless. As a young adult he and his new fiancé Raïssa Oumansav made a suicide pact together, promising to one another that if they did not find meaning in life within the next year, they would end their lives on the anniversary of their pact. Within that year, however, they both were persuaded by León Bloy that life indeed has meaning, and preeminently in Jesus Christ. Filled with faith that Christianity was true they subsequently were received into the Roman Catholic Church in 1906.[3]

Meritain enjoyed a long, prolific career as a philosopher teaching in numerous institutes, colleges, and universities from 1912 till 1960, whereupon Jacques and his wife Raïssa returned to France. Not long after the death of his wife, he joined a religious order in Toulouse, the Little Brothers of Jesus, where he lived and died in 1973.[4] In addition to his prolific teaching career, Maritain composed a voluminous body of published works that notably include *The Degrees of Knowledge* (1932), *True Humanism* (1936), *The Rights of Men and Natural Law* (1942), *The Person and the Common Good* (1947), and *Man and the State* (1951). Focused mostly on social action, he "began to develop the principles of a liberal Christian humanism and defense of natural rights."[5]

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[3] Jacques Maritain, *Natural Law: Reflections on Theory and Practice* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 1952).

[4] Maritain, *Natural Law*, 7.

[5] Maritain, *Natural Law*, 5.

Just prior to WWII, he and Raïssa fled to North America, where he taught first in Toronto, then at Princeton and Columbia. Following WWII, he dedicated much of his attention to assisting in the efforts made by the United Nations to draft a UDHR. Concerning this, William Sweet adds, "[I]n December 1944, Maritain was named French Ambassador to the Vatican (serving until 1948), and was actively involved in a number of diplomatic activities, including discussions that led to the drafting of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)."[6] Maritain's legacy is inextricably linked to the role he played both in terms of the content of the UDHR and his assistance in its final incarnation. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) assembled a committee to examine the feasibility of drafting the UDHR and, as Andrew Woodcock points out, the

> committee was made up of some of the leading scholars and jurists of the day, and it has been suggested that it is largely due to the foundations laid by this group that the declaration ultimately came into existence. . . . [I]f the drafting process had stalled at this point, and it had been established that there could be no agreement between the stakeholders on the question of content, then the process could not have gone on. Jacques Maritain played a significant role at this early stage. He was a key figure in the UNESCO committee, and prepared the introduction to the UNESCO report on the proceedings of the committee. [He] made a significant submission to the committee in his individual capacity . . . [and] the ultimate "tone" of the Declaration *reflects the substantial contribution made by Maritain at this genesis of its creation*.[7]

The significant linkage between the content of the UDHR and Maritain's thought can hardly be understated. As Woodcock points out, as "an unashamed Thomist . . . he was a strong exponent of the work of Thomas Aquinas. The dominant theme in his work tends to be on the issue of the rights of man, and the [*sic*] human dignity, as it arises from natural law, rather than on the duties of man as a social animal."[8] For Maritain, a reasonable justification for universal human rights is not consistent within legal positivism or alternative NL theories, but the fruit of Thomistic NL. Why does this matter? It is relevant because "the declaration was perhaps the clearest example in the twentieth century of a document which has the appearance of a legislative instrument bearing the hallmarks of a natural law document."[9] To the specifics of NL theory, and Maritain's version of it, this essay shall now turn.

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[6] William Sweet, as cited in Maritain, *Natural Law*, 6.

[7] Andrew Woodcock, "Jacques Maritain, Natural Law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," *Journal of the History of International Law* 8 (2006), 247. Emphasis original.

[8] Woodcock, "Jacques Maritain, Natural Law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," 256.

Natural Law and Natural Rights

Since discussion of "natural rights" is a legitimate discussion to have, and *universal* rights in particular, one must ask a pertinent question: On *what* is the notion of "natural rights" based? Historically, the response has been that "natural rights" proceed from "natural law." But what is NL? What is its theoretical origination? Which major figures have promoted and advanced NL theory?

Andrew Woodcock argues, "The high watermark of classical natural law theory is to be found in Cicero, the first-century lawyer, statesman and philosopher. Cicero approached the identification of true law on the basis of the assumption that the world was the work of a divine entity."[10] Centuries before Cicero, however, philosophers like Plato and Aristotle advanced theories of NL, laying significant groundwork for discussion in the field. The role Cicero played in the development of NL should not be overlooked. "Borrowing from both Plato and Aristotle, Cicero focused on the essentially social nature of man, to determine the content of law. That is, he considered the social institutions created by man, and proposed that the content of law must be to promote the interaction of man, and to protect the institutions he has created."[11] The matter of humanity's *preservation* is important to the theory. Woodcock underscores how "the principle of preservation of the order of man is the single most important principle governing the determination of law, which can be identified from the works of all natural lawyers following upon Cicero."[12] Another key figure in the development of NL theory is Thomas Aquinas, the Dominican scholastic of the thirteenth century A.D. In his *Summa Theologiae,* he writes:

> Now among others, the rational creature is subject to Divine Providence in a more excellent way, by being provident both for itself and for others. Therefore, it has a share of the eternal reason, whereby it has a natural inclination to its own proper act and end; and this participation of the eternal law in the creature is called the natural law. . . . The light of natural reason, whereby we discern what is good and what is evil, which is the function of the natural law, is nothing other than the participation of the eternal law in the rational creature.[13]

In Aquinas' view, God as creator has ordered the cosmos and everything he has created to function in a rational, particular, ordered way. Thus, everything in creation is

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[9] Woodcock, "Jacques Maritain, Natural Law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," 248.
[10] Woodcock, "Jacques Maritain, Natural Law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," 249.
[11] Woodcock, "Jacques Maritain, Natural Law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," 249.
[12] Woodcock, "Jacques Maritain, Natural Law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," 249.
[13] *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 92, 2, as quoted in Ralph J. Masiello, "Some Brave Ideas on an Old Rule of Law: The Natural Law According to Jacques Maritain—Jacques Maritain on the Natural Law and Human Rights," *Catholic Lawyer* 25:1 (Winter 1979), 4.

ordered to the end (*telos*) to which God has brought it into being. As he states elsewhere, "[E]verything that is contrary to the law of nature is a sin because it is contrary to the law of nature."[14]

Expounding upon NL, Ralph Masiello emphasizes, "The reality of the natural law is manifested in the natural tendency of man to eschew violence and pursue peace. This spontaneous quest for justice, friendship, enlightenment, everything that is necessary for the perfection of the person, it is rooted in man's will."[15] This "natural tendency" for humanity to "eschew violence" and to "pursue peace" is viewed to be *in itself* a kind of empirical evidence of the "law" that makes these propensities consistent, evident, and consistently evident. This is precisely what Aquinas addresses by his reference to the "natural inclination" of man as predisposed toward his nature. Why? Because "a natural inclination is a tendency of man to function according to the normal capacity of a power."[16] Humans consistently behave *in a certain way*, and as they do, they demonstrate there is distinction evident between the "laws of men" and the "moral laws" that supersede them. It is precisely these "moral laws" that compel many to abide by the "laws of men" and to conform to them. As Woodcock points out, "[N]atural law in its classical formulation is perhaps best stated in the Ciceronian maxim *lex iniustia non est lex* ('an unjust law is not law'). This is perhaps the most simplistic statement of the theory, and it is arguably overly simplistic."[17] This has led some to highlight what is called the "due care standard" with respect to commonly held convictions regarding basic human ethical behavior. In the words of Charles P. Nameth,

> An imprecise doctrine, the due care standard governs human conduct, demanding that every person act reasonably in his journey through the temporal world and entitling him similar treatment in return. It is generally agreed that individuals do not have a duty to anticipate others' negligence, and thus, absent special circumstances, persons may assume, and act accordingly, that other members of society will use ordinary care. The shadow of the natural law may be seen within these lines, for man is thought of as good and is expected to be directed to it.[18]

Nameth's commentary accentuates the basic assumption made by humans to be free to live as "they are entitled" in their self-determinative pursuits. This "sense of entitlement" directly addresses the notion of "rights," and universal ones at that. This is pointedly significant, because "[a]ll legal standards recognize that there is a higher order,

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[14] Masiello, "Some Brave Ideas on an Old Rule of Law," 6.

[15] Masiello, "Some Brave Ideas on an Old Rule of Law," 1.

[16] Masiello, "Some Brave Ideas on an Old Rule of Law," 6.

[17] Woodcock, "Jacques Maritain, Natural Law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," 249.

[18] Charles P. Nemeth, "Jacques Maritain on the Natural Law and Its Application," *Catholic Lawyer* 25:1 (Winter 1979), 9.

a design in which men govern and are governed by just measure. This concept is embodied in the natural law. The rights to life, personal freedom and property are not legislative inventions; they are merely reflections on the Supreme rule."[19] As Ralph McKinnon so eloquently puts it, it is "evidenced that laws are made, not discovered except in the natural principles in which they are ultimately grounded."[20]

Not all scholars believe the notion of "human rights" to be all that clear. As Max Hocutt retorted, "[T]he phrase human rights is ambiguous between (1) rights that are presumed to belong to human beings naturally as against rights belonging to them as members of various societies and (2) rights that human beings are presumed to have as against rights supposedly belonging to animals, plants, or inanimate objects."[21] Masiello echoes the challenge of "human rights" rhetoric, particularly their grounding: "The crucial problem relating to human rights today, over and above an overriding sense of uncertainty as to the true foundation of human rights, is the confusion of surrogate rights entrusted to the state with the natural rights, or the relegation of natural rights to acquired rights."[22] Since political legal theory and moral philosophy are replete in virtually every culture, one must consider the alternatives to the TNL view.

Rival Theories to Traditional Natural Law

If a person is not inclined to embrace TNL, what alternative theories may be embraced? Some scholars embrace a theory called *legal positivism*, others advocate a form of *new natural law* theory, and yet others contend for a mere "empirical natural law." The author of this essay shall address each of these in turn.

Logical legal positivism is "the view that legal standards are merely social conventions and do not reflect a universal moral law."[23] In other words, every culture establishes particular behavioral norms and as such these norms become implicit regulations for how people in these cultures "should" behave. The apparent "moral laws" serve as a functional "law" as they determine the ideal behavioral standard in that particular culture. Not all laws, however, pertain to moral categories. In the words of Leslie Green,

> legal positivism denies [the claim of natural law that laws are grounded in an essentially moral enterprise] insisting that there is no necessary connection between law and morality, at least none that guarantees that every full-blooded

[19] Nemeth, "Jacques Maritain on the Natural Law and Its Application," 8.
[20] Quoted in Nemeth, "Jacques Maritain on the Natural Law and Its Application," 8.
[21] Hocutt, "Rights: Rhetoric versus Reality," 51n3.
[22] Masiello, "Some Brave Ideas on an Old Rule of Law," 7.
[23] Stephen B. Cowen and James S. Spiegel, *The Love of Wisdom: A Christian Introduction to Philosophy* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Academic, 2006), 457.

> legal system will have some positive moral worth. Law is just an institutionalized mode of rule application, rules being identified by considerations of social fact and without recourse to moral arguments.[24]

Distinction needs to be made here between the laws a government may pass, and a judge's interpretation of the law in its application, for "to a positivist, a theory of law and a theory of proper adjudication are different enterprises. Law often gives judges the power to decide whether a certain delay is 'unreasonable,' whether a wage rate is 'fair,' whether procedures accord with 'fundamental justice,' and so on."[25] If legal positivism can arrive at a cogent explanation for NL as referring to laws produced by natural, albeit rational, animals, the case, it seems, can be made that these local (as opposed to universal) conventional rules are in fact a kind of NL. Such normative behavioral rules are simply naturally produced by natural entities. Still, the question of how one may distinguish between "morals" and "laws" remains. "Certain exponents of positivism have sought a complete separation of law and morals. . . . [For instance,] Justice Black believed that the natural law had no place in legal reasoning and felt that the Supreme Court should abandon it as an 'incongruous excrescence on our constitution.'"[26] Hence, it appears that legal positivism can account for some measure of standardization concerning localized communally compulsory behavioral expectations, yet it cannot, and does not, make a case for universal NL.

What does New Natural Law (NNL) theory bring to the table? The roots of NNL are rooted in TNL theory. As Maritain once claimed (representing the Thomistic tradition), "[M]an's right to existence, to personal freedom, and to the pursuit of the perfection of moral life, belongs, strictly speaking, to natural law."[27] Aquinas maintained that there were two levels involved in the NL: (1) the ontological ground for NL, and (2) the epistemological (or "gnoseological") dimension related to *knowledge of* the NL. It is precisely the aim of NNL theorists to contemporize Thomistic NL such that the first level is deemed irrelevant, hence atheists can find common ground with NNL, since human reasoning about normative human behavior is possible.

Shalina Stilley unpacks some NNL distinctives: "New natural law theorists claim that just as principles of speculative reason are not derived from other principles but are *per se nota*, so too is the first principle of practical reason. In addition, they claim that since there are self-evident goods, it is possible to grasp the basic precepts or Oughts of natural law without deducing them from facts about human nature."[28] If indeed

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[24] Leslie Green, "The Nature of Law Today," *American Political Science Review* 88:1 (1994), 206.

[25] Green, "The Nature of Law Today," 208.

[26] Nemeth, "Jacques Maritain on the Natural Law and Its Application," 11.

[27] Maritain, *Natural Law*, 65.

[28] Shalina Stilley, "Natural Law Theory and the Is—Ought Problem: A Critique of Four Solutions," (PhD diss., Marquette University, 2010), 141.

certain goods are "self-evident," one is still left to wonder *why* they are self-evident. Nonetheless, NNL advocates contend the starting place must be self-evident goods, from which one deliberates to more complex levels of moral reasoning. On this, George Khushf highlights, "Generally, new natural law theorists claim that we reason from self-evident basic goods to that sense of the whole meaning of life."[29] This points to what is called "practical reasoning." How does this type of reasoning work? "Practical reasoning starts with the self-evident basic goods, specifies these, moves to second-order regulation of their pursuit (and this feeds back on the specification), and then at the tail end of the process comes to a sense of 'integral fulfillment,' which is itself specified and iteratively refined over the whole of life."[30] The process of NL reasoning for NNL is, then, one that builds from *practical reasoning* to *integral fulfillment*. Khushf demonstrates that at least four distinct levels are entailed in NNL:

> If we take for granted what new natural law theorists say about practical reasoning, then: at the first level, practical reasoning orients an agent toward basic goods and regulates how such goods are to be pursued; at the second level, a general theory might be worked out about what is going on at this first level; at the third level, an account might be given of the nature of the accessibility of claims associated with either of these first two levels to an agent or agents who may ask about the grounds for holding any of the claims to be true. Finally, even if we conclude that some set of claims is rationally accessible (whatever we may mean by this), we have a tricky relation between those beliefs about rational accessibility and any belief about what will, in fact, be the case.[31]

Khushf does well to highlight the tension NNL faces in the identification of "what is knowable" and what in fact "will be the case" in certain circumstances. When it comes to NNL, therefore, it appears clear that its starting point is the very fact of human acknowledgement of self-evident goods, continuing via practical reasoning to integral fulfillment.[32]

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[29] George Khushf, "What Hope for Reason? A Critique of New Natural Law Theory," *Christian Bioethics* 22:2 (2016), 251.

[30] Khushf, "What Hope for Reason?" 251.

[31] Khushf, "What Hope for Reason?" 246.

[32] Much more could be elaborated here. Note David Elliot in his contention that NNL theorists "insist that prior to any moral consideration whatsoever, practical reason must be aware of the good the pursuit of which will result in moral considerations, but whose sheer awareness itself is distinct from such considerations. This is the level at which practical reason self-evidently knows Aquinas' first principle of practical reason: 'Good is to be done and pursued, and evil avoided.' The idea is that prior to choice human beings find themselves directed towards various goods the realization of which does not merely lead to happiness or flourishing, but constitutes it. These goods are considered to be intrinsic to all human persons, and as such are spoken of by Finnis as 'underived' and 'basic'. They are 'underived' in the sense that the goodness of the goods does not need to be proven by speculative reason because anyone who reflects upon their own practice understands them to be self-evidently good without the need of

Finally, what can be said about a so-called "empirical natural law" view? Max Hocutt makes the case for an "empirical natural law," one that is evolutionarily tenable to think that moral norms are the byproduct of biological programming in human DNA. Every tribal people, according to Hocutt, would have embraced communal duties that, in turn, are passed on not simply in one's oral history, but one that "suggests that an instinct for closely knit tribal communalism is probably built into the human genome and embedded in the human brain; as the saying goes, it's in our DNA."[33] To be certain, this view should be taken seriously. To this he adds, "Furthermore, this hypothesis is confirmed by the fact that human beings everywhere yearned for the security of the tribally based communal existence that their ancestors enjoyed for many millennia. This yearning helps to explain socialist distain of personal Liberty and private property, concepts once pregnant in England and its colonies, if now very much in decline there."[34] His concluding argument is both clear and forceful:

> Rights—moral as well as legal—are constituted by social conventions. Moral rights are constituted by moral conventions, legal rights by legal conventions. Under both kinds of conventions, some people have rights because other people have duties, and others have duties because the members of their society make a practice of enforcing them. Therefore, that a right exists means that it has protection in the form of regular enforcement of the duties associated with it. This explanation holds whether the topic is official rights of law or unofficial rights of morality and etiquette. Legal rights exist under rules of law, so they enjoy the protections of government. Moral rights (and rights of etiquette) exist under informal customs and enjoy the protection of ordinary members of society. Without official protections, no legal rights exist; and without unofficial protections, no moral rights exist. It follows that all rights, legal or moral, are man-made.[35]

John Hasnas, another advocate of empirical natural rights, admits from the outset that morals and rights are products of humanity and need not be grounded in a transcendent source. "The rights I have described . . . are not inherent in human beings and do not spring from human nature or fundamental moral principles." He goes on to explain, "They are certainly not 'natural' in the sense of not having been created by 'human action.' Although not consciously created by any human mind, they depend on human interaction for their existence. Thus, although they are 'the result of human

argument." See David Elliot, "A Theological Assessment of the Natural Law Theory," (master's thesis, Toronto School of Theology, 2010), 36.

[33] Hocutt, "Rights: Rhetoric versus Reality," 60.

[34] Hocutt, "Rights: Rhetoric versus Reality," 60–61.

[35] Hocutt, "Rights: Rhetoric versus Reality," 63.

action, but not the execution of any human design,' they are indeed the creation of human beings."[36]

If all rights and laws are humanly produced, as Hocutt and Hasnas assert, one is left to ask, "Should this theory be called 'empirical natural laws' rather than 'empirical natural *law*?'" The use of the singular *law*, although helpful linguistically, may give the strong impression that NL would apply to *all* humans *everywhere*. This, however, does not logically follow from the case made by Hocutt or Hasnas. More on this to come. Attention now will turn to Maritain and his adumbrations of Thomistic NL theory.

Making Sense of "Universal" Human Rights

Thus far, this article has touched on (1) the life and thought of Jacque Maritain, (2) NL and NR, (3) alternatives to TNL, and (4) Maritain's application of TNL. Focus will now be given to the shortcomings in alternative theories to TNL in satisfying the preconditions for the intelligibility of universal human rights (UHR). First, NNL will be addressed, then legal positivism, and finally, empirical NL.

Contra NNL

One of the salient questions this essay centers on is this: Which theory can best make the case for the universality of human rights? Deriving from TNL theory, NNL adherents make a strong case for how humans can navigate toward moral and ethical behavior by starting from self-evident goods and extrapolating from these toward a place deemed "integral fulfillment." In strong criticism against NNL, Khushf claims the following:

> On the premises of new natural law theory, the capacity for practical reasoning and the use of that capacity is logically, ontologically, and temporally prior to any awareness of the truth of the theory. Satisfying these conditions for practical reasoning is not sufficient for development of the theory. In fact, many people reason practically yet are not able to explicitly articulate the first principle, let alone the full theory. Appreciation of this distinction between rational accessibility of the theory and rational accessibility of the principles posited by the theory is important for clarifying the nature of the claim new natural law theorists make about the direct rational accessibility of the principles to all rational agents. They are claiming that *all agents are aware of the principles and they deploy them when they*

[36] John Hasnas, "Toward a Theory of Empirical Natural Rights," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 22:1 (2005), 134.

> *reason practically*. However, at the second-order level, agents may not be aware that they are aware of the principles and how they are deploying them.[37]

An important take-away from Khushf's critique is simply that NNL makes a fatal assumption that agents "are aware of the principles and they deploy them when they reason practically." Khushf astutely points out that *people often fail to do so*. Additionally, NNL, as well as a version of it named NNL Action Theory, fall short of satisfying the "universality factor." In the words of Steven J. Jensen, "One of the great weaknesses of [NNL] action theory is a lack of consistency in applying a universal standard."[38] Elsewhere he writes,

> The fundamental criticism against new natural law action theory questions its account of intention. New natural law excludes from intention (so the criticism goes) that which should be included . . . on the one hand, it might claim that intention includes more than the goal and the means to achieve that goal. On the other hand, it might grant this account of intention but question the new natural law analysis of what counts as a means. I think the merits of the former criticism can often be expressed in terms of the latter.[39]

The failure of NNL to account for why certain goods are self-evident is the Achilles heel of the theory, falling short as a satisfactory model in making the case for UHR. Although it makes a case for a kind of epistemological tenability that explains human behavior—most notably "moral awareness of goods"—it does not make a satisfactory case for both the ontological grounds for why self-evident goods exist, or why such moral duties are compulsory for an individual. It simply falls short of the goal.

Contra Legal Positivism

Legal positivism fares even worse in accounting for UHR. Their own proponents have acknowledged that positivism makes no claim to do so. Positivists argue laws cannot derive their grounding from a supernatural source and "that only its purpose, goal or function makes law what it is; and since it is trivially true that a thing ought to fulfill its proper function, positivists must be wrong to think that there is a difference between law as it is and law as it ought to be."[40] Despite the laws of human beings taking the form of an "ought," there is no universally binding factor that compels all people

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[37] Khushf, "What Hope for Reason?" 253. Emphasis added.

[38] Steven J. Jensen, "Phoenix Rising from the Ashes: Recent Attempts to Revive New Natural Law Action Theory," *The National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 20:3 (2020), 525.

[39] Jensen, "Phoenix Rising from the Ashes," 529.

[40] Green, "The Nature of Law Today," 207.

everywhere to submit to them. They are merely social conventions and, as such, can be revised and dismissed at the behest of the cultures who produce them.

The rejection of a universal NL leads to a fundamental undermining of UHR. Like NNL, positive law lacks a sufficient ontological ground. "To Maritain, positive law could not exist without the natural law. There is no true 'being' of positive law," says Nemeth.[41] Why is this the case? Because "even the most expert craftsman of legal verbiage must rely on more than mere words. Just as a carpenter needs to have a conceptual picture of a table in order to build one, a legal draftsman needs to have a specific foundation of justice appropriate to his or her legislative proposal."[42] To quote Mortimer J. Adler, "[P]ositive law without a foundation in natural law is purely arbitrary. It needs the natural law to make it rational."[43]

Ralph Masiello finds positivism lacking because it reduces to arbitrary subjectivism, lacking universal authority. He warns that "without the natural law as the basis for civil law, a purely pragmatic interpretation of the law could become capriciously susceptible to the whims of public opinion, and inalienable rights can become a figment of positive law, undermining the foundations of our democratic freedoms."[44] What becomes apparent is that positive law, a codified instantiation of the general public's opinion, could never be kept in check by a supervening law, hence the public would be left with no other recourse than to attempt to sway public opinion in order to establish a new positive law.

Contra Empirical Natural Law

Max Hocutt, John Hasnas, and others make the case for NL based "solely" on empirical data. Arguing for his version of empirical natural rights, Hocutt makes the following case:

> Rights—moral as well as legal—are constituted by social conventions. Moral rights are constituted by moral conventions, legal rights by legal conventions. Under both kinds of conventions, some people have rights because other people have duties, and others have duties because the members of their society make a practice of enforcing them. Therefore, that a right exists means that it has protection in the form of regular enforcement of the duties associated with it. This explanation holds whether the topic is official rights of law or unofficial rights of morality and etiquette. Legal rights exist under rules of law, so they enjoy the protections of

[41] Nemeth, "Jacques Maritain on the Natural Law and Its Application," 11.

[42] Nemeth, "Jacques Maritain on the Natural Law and Its Application," 11.

[43] Mortimer J. Adler, "The Doctrine of Natural Law in Philosophy," *Natural Law Institute Proceedings* 1 (1949), 83, quoted in Nemeth, "Jacques Maritain on the Natural Law and Its Application," 11.

[44] Masiello, "Some Brave Ideas on an Old Rule of Law," 4.

> government. Moral rights (and rights of etiquette) exist under informal customs and enjoy the protection of ordinary members of society. Without official protections, no legal rights exist; and without unofficial protections, no moral rights exist. It follows that all rights, legal or moral, are man-made. If calling a right "natural" means only that it was made and is protected by God, no empirical meaning can be assigned to the claim.[45]

Much like legal positivism and NNL, Hocutt's case is persuasive, but only to a point. It can answer how local laws arise, their role and complexion in society, and the interrelation between legal laws and moral laws, but it too fails to provide a universally binding dimension to law. Hasnas' theory fares no better, as Hocutt himself even admits: "The main problem with Hasnas' [empirical natural rights] theory is that [his] Lockean conventions appear to be highly provincial, but natural rights are supposed to be universal."[46] Attempts, therefore, to ground all law-making merely in the mechanics of human functioning will fall short of demonstrating what these very laws should be and why they should be compulsory.

Maritain's Application of Traditional Natural Law

Maritain stayed well within the bounds of TNL but helped to flesh out much of Aquinas' thought so as to be understood and applied within a twentieth-century post-WWII context. To understand a Maritainian NL theory, one must appreciate his emphasis on the nature of "true humanity." This view emphasizes a human as both an "individual" as well as a "person." Andrew Woodcock provides a useful summary:

> In order to understand [Maritain's] formulation of natural law, it is essential to appreciate Maritain's distinction between personality and individuality. The concept of individuality is derived primarily from the work of Aquinas, and is based upon the proposition that all things of matter have a purpose. The consequence of this is that everything of matter has a function, and must fit in as a portion of the total physical whole. Therefore, individuality tends to describe the position of man as a fraction of the totality of mankind. Conversely, the concept of "personhood" is much more complex, and represents a whole in itself. The idea of personhood is something separate from the material; "it refers to the highest and deepest dimensions of being." The person is the vehicle for the exposition of human intelligence, which is the high point of human development, and which makes humanity separate and superior to the rest of creation. The person is

[45] Hocutt, "Rights: Rhetoric versus Reality," 63.
[46] Hocutt, "Rights: Rhetoric versus Reality," 51.

> therefore a whole in itself. As a whole, it is able to communicate with others, and this, then is the basis for community.[47]

Here, Woodcock explains how Maritain's starting point centers on the *nature of man*, that is, humanity's *ontology*. He adds, with "respect to the ontological element, the first assumption which may be made is twofold; firstly, man has certain ends, or a role in the world, and secondly, that as a creature with the gift of intelligence, man is capable of ascertaining those ends."[48] The relevance of this cannot be stressed enough, for everything humanity does comes out of its nature. Further, the whole notion of NL, according to Meritain, rests on the premise of humanity's nature. In his own words he states, "[T]he natural law of all beings existing in nature is the proper way in which, by reason of their specific nature and specific ends, they achieve fullness of being in their behavior."[49]

A significant function of human nature revolves around a human being's capacity to cogitate, both in what Maritain calls "inclination" (by way of Aquinas) and "conceptual reasoning." In *Natural Law*, Maritain indicates that "the formal medium by which we advance in our knowledge of the regulations of Natural Law is not the conceptual work of reason, but rather those inclinations to which the practical intellect conforms in judging what is good and what is bad. . . . The notion of natural knowledge through inclination is basic to the understanding of Natural Law, for it brushes aside any intervention of human reason as a creative factor in natural law."[50] By "inclination" Maritain means something along the lines of a "predisposition," a "moral propensity," or a "practical intuition." This, he claims, is part of humanity's nature as according with Eternal Law, rooted in Divine Reason. He explains how morality and human reason presuppose God as their foundation:

> Uncreated Reason, the reason of the Principle of Nature, is the only reason at play not only in *establishing* Natural Law (by the very fact that it creates human nature), but in *making Natural Law known*, through the inclinations of this very nature to which human reason listens when it knows natural law. And it is precisely because Natural Law depends *only* on Divine Reason that it is possessed of a character naturally sacred, and binds man in conscience, and is the prime foundation of human law, which is a free and contingent determination of what Natural Law leaves undetermined, and which obliges by virtue of Natural Law.[51]

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[47] Woodcock, "Jacques Maritain, Natural Law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," 257.
[48] Woodcock, "Jacques Maritain, Natural Law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," 257.
[49] Maritain, *Natural Law*, 29.
[50] Maritain, *Natural Law*, 43.
[51] Maritain, *Natural Law*, 22. Emphasis original.

In recapitulation, therefore, Maritain's NL holds that humanity has a nature that simultaneously contains a predisposition toward moral inclinations (by virtue of its nature) as well as the ability to reason about those very inclinations *cum eo* (after the fact). The moral inclinations constitute a kind of "practical reason," such that a person has immediate access to knowledge of what is good. Maritain states, "[M]y contention is that the judgments in which Natural Law is made manifest to practical Reason do not proceed from any conceptual, discursive, rational exercise of reason; they proceed from that *connaturality* or *congeniality* through which what is consonant with the essential inclinations of human nature is grasped by the intellect as good; what is dissonant, as bad."[52]

Reason itself, says Maritain, is grounded in Divine Reason, and *ordered* reason, at that. This very "ordered-ness" of Eternal Law makes NL intelligible, for law *as such* presupposes order. Order is discernable in all law. "That which defines law is reason, intelligence, because there is an order. It is reason that can make order, and which is itself order. Law presupposes an ordination of reason for the common good. The community, then, is the subject of the law, while the good of this community is the end or purpose of the law."[53]

How exactly do NL and NR relate one to one another? Somewhat surprisingly, Maritain seldom defined what he meant by "rights" within his writing. In an unpublished paper entitled "The Philosophical Foundations of Natural Law," he defined what he meant by a human "right" in stating the following:

> A right is a requirement that emanates from a self with regard to something which is understood as *his* due, and of which the other moral agents are obliged in conscience not to deprive him. The normality of functioning of the creature endowed with intellect and free will implies the fact that this creature has duties and obligations; it also implies the fact that this creature possesses rights, by virtue of his very nature—because he is a self with whom the other selves are confronted, and whom they are not free to deprive of what is due him. And the normality of functioning of the rational creature is an expression of the order of divine wisdom.[54]

Elsewhere Maritain connects NL with rights. "How could we understand human rights if we had not a sufficiently adequate notion of natural law?" Maritain inquires. "The same Natural Law which lays down our most fundamental duties, and by virtue of which every law is binding, is the very law which assigns to us our fundamental

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[52] Maritain, *Natural Law*, 20. Emphasis original.
[53] Maritain, *Natural Law*, 44.
[54] Maritain, *Natural Law*, 60n27.

rights."[55] On this view, rights as "universal human rights" are not only warranted, but *to be expected*. The Eternal Law that grounds NL also grounds UHR. For rights to be universal, they must find their source in a Grand Orderer of the nature of humankind.

In other words, there is no right unless a certain order—which can be violated in fact—is inviolably required by what things are in their intelligible type or their essence, or by what the nature of humanity is, and is cut out for: in order by virtue of which certain things like life, freedom, work are due to the human person, an existent who is endowed with a spiritual soul and free will. Such an order, which is not a factual datum in things, but demands to be realized by them, and which imposes itself upon our minds to the point of binding us in conscience, existing things in a certain way, I mean as a requirement of their essence.[56]

In sum, Maritain employed Thomistic NL theory consistently in his own thinking about NL and NR. His insistence that the grounds for NL, as well as "conceptual reasoning" about it, are equally important to the whole endeavor of making the case for UHR.

Conclusion

The question of UHR is one of profound relevance today. The establishment of the DUHR in 1948 marked a strident move forward in the recognition for the need to substantiate UHR, and the role that Jacques Maritain played in bringing the DUHR into being was both crucial and laudable. The key theory in helping to bring about this Declaration was founded primarily on the principles grounded in TNL, rooted in the likes of Aristotle, Cicero, and Aquinas. Maritain's thought helped to elucidate that "the law in effect is essentially an ordinance of reason (*ordinatio rationis*), so that without an ordering reason there is no law. The notion of law is essentially bound up with that of an ordering reason. Indeed, in the case of natural law, human reason has no share in the initiative and authority establishing the law, either in making it exist or in making it known."[57] He made the compelling case that "in reality, if God does not exist, the natural law lacks obligatory power. If the natural law does not involve the divine reason, it is not a law, and if it is not a law, it does not oblige."[58] The contention is strong—UHR requires a NL. In the words of Roscoe Pound, "Natural law has proved itself in the history of civilization. . . . It gives us the distinction between law and laws."[59]

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[55] Maritain, *Natural Law*, 58.
[56] Maritain, *Natural Law*, 61.
[57] Maritain, *Natural Law*, 43.
[58] Maritain, *Natural Law*, 47.
[59] Roscoe Pound, "The Revival of Natural Law," *Notre Dame Law* 17 (1942), 287, 328, quoted in Nemeth, "Jacques Maritain on the Natural Law and Its Application," 12.

Alternative theories to TNL fail to meet the preconditions (both ontological and epistemological) necessary for a thoroughgoing justification for (1) how UHR are intelligible, and (2) how in fact UHR can meet the "universality factor." Apart from a transcendent, rational, ordered NL, the legal pronouncements of human beings would be reducible to fruitless legal pronouncements and in-fighting, one nation claiming their humanly-made laws to be superior to another nation's humanly-made laws. It would "appear that any state action that abridges human rights automatically violates the natural law."[60] If no NL exists to serve as a "check" for the laws of all humanity, what will compel nations to change their laws? How could any nation be guilty of violating a person's "universal human right?" Without an ontologically grounded NL, none could rightly do so.

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[60] Nemeth, "Jacques Maritain on the Natural Law and Its Application," 11.

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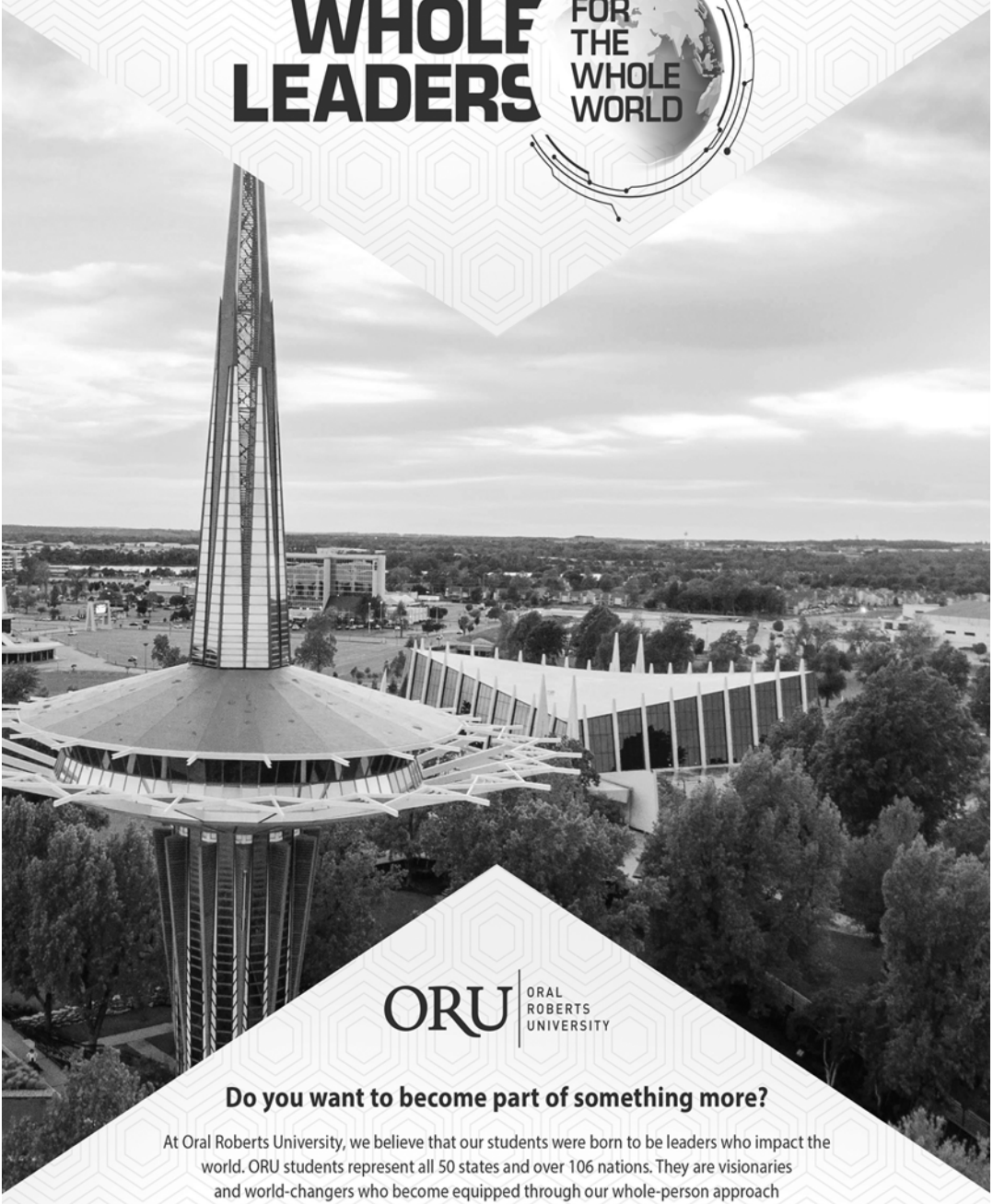

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Pentecostal Socio-Political Engagement and the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Keywords *Pentecostalism, religious freedom, public engagement, coronavirus, pandemic*

Abstract

The coronavirus pandemic has raised important questions regarding the correct balance between religious freedom and public health. These questions have become increasingly difficult to address given the diverse reactions within the church to government-imposed restrictions on religious freedom such as limitations on public gatherings in places of worship. Nowhere has this diversity been more prevalent than within Pentecostalism. This article discusses the religious response to the pandemic in the United States within the Pentecostal Movement as gleaned through three sources: public statements, legal action, and other public activity. I suggest that Pentecostalism's diversity in this area is consistent with its diversity in other areas, while also signaling the need for the Pentecostal Movement to develop a coherent theology of social-political engagement.

Introduction

In early 2020, the coronavirus outbreak swept across the United States with devastating force. By March of the following year, the virus had taken over 500,000 lives in the United States, infected over 30 million people, crippled the economy, and crushed public morale. At the time of this writing, those numbers have moved to well over 1 million deaths and over 80 million infections.[1] Controlling such a large-scale pandemic required quick and reasoned action by government officials as well as cooperation by the public. In the United States, the demand for cooperation was most evident as the government began placing restrictions on public gatherings in houses of worship.

This article discusses the religious response to the coronavirus pandemic in the United States within Pentecostalism. Specifically, I consider how the Pentecostal

[1] "Covid Data Tracker," *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, last modified May 12, 2022, https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#trends_totaldeaths%7Ctot_deaths%7Cselect.

Movement has responded to government restrictions on gatherings in churches. First, I provide an overview of the pandemic and suggest a rubric for categorizing Pentecostal responses to the government's restrictions on public gatherings based on the work of Amos Yong and Fredrick Ware. Second, I consider the diverse reactions within Pentecostalism, as gleaned through three sources: public statements, legal action, and other public activity. Finally, I discuss ethical patterns that emerge from the data that may guide further discussion.

The COVID-19 Pandemic in the United States

While it may seem difficult to grasp in hindsight, initial accounts that a novel virus had originated in China were met with measured reservation in the United States. For locals, the concern seemed too distant to warrant serious consideration let alone any preventative action. On January 20, 2020, however, the first case was confirmed in the United States. Still, the general population was largely skeptical and carried on with little hesitation. Only after domestic cases rose sharply in the ensuing days and weeks did the public call for government intervention. By March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization had declared COVID-19 a worldwide pandemic. Two days later, President Donald Trump declared a national emergency in the United States.

At the federal level, early efforts to prevent further spread of the virus included imposing travel restrictions, preventing cruise ships from docking on our shores, developing guidance on best practices to contain the spread, and generating statistical data related to the virus as well as updates on efforts to develop a vaccine. Despite these significant changes, however, the greatest opposition from the public took place at the state and local level. This is unsurprising given that the basic doctrine of state sovereignty gives state and local authorities widespread discretion in addressing crises affecting their own populations. While some of these methods—such as the closing of large venues, including malls, beaches, and shopping centers—were met with little resistance—others—such as the limits on public gatherings, particularly in houses of worship— received considerably more scrutiny.

A news survey of the laws across the country at the birth of the pandemic demonstrates that state and local authorities adopted wide-ranging social-distancing measures in churches and other houses of worship.[2] Many states, including Virginia and Maryland, initially restricted in-person gatherings in houses of worship to ten people. A New York order, in turn, restricted in-person gatherings to either a set

[2] Jiachuan Wu, Savannah Smith, Mansee Khurana, Corky Siemaszko, and Brianna DeJesus-Banos, "Stay-At-Home Orders Across the Country: What Each State Is Doing–Or Not Doing–Amid Widespread Coronavirus Lockdowns," *NBC News*, April 29, 2020, https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/here-are-stay-home-orders-across-country-n1168736.

number or a percentage of a building's maximum allowable occupancy, based on the infection/death rates in each county. Other states, such as Texas, in contrast, did not restrict churches or other religious groups from gathering in-person in any measurable sense.

Notably, regardless of each jurisdiction's particular approach to handling the pandemic, virtually all states exempted certain types of businesses from complying with limitations on in-person gatherings. These "essential businesses" usually included supermarkets and pharmacies, but, in many states, they also included liquor stores and golf courses. Curiously, the states that deemed liquor stores and golf courses "essential" typically declined to extend similar protection to churches and other houses of worship. Indeed, the few outliers, like Texas, allowed in-person religious gatherings only because they had specifically designated activities such as worship and religious instruction as "essential services."[3]

Unsurprisingly, the government's efforts to restrict public gatherings in sacred spaces were met with wide-ranging responses by religious groups. On the one hand, many congregants acknowledged the gravity of the public health crisis at hand and the importance of cooperating with officials in preventing further spread of the virus. On the other hand, a significant segment remained suspicious of the seemingly arbitrary application of government restrictions. Many in this latter group struggled to understand how the government could deem liquor stores and golf courses "essential" but not houses of worship. Within the broader community, this concern arose not only out of deeply-rooted religious convictions but also fundamental constitutional concerns.[4] Indeed, in his now-widely circulated opinion, Federal Judge Justin Walker spoke for many in the religious community when he criticized a mayor's decision to allow indoor liquor stores to remain open but not drive-through church services, quipping, "[I]f beer is 'essential' so is Easter."[5] In short, the government's restrictions on in-person gatherings for religious groups, when viewed in the context of the exemptions in place for secular businesses, generated tension and confusion among people of faith.

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[3] State of Texas Executive Order GA 14, (March 31, 2020), https://gov.texas.gov/uploads/files/press/EO-GA-14_Statewide_Essential_Service_and_Activity_COVID-19_IMAGE_03-31-2020.pdf.

[4] Daniel Cameron and Matthew F. Kuhn, "Religious Liberty in the Age of Covid-19: Kentucky's Experience," *University of Louisville Law Review* 59:2 (2021), 205–25; Caroline Mala Corbin, "Religious Liberty in A Pandemic," *Duke Law Review Online* 70:1 (2020).

[5] *On Fire Christian Ctr. v. Fischer*, 453 F. Supp. 3d 901, 911 (W.D. Ky. 2020).

A Rubric for Pentecostalism in the Public Square

In order to consider Pentecostalism's reaction to the government's restrictions on public gatherings, we must first consider how to categorize religious responses to government action in general. In his book, *In the Days of Caesar: Pentecostalism and Political Theology*, Amos Yong outlines Pentecostal relationships with the "political," a term he defines broadly to encompass all interactions between people and the public square.[6] Although Yong is focused on global rather than domestic Pentecostalism in his work, his categories are equally applicable to the narrower United States context. In that respect, Yong divides Pentecostal relationships with the political into three separate domains: (1) politics, traditionally understood; (2) economics; and (3) society and culture.[7]

Within the domain of Pentecostals and politics, Yong offers three approaches or modes of operation. First, there are apolitical Pentecostals who interpret Jesus's words, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36, NIV), literally and thus reject any connection between church and state.[8] This group has little faith in the ability of secular institutions to solve the social problems of this world and prefer instead to put their hope solely in God. For many, this strong distrust of secular institutions is grounded in a "last days" theology that anticipates the rise of a one-world government administered by the antichrist. In short, those in this group view befriending the world, in any form and for any purpose, as literally making "enmity with God" (Jas 4:4). Second, there are political Pentecostals who believe not only that the church's social engagement with secular organizations is biblical, but also that they themselves should occupy political positions in order to impact society at a higher level.[9] Notably, recent decades have seen several Pentecostal leaders rise to high positions within the United States government. Former Vice-Presidential Candidate and Governor of Alaska, Sarah Palin (2006–2009), spent years attending Pentecostal churches while former Attorney General (2001–2005) and United States Senator (1995–2001) John Ashcroft was and remains an active member of the Assemblies of God. Finally, in between these groups lies Pentecostalism as an alternative *civitas* and *polis*. These terms refer to believers who are cautious about becoming excessively involved in cultural, legal, or political matters, but who also choose to collaborate and cooperate with selective groups when promoting the mission and vision of the church.[10] For example, churches oftentimes choose to cooperate with both nonprofits and localities when planning and administering

[6] Amos Yong, *In the Days of Caesar: Pentecostalism and Political Theology* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2010), xix, 3.

[7] Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, 4–15.

[8] Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, 4–7.

[9] Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, 7–11.

[10] Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, 11–15.

programs such as food pantries. In this sense, churches work hand in hand with non-religious organizations to provide resources to the community and with government actors to notify the community that these services are being offered.

In comparison to Yong's view, Fredrick Ware provides another rubric for sorting through Pentecostal responses to the political. In his article, "African American Pentecostalism and the Public Square," Ware walks through four "perspectives" on how believers can understand their position in and relationship with the public square: realism, idealism, reconstructionism, and communitarianism.[11] As he explains, a public square refers to any place of gathering and interaction for persons comprising the body politic; it is inclusive of both government supported places such as schools, parks, courts, offices, and agencies, as well as other public spaces such as local markets.[12] Briefly, realists follow the tradition of Reinhold Niebuhr and believe that the role of democratic government is to maintain order, national security, and property ownership. Yet, because human beings are sinners by nature, realists caution against any approach that seeks to impose Christian moral principles in the public space. As such, Pentecostal realists see their religious faith as private and separate from their public lives.[13] Idealists, in contrast, posit that Christian moral principles can be "actualized" or "approximated" in the public square when the purpose is to order and improve human life. In this sense, the church moves only when secular institutions fail to advance the common good. Seen this way, "Each forward development in American democracy is a victory that represents an accumulation of many short-term successes in the realization of God's kingdom."[14] Reconstructionism holds that the United States is a Christian nation whose path to renewal, restoration, and duty in enforcing God's law is disclosed in Scripture. Thus, this group emphasizes personal responsibility and self-determination anchored in God rather than secular government.[15] Lastly, communitarianism sees the church and not democratic government as the primary domain where individuals can discern and strive for the good. This view aligns closely with a large segment of Pentecostals who view themselves as a separate community that is in the world but not of it. Rather than rely on or interact with government actors, communitarians use moral and spiritual resources from within the church to address social problems.[16] When taken together, these categories, along with those offered by Yong, provide a

[11] Frederick Ware, "African American Pentecostalism and the Public Square," *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 44 (2017), 104.

[12] Ware, "African American Pentecostalism and the Public Square," 100.

[13] Ware, "African American Pentecostalism and the Public Square," 105.

[14] Ware, "African American Pentecostalism and the Public Square," 105–6.

[15] Ware, "African American Pentecostalism and the Public Square," 106.

[16] Ware, "African American Pentecostalism and the Public Square," 107.

useful classification of responses to the political within Pentecostalism that will drive our discussion moving forward.

Pentecostal Responses to COVID-19

A fully representative picture of how the Pentecostal Movement has responded to the pandemic will not be possible in this short article. After all, the United States is home to countless Pentecostal congregations within a range of social-economic and ethnic communities. Moreover, tracing the responses of smaller independent churches will be significantly more difficult than for larger and more established groups given, among other things, the former's reduced media footprint. Thus, my focus will be on surveying selective cases of Pentecostal responses in order to get a sense of the diversity or uniformity of Pentecostalism's response to the pandemic. With that qualification in mind, I turn now to consider examples of Pentecostal responses through three sources: (1) public statements; (2) legal action; and (3) other public action.

Public Statements

Public statements refer broadly to any form of media in which an organization addresses or opines on a social issue. Because such statements are more common in larger organizations, we are more likely to find public statements issued by established denominations rather than smaller independent congregations. Even with these limitations, however, there is noticeable diversity within the Pentecostal community on how to respond to the government's restrictions through public statements.

The Assemblies of God (AG) Fellowship, for instance, offers the public a dedicated website that provides articles and news updates on the pandemic. These resources take a largely neutral approach to the government's response, focusing on hope and prayer rather than critique or concern. A February 28, 2020, post, "Coronavirus: Four Ways to Pray," for example, calls for prayer and patience in the midst of an unfolding pandemic.[17] In a March 12, 2020, address, the "AG General Superintendent Advise[d] on Coronavirus," acknowledged those who "have expressed frustration" over what they consider to be an "overblown" situation.[18] Indeed, it was not until May 17, 2020, in an article entitled, "No Lottery Lockdown," that the AG implied any sort of negative stance on the government's handling of the pandemic, here expressing concern over the fact that restaurants, movie theatres, and parks remain

[17] Doug Clay, "The Coronavirus; Four Ways to Pray," *AG News*, February 28, 2020, https://news.ag.org/en/News/Coronavirus-Four-Ways-to-Pray.

[18] Doug Clay, "AG General Superintendent Advises on Coronavirus," *AG News*, March 12, 2020, https://news.ag.org/en/News/AG-General-Superintendent-Advises-on-Coronavirus.

closed while casinos remained open.[19] Yet, glaringly absent from the superintendent's writings and other posts from the AG's website is any forceful guidance on complying with government mandates related to social distancing, mask wearing, and restrictions on public gatherings. Instead, the national AG Fellowship appears to have adopted a hands-off approach that focuses on the spiritual aspects of dealing with a pandemic as a church.

The picture changes somewhat at the AG's district level. Districts such as the Northern New England and North Texas Districts, for example, have similarly dedicated webpages with resources for their members.[20] Both districts, however, provide specific guidance on complying with government mandates, and appear much more deferential to the government's authority in controlling the pandemic. The North Texas District, for example, has a link to a provocative article entitled, "Why Churches Should Respect the Coronavirus Ban on Gatherings," while the Northern New England District's page begins with an announcement of a cancelled event due to the pandemic, noting its "desire to be more of a blessing than a burden to local ministries." Thus, we can already see some variation within a single Pentecostal denomination, with the national AG church taking a largely neutral approach and the district offices being more vocal about their views.

The AG Fellowship is often compared and contrasted with the Church of God in Christ (COGIC), given their shared history and heritage in the United States. Thus, an evaluation of the policy and practices of these respective institutions may be instructive. Like the AG church, COGIC has dedicated web space with updates from their highest-ranking leader, in this case, the Presiding Bishop. Unlike the AG Fellowship, however, COGIC's updates consistently encourage compliance and cooperation with government mandates. One statement from the presiding bishop reveals the creation of a COVID-19 advisory board comprised of the bishop, the general board, as well as physicians and scientists.[21] Another statement makes repeated references to the "medical and scientific" community in calling for continued observance of all government guidelines.[22] Yet, perhaps the clearest sign of COGIC's collaborative approach lies in the planning of the April 9, 2020, National Government Resources Conference Call, which boasted "Expert presenters from the Small Business

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[19] John W. Kennedy, "No Lottery Lockdown," *AG News*, May 7, 2020, https://news.ag.org/en/News/No-Lottery-Lockdown.

[20] "Covid-19 Response," *Northern New English District Assembles of God*, accessed June 2, 2020, http://nnedaog.org/covid-19-response/; "Covid-19 Updated & Information," *North Texas District Counsel Assembles of God*, accessed July 27, 2021, https://northtexas.ag/covid19/.

[21] Bishop Charles E. Blake, "Church of God in Christ March 18, 2020 Presiding Bishop's Statement," https://www.cogic.org/covid19/files/2020/03/COVID-Blake-2.pdf.

[22] Bishop Charles E. Blake, "Church of God in Christ Presiding Bishop's Statement on Annual April 2020 Meeting," https://www.cogic.org/covid19/files/2020/03/Bishop-Blake-letter-Covid-19-2.pdf.

Administration, the Department of Justice and other federal agencies" who addressed how federal COVID relief programs "will help churches, small businesses and nonprofits."[23] Thus, although both the AG and COGIC make use of public statements as a means of disseminating information, their tone, agenda, and overall approach could not be more different. Moreover, if the distinction between the national AG and district AG offices is any indication, we might expect similar contrasts within the hierarchy of other Pentecostal denominations.

Legal Action

Whereas public statements provide a space for churches to offer reassurances and address concerns among their congregants, legal action almost invariably delivers the opposite effect of creating tension, controversy, and division by demanding action, inaction, or damages from an opposing party. While a comprehensive list of cases related to the pandemic show zero lawsuits involving Pentecostal denominations, two cases that have reached the Supreme Court were initiated by independent Pentecostal mega-churches.[24] Yet, it would be a mistake to think that independent Pentecostal churches have a monopoly on COVID-19 litigation. Indeed, these two cases are in addition to a sea of lower-court lawsuits brought by other religious groups including Jewish synagogues, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Baptist churches, and Roman Catholic churches.

In the first Pentecostal case to reach the Supreme Court, the Elim Romanian Pentecostal Church, together with Logos Baptist Ministries, submitted a legal brief challenging the Illinois governor's executive order that generally barred gatherings of more than ten people, which included religious gatherings.[25] The churches, who retained the services of Liberty Counsel, an international non-profit that litigates matters concerning evangelical values, brought the suit under both the Free Exercise Clause and several statutes. On March 29, 2020, the Court denied the church's emergency application for relief without issuing a written decision.[26]

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[23] Church of God in Christ: COVID-19, "National Government Resources Conference Call," accessed July 31, 2020, https://www.cogic.org/covid19/presiding-bishops-updates/national-government-resources-conference-call/.

[24] "Lawsuits about State Actions and Policies in Response to the Soronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic, 2020–2021," *Ballotpedia,* accessed May 12, 2022, https://ballotpedia.org/Lawsuits_about_state_actions_and_policies_in_response_to_the_coronavirus_(COVID-19)_pandemic.

[25] "Brief for Elim Romanian Pentecostal Church," accessed July 28, 2020, https://www.supremecourt.gov/DocketPDF/19/19A1046/144326/20200527153226226_Application%202%20-%20Emergency%20Writ%20of%20Injunction%20Pending%20Appeal.pdf.

[26] Elim Romanian Pentecostal Church v. Pritzker, 141 S. Ct. 1753 (2021).

In the second case, the South Bay United Pentecostal Church challenged California's religious gathering restrictions, which limited attendance in churches or places of worship to a maximum of 25% or 100 attendees. The church enlisted the Thomas More Society, a national non-profit law firm focusing on issues of life, family, and religious liberty, and brought the suit under the Free Exercise Clause. On May 29, 2020, the Court rejected the church's claim in a 5-4 decision. Chief Justice Roberts, writing for the majority, warned against intervening in national emergencies, while Justice Kavanaugh, writing for the dissent, argued that California's limits "indisputably discriminates against religion."[27] Notably, the Court vacated its own decision the following year in light of their ruling in another case that granted relief to a pastor who sought to hold in-person Bible studies in his own home.[28]

Other Public Activity

The term "other public activity" is a catch-all phrase for those public actions that do not fit precisely in the preceding two categories. On one end of the spectrum, there are those activities that are in clear protest to the government's actions. Perhaps the most well-known examples of this were the protests and subsequent arrests of two Pentecostal pastors who refused to close their churches in violation of separate mandates. Like the lawsuits previously discussed, the pastors in question each belonged to independent mega-churches rather than established denominations. In one case, Rev. Rodney Howard-Browne, pastor of the River at Tampa Bay, located in Florida, was arrested after holding services on the grounds that he was endangering his parishioners by facilitating the spread of COVID-19.[29] In another case, Rev. Tony Spell, pastor of Life Tabernacle Church in Central City, was fitted with an ankle bracelet and placed under house arrest after repeatedly violating Louisiana's mandate to avoid large gatherings by hosting church services. In defense of his decision to hold services, Rev. Spell remarked, "This is an attack on religion. This is an attack on our constitutional rights. We have a constitutional right to assemble and to gather and there are no laws that I am breaking."[30]

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[27] *S. Bay United Pentecostal Church v. Newsom*, 140 S. Ct. 1613 (2020).

[28] *S. Bay United Pentecostal Church v. Newsom*, 209 L. Ed. 2d 582 (2021).

[29] Kavitha Surana, "Tampa Pastor arrested for Defying Virus Orders Closes Church Due to 'Tyrannical Government,'" *Tampa Bay News*, April 1, 2020, https://www.tampabay.com/news/hillsborough/2020/04/02/tampa-pastor-arrested-for-defying-virus-orders-closes-church-due-to-tyrannical-government/.

[30] Youssef Rddad and David J. Mitchell, "Central Pastor Cited after Defying Coronavirus Order: 'This Is an Attack on Religion,'" *The Advocate*, March 31, 2020, https://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/coronavirus/article_e7c0a2a0-7369-11ea-9de7-030a7a7fbef3.html.

On the other end are those activities that promote cooperation with the government, such as encouraging everyone to get vaccinated. For example, La Iglesia de Dios Pentecostal Misión Internacional in Maryland—a Hispanic church belonging to the Latin-American based I.D.D.P.M.I denomination—and Applebee Pentecostal Assemblies in Wisconsin—which belongs to the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World—both made headlines for their efforts to cooperate and collaborate with government and community groups to host vaccine clinics on church grounds.[31]

Discussion

There are at least three tentative observations we can make from our brief survey of selected responses to the government's response to the coronavirus pandemic within Pentecostalism. First, and perhaps most obviously, the diversity in Pentecostal responses, both in terms of the content and medium, echoes the diversity we see in the general religious community. From promoting vaccinations to bringing lawsuits in order to hold services, Pentecostalism does not appear to express any unique reaction to government action. While parallel studies are beyond the scope of this article, the Roman Catholic Church, as just one example, has expressed a similar kind of diversity, with some dioceses fervently complying with government mandates and others bringing lawsuits in solidarity with other faith traditions.[32] Put differently, the present survey suggests that the Pentecostal Movement is more or less a representative example of religious responses to the pandemic by the religious community in general.

Second, and related to the first, the responses to the government's handling of the pandemic within Pentecostalism seem to encompass the spectrum of categories proposed by Yong and Ware. In that regard, the pastors who openly defied the government's mandate not to hold services might best identify with apolitical Pentecostals while churches who use the legal system for the purposes of advancing their religious rights might fit best with Pentecostalism as an alternative *civitas* and *polis*. Indeed, the latter group only partnered with ecumenical legal organizations like the Thomas More Society and Liberty Counsel because they sought to protect their interests as a religious community. Likewise, churches that held vaccine clinics on their own property strongly align with the approaches of both idealists and political

[31] Jose Umana, "Howard Co. Hospital Hosts Vaccination Clinics at Local Church," *WTOP News*, June 24, 2021, https://wtop.com/howard-county/2021/06/howard-co-hospital-hosts-vaccination-clinics-at-local-church/; Brenda Ordonez, "Appleton Pentecostal Assembly Hosts Free COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic," *We Are Green Bay*, June 24, 2021, https://www.wearegreenbay.com/coronavirus/appleton-pentecostal-assembly-hosts-free-covid-19-vaccine-clinic/.

[32] *Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn v. Cuomo*, 141 S. Ct. 63 (2020).

Pentecostals given their clear willingness to partner with government actors for the benefit of the larger community. COGIC is also represented here given their public statements, which encouraged compliance with the government's mandates, and their events, which required collaboration with various government agencies and stakeholders. Notably, the divergent approaches of these two groups may stem, in part, from the higher risk of contracting the virus among minorities, given that COGIC is predominately African American, whereas the AG Fellowship is majority Caucasian.[33] At any rate, while elements of Yong's and Ware's categories can be clearly seen in the examples discussed, it is also fair to say that Pentecostalism as a whole cannot fit neatly into any one classification.

Third, it seems that Pentecostal churches that belong to established denominations are much more likely to have a favorable response to the government's actions in controlling the pandemic. From national leaders issuing public statements encouraging believers to listen to the medical community, to local congregations opening up their doors to vaccine clinics, most of the positive responses came from churches affiliated with large denominations such as the AG and COGIC. On the opposite side, the harshest responses to the government's restrictions, whether through public disobedience or federal lawsuits, came from independent churches. There is thus room for discussing the connection between church structure and governance, on the one hand, and the nature and degree of a church's socio-political engagement. To phrase it more as a proposal, perhaps churches that benefit from the structure, organization, and resources of a denomination are more likely to engage with government actors, while those with looser association may feel at greater liberty to remain separate, autonomous, and independent from the state.

Conclusion

Scholars have long pointed to the growing diversity within the Pentecostal Movement. That diversity extends beyond theological views and socio-economic standing; it also extends to their engagement with the political. However, it may be that the diversity we see in Pentecostal responses to the pandemic occurs in part because Pentecostalism lacks a consistent and unifying theological principle that speaks to the complicated ethical considerations involved in balancing religious rights with the demands of a worldwide pandemic. It would also seem that the Pentecostal Movement is not alone in this sense,

[33] "Health Equity Considerations and Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups," *Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention*, last modified January 25, 2022, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html.

given that religious communities across the board seem to experience the same type of diversity in how they have reacted to the pandemic.

Of course, the fact that Pentecostals have had diverse reactions to the pandemic does not mean they cannot develop a unified theological response to the same. Indeed, Pentecostals around the world are united by a collection of markers, ranging from their particular emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit to the use of the Full Gospel as an organizing principle in theological works. Moreover, if the pandemic has shown us anything it is that the Pentecostal Movement needs to develop a robust theology of social-political engagement so that they may be better equipped to respond to perceived limitations on religious freedom in ways that are informed more by their theology than merely by organizational structure. In that regard, recent discussions in the area of Pentecostal political theology, while important and significant, have been largely limited to issues of social justice in the domestic sphere[34] and social engagement in the missional context.[35] Moreover, while there are certainly Pentecostals speaking directly on the issue of socio-political engagement, none of them directly address the scenarios posed by the pandemic.[36] To be clear, the question is not whether the Pentecostal Movement has attempted to explain whether and how to engage the socio-political (it has), but rather how that engagement might change when religious rights are arguably at stake. For many believers, the pandemic pitted religious freedom directly against government interests, and religious expression directly against public health concerns. This reality gives rise to the following questions: do societal interests ever trump religious freedom? Should the church voluntarily restrict its own religious expression in the name of public health? What does all of this mean for the Pentecostal public school teacher, health care worker, and minister? If nothing else, this article seeks to encourage Pentecostals to think about socio-political engagement from a constitutional perspective. Whether

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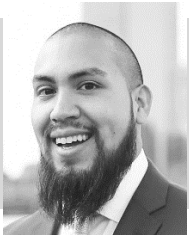
[34] Steven M. Studebaker and Michael Wilkinson, *A Liberating Spirit: Pentecostals and Social Action in North America* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010); Cheryl J. Sanders, "Social Justice: Theology as Social Transformation," in *The Routledge Handbook of Pentecostal Theology*, *Routledge Handbooks in Theology*, ed. Wolfgang Vondey (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 432–42; Murray W. Dempster, "Pentecostal Social Concern and the Biblical Mandate of Social Justice," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 9:2 (1987), 130–37.

[35] Kenneth J. Archer and Richard E. Waldrop, "Liberating Hermeneutics: Toward a Holistic Pentecostal Mission of Peace and Justice," *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 31 (2011), 65–80; Ivan Satyarata, "Power to the Poor: Towards A Pentecostal Theology of Social Engagement," *American Journal of Political Science* 19:1 (2016), 45–57; Ivan Satyarata, *Pentecostals and the Poor: Reflections from the Indian Context* (Baguio City, PH: APTS Press), 2017; *Pentecostal Education* 6:2 (2021), (published under the theme "Pentecostal Social Engagement" and featuring articles on social engagement from both domestic and missionary contexts).

[36] Steven M. Studebaker, *A Pentecostal Political Theology for American Renewal: Spirit of the Kingdoms, Citizens of the Cities* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*.

you agree with the government's response to the pandemic, or your particular church's reaction to the same, the question of how to balance religious rights, constitutional concerns, and public interests is worth addressing in future research.



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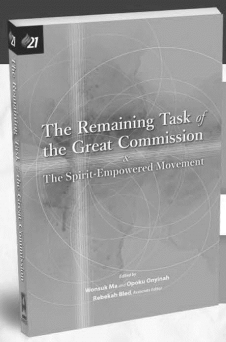

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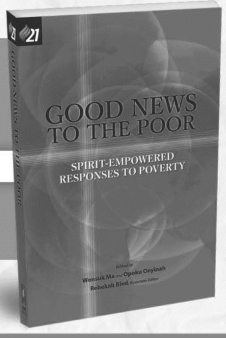

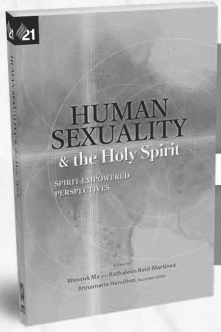

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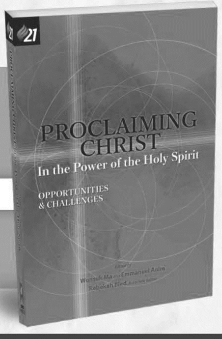

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Songs as Theologizing

Annamma Mammen's (1911–2002) Contribution in Shaping the Kerala Pentecostal Imagination

Allan Varghese Meloottu

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Keywords *women, Indian, Kerala Pentecostalism, ministry, theology, songwriter, songs, Malayalam, leadership*

Abstract

In Indian Pentecostal theological and missiological literature, the role of Kerala Pentecostals is well documented. However, the pioneering voices that are highlighted are of men, sidelining women's voices and contributions that shaped the grassroots Kerala Pentecostal imagination. The preacher-songwriter Annamma Mammen (1911–2002) is one such voice that impacted early Kerala Pentecostal growth. Therefore, this article, in addition to bringing forth the sidelined story of Annamma Mammen, emphasizes Mammen's role as a songwriter and analyzes one of her early songs to highlight how her theology encapsulates early Kerala Pentecostal theological emphases (eschatological imagination, scriptural importance, contextual primacy, and Jesus-centeredness). Although Mammen's missionary life and itinerant preaching were impactful for developing Kerala Pentecostalism, namely the Indian Pentecostal Church of God (IPC), it was her role as a songwriter that carries Mammen's legacy in shaping the contemporary Kerala Pentecostal imagination.

Introduction

The historical growth and influence of South Indian Kerala Pentecostalism are well documented. The Pentecostal faith that came to the southern Indian state of Kerala with a series of revivals at the end of the nineteenth century,[1] to the missionary

[1]According to the Indian theologian A. C. George, there were three notable revivals: "one in 1860, another in 1873 and a third in 1895" (A. C. George, "Pentecostal Beginnings in Travancore, South India," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 4:2 [2001], 221). By the early twentieth century, with the rise of indigenous reformers within the Syrian Mar Thoma churches and the arrival of Pentecostal missionaries like George Berg (arrived in 1909), Robert F. Cook (arrived in 1913 from Los Angeles), and Mary Chapman (arrived in 1915), the dawn of Pentecostalism as a new ecclesial institution was slowly emerging. In 1926 the first indigenous Pentecostal ecclesiastical body was named South Indian Pentecostal Church of God (SICG) (Allan Varghese, "The Reformative and Indigenous Face of the Indian Pentecostal Movement," *Nidān* 4:2 [2019], 11; K. E. Abraham *Yeshuvinte Eliyadasen* [trans. *Humble Servant of God*], 4th ed. [Arlington: Vijai & Shirley Chacko 2015], 159), which was eventually renamed Indian Pentecostal

movement of South Indian Pentecostal missionaries to North India in the mid-twentieth century, are highlighted in scholarly literature.[2] However, most scholars solely highlight the voices of men, sidelining the active role of Kerala women in shaping Kerala Pentecostalism and the Indian Pentecostal movement at large.[3] The preacher-songwriter Annamma Mammen (1911–2002) is one such voice that not only impacted early Kerala Pentecostal growth but also continues to shape the theological imagination at a grassroots level. Mammen entered the male-dominated world upon receiving a call from God and not only engaged in Pentecostal missionary activities, but also became a fearless advocate for women's leadership roles in Kerala Pentecostal ministry. Although her teaching and preaching were phenomenal, it was her songs that became influential in shaping the Kerala Pentecostal imagination.[4]

Therefore, in this article, while bringing forth the sidelined story of Annamma Mammen, I will argue that in the early twentieth century Mammen was not only active in missionary work and advocating for women's leadership in Kerala Pentecostal ministry, but was also engaged in Pentecostal theologizing through her songs.

To arrive at this objective, I will first provide a brief biographical account of Annamma Mammen. Second, in order to highlight Mammen's theological contribution, I will analyze one of Mammen's songs, highlighting four theological emphases of Mammen's theology (eschatological imagination, scriptural allusions, contextual primacy, and Jesus-centeredness) that are reflective of early Pentecostal

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Church of God (IPC), "signifying its expansion in other geographical regions" (Varghese, "The Reformative and Indigenous Face of the Indian Pentecostal Movement,"12). By the mid- to second half of twentieth century, the influence of Kerala Pentecostal missionary endeavors led to the beginning of numerous Pentecostal churches and denominations across India.

[2] Shaibu Abraham, *The History of the Pentecostal Movement in North India: Unfolding Its Social & Theological Contexts* (New Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2017), 45–86; Yabbeju Rapaka, *Dalit Pentecostalism: A Study of the Indian Pentecostal Church of God, 1932 to 2010* (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2013), 23–52; Wessly Lukose, *Contextual Missiology of the Spirit: Pentecostalism in Rajasthan, India* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 61–72.

[3] Although in general women's roles are sidelined in Indian Pentecostal historiography, some scholars have begun to recognize women's pioneering work. For example, V. V. Thomas provides a brief overview of women's roles in Indian Pentecostalism. Thomas locates the discussion within the wider Indian context of how women are perceived in society. For further details see, V. V. Thomas, "Women's Contribution to the Indian Church with Special Reference to Women of the Pentecostal Churches," *UBS Journal* 5:1 (2007), 72–84. Another example is Dyron Daughrity's and Jesudas Athyal's work highlighting some of the Pentecostal women pioneers like Mary Kovoor and Pandita Ramabai. For their full biographical discussion, see Dyron Daughrity and Jesudas Athyal, *Understanding World Christianity: India* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 249–54. In global Pentecostal scholarship Pandita Ramabai's name is well-known and so has received more attention than any other Indian Pentecostal woman. For a Pentecostal analysis of Ramabai's life, see Allan H. Anderson, "Pandita Ramabai, the Mukti Revival and Global Pentecostalism," *Transformation* 23:1 (2006), 37–48.

[4] Although Mammen preached throughout the Malayalam-speaking world, we do not have any of Annamma Mammen's sermons or writings, but are left to rely exclusively on her songs to understand her theology.

beliefs. Finally, I will also discuss the legacy of Mammen's life and theology in providing a new vision for women's ministerial roles in Kerala Pentecostal churches.

Biographical Overview

Early Life, Conversion, and Call

Annamma Mammen was born on April 26, 1911, the first child of Syrian Mar Thoma parents—K. M. Mammen and Mariamma in Kochuparambil house, Kumbanad, Kerala.[5] Although Mammen enjoyed a relatively comfortable childhood, tragedy hit at age 14 as Mammen's mother passed away while giving birth to Mammen's youngest brother. As the eldest in the house, Mammen assumed the role of taking care of her five younger siblings along with her grandmother. Through her daily household duties, Mammen completed her education and went on to be a schoolteacher.

Her early responsibilities at home and relentless resilience made her, as Alyeamma Abraham notes, "an adventurous woman."[6] However, for Mammen, her Christian faith was her strength, and having been raised in the Mar Thoma tradition she was fervently active in her local Mar Thoma church. Although she was exposed to Pentecostal teachings and revivals in her locality through the ministry of K. E. Abraham, as a young child she felt no urge to join this emerging Pentecostal movement.

However, in 1927, when she was 16 years old, she had an encounter that changed her life. In a 1992 interview she shared the story of her calling.[7] One afternoon, while taking a nap at Thiruvalla Seminary,[8] where she often visited, she had a dream. In the

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[5] Aleyamma Abraham, "Pentecostal Women in Kerala: Their Contribution to the Mission of the Church," (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2004), 65. Although Saju (*Kerala Pentekostu Charithram* [trans., *History of Kerala Pentecostals*] [Kottayam, Kerala: Sanctuary Word Media, 2011], 331) and other authors (e.g., Saji Philip Thiruvanchur, "Annamma Mammen: Kurishinte Vazhiyile Deeraporali" [trans., "Annamma Mammen: Courageous Fighter on Cross Way"], *Good News Weekly* 25:36 [2002]; and idem., "Andhraye Snehikunna Pentecostal Vanitha Raghnam" [trans., "The Pentecost Lady, Who Loves Andra"), *Good News Weekly* 25:37 [2002]) list Mammen's birth year as 1914, the interviews the author of this article had with Mammen's extended family confirm Aleyamma Abraham's mention that Mammen was the eldest in the family and she was born in 1911. The family also confirmed that it is impossible for Mammen to have born in 1914 as one of her younger brothers was born in 1914.

[6] Aleyamma Abraham, "Pentecostal Women in Kerala," 65.

[7] The autobiographical sketch in this paragraph is a summary version of Pastor James K. Eapen's interview with Annamma Mammen in 1992 in Malayalam. In the interview, Ms. Mammen recalls most of her conversion experiences. All the quotations used in this section are taken from the interview and are translated by the author. For the full interview in Malayalam, see James K. Eapen, "Sister Annamma Mammen Testimony (1992)," 2002, YouTube video, 19:35, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H63rAtWWOz4 (22 May 2022).

[8] Although in the interview Mammen mentions "Thiruvalla Seminary," it is likely that Mammen was referring to the Mar Thoma Vanitha Mandiram at Thiruvalla, which has been offering Bible studies for women since 1925. The Mar Thoma church did not have any other theological institutions or

dream, she saw someone telling her that God had called her for a miraculous act. Awakened from sleep, still trying to make sense of the dream, she dedicated her life to God, not knowing what the call meant. Mammen assumed that God intended to use her within the Mar Thoma church, and so she said, "I thought God might do something through me at the Maramon Convention."[9] However, that assumption changed after another encounter where she experienced Spirit baptism and started to speak in tongues. On this occasion, while on her way home from Thiruvalla to Kumbanad when she reached Eraviperoor,[10] she said, "I felt like I was unable to speak, and I began to feel distressed, I started to cry fearing I cannot talk. I sat at the roadside in distress, and soon I started to speak in other tongues loudly. Some people heard and thought it was strange."[11] However, soon Mammen recognized that experience as being filled by the Holy Spirit. Such an experience provided Mammen the confidence to dedicate her life to "serve the Lord for the rest of her life, leaving behind her parents and dear ones."[12]

According to Mammen, her Pentecostal experience and her decision to be a missionary led her father to shun her from the family home.[13] For her family, Mammen's decision to be a missionary was a "prestige issue" as "in leading Syrian Christian families in Kerala, women [were] not supposed to go out on their own."[14] Unlike the Pentecostal men who left their Syrian churches, Pentecostal women adopted visible lifestyle changes that aggravated the communal shame following conversion. These lifestyle changes included denouncing jewelry and wearing white clothing. In the Kerala context, where jewelry and expensive saris demonstrated social status and

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seminaries in Thiruvalla, and the only seminary is situated in Kottayam, which would have been far for Mammen to commute on a daily basis. For a concise history of Vanitha Mandiram, see https://marthoma.in/organisations/mar-thoma-suvishesha-sevika-sangam/ (25 February 2023).

[9] Since 1895 the Mar Thoma Evangelistic Association conducted their annual convention at Marmon, near Kozhencherry. "It is held on the sandbanks of river Pampa, late in February or early in March in the summer season, and lasts for a whole week, from Sunday to Sunday. During the last days in the week, well above fifty thousand people attend the meetings and listen in pin-drop silence to the addresses delivered" (C. P. Mathew and M. M. Thomas, *The Indian Churches of Saint Thomas*, rev. ed. [Delhi: ISPCK, 2005], 102). Prominent Christian preachers like Thomas Walker, Sadhu Sunder Singh, G. Sherwood Eddy, and E. Stanley Jones were guest preachers during its early years.

[10] The distance between Thiruvalla and Kumbanad is approximately ten kilometers and Eraviperoor is about three kilometers from Kumbanad.

[11] James K. Eapen, "Sister Annamma Mammen Testimony (1992)."

[12] Aleyamma Abraham, "Pentecostal Women in Kerala," 65.

[13] In the interview, Ms. Mammen remembered these painful experiences, saying, "They beat me out of home."

[14] Aleyamma Abraham, "Pentecostal Women in Kerala," 65.

power,[15] Pentecostals taught that such symbols of power represented worldliness.[16] Consequently, women wore white saris[17] and denounced any ornaments, setting them apart from other traditions and embodying the life of simplicity, often comparing themselves to the early church.[18] For Pentecostal women, such a lifestyle change was a public declaration of their allegiance towards Jesus Christ; for their extended family who were not Pentecostals, it meant insult and public humiliation. Often such social pressures led families to persecute Pentecostals and even shun them from their family homes, which Annamma Mammen endured as she followed Christ in the Pentecostal manner.[19] However, for Mammen, there was no turning back. "Since she had experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit, her first commitment was to the Lord and the direction of the Holy Spirit."[20]

Missionary Life as a Bible Woman, Advocate for Women Ministers, and Songwriter

In the subsequent years, she became a gospel preacher while teaching, living with distant relatives and other Pentecostal believers. K. E. Abraham, one of the pioneers of South Indian Pentecostalism, recalls one such impact in his biography:

> Annamma Mammen, who was a member of Kumbanad Pentecostal church, joined a teaching job at Kirikode near Karthikapaly. She used to live at one of her relatives' homes. Her moral and upright living during her stay at their home brought the entire family to the Pentecostal faith. As a result, a few members from the village decided to organize a revival meeting there in which I was invited to preach. Consequently, numerous people came to experience the Pentecostal Christian faith . . . starting a Pentecostal church.[21]

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[15] Often, wedding days are pivotal social occasions when such social powers are displayed. As Stanley John writes, on the wedding day, "a woman's adornment with jewelry . . . displayed the family's social and economic status" (Stanley J. Valayil C. John, *Transnational Religious Organization and Practice: A Contextual Analysis of Kerala Pentecostal Churches in Kuwait* [Leiden: Brill, 2018], 106).

[16] For further insights into how Kerala Pentecostals frame their theological rationale against wearing jewelry, see P. J. Daniel, *Wearing Ornaments, Is It Necessary?* (Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala: Unarvu Publications, 2001).

[17] Aleyamma Abraham ("Pentecostal Women in Kerala," 59) mentions that such an embrace of white clothing is often supported by Rev 7:9, which says, "After this, I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands" (NRSV).

[18] Aleyamma Abraham, "Pentecostal Women in Kerala," 59.

[19] Aleyamma Abraham, "Pentecostal Women in Kerala," 59.

[20] Aleyamma Abraham, "Pentecostal Women in Kerala," 65.

[21] K. E. Abraham, *Yeshuvinte Eliyadasen*, 508. The original quotation is in Malayalam and this is the author's translation.

However, soon Mammen resigned her job to be a full-time missionary in Eluru, Andra Pradesh, joining P. T. Chacko and Mrs. Chacko in 1936.[22] In Andra Pradesh, Mammen and other women engaged in mission activities, such as visiting houses, conducting prayers and open-air meetings. "On street corners, they would sing; and when people gathered, they preached the Word of God,"[23] a pattern similar to that of the "Bible women" missionaries.[24] After her time in Andra Pradesh, Mammen also spent some years in Tamil Nadu while visiting Kerala regularly.[25] By the mid-twentieth century, Mammen had traversed most of southern India and beyond, preaching the gospel, teaching, and helping start Pentecostal churches.[26]

Despite Mammen's missionary journeys around the world, Mammen also made it a point to actively stand for empowering other Kerala women for full-time ministry. One of the remarkable contributions in this regard was through providing leadership for the *Sangethems*. In 1958, along with the help of other women,[27] Mammen provided leadership in founding *Sangethems* (literally, "refuge").[28] *Sangethems,* a ministry affiliated with the Indian Pentecostal Church of God (IPC), was home for women "who abstained from marriage for the sake of mission work."[29] Luke writes further: "Miss. Annamma Mammen, a well-known handmaiden of the Lord, motivated several sisters to stay in *Sankethams* and be involved in the ministry."[30] Although the number of women staying at the *Sangethems* dwindled over the years, *Sangethems* are an example of Mammen's vision and leadership to encourage women (mainly single women) to take

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[22] One of the reasons Mammen decided to go to Eluru is because Mrs. Chacko was Mammen's cousin. See T. S. Abraham, *A Brief History of the Indian Pentecostal Church of God* (Kumbanad, Kerala: K.E. Abraham Foundation, 2013), 143.

[23] Aleyamma Abraham, "Pentecostal Women in Kerala," 66.

[24] The idea of women missionaries as Bible women was common by then in Andra Pradesh. For a historical review on the early Bible women in the Rayalaseema area in Andra Pradesh, see Chakali Chandra Sekhar, "Dalit Women and Colonial Christianity: First Telugu Bible Women as Teachers of Wisdom," *Economic & Political Weekly* 56 (2021), 57–63.

[25] In 1955, Mammen was listed as a teacher at the Hebron Bible School, Kumbanad (K. E. Abraham, *Yeshuvinte Eliyadasen*, 439).

[26] While in Tamil Nadu, Mammen met Agnes Walsh, a Swedish missionary, through whom Mammen received further opportunities to embark on various international journeys, including a one-year teaching appointment at the Elim Bible Institute in New York. Mammen is also said to have spent some significant time in Hong Kong planting a church (Aleyamma Abraham, "Pentecostal Women in Kerala," 66).

[27] One of the notable persons who helped to found this along with Mammen is Mary Amma, wife of Astamudi Ummachen (Clara Mathew Shiju, *Indian Christian Women Pioneers and Leaders Revealed: An Exploration of Overlooked Women Voices in Socio-cultural & Religious Framework* [New Delhi: Christian World Imprints], 85).

[28] Saju, *Kerala Pentekostu Charithram*, 331; Shiju, *Indian Christian Women Pioneers and Leaders Revealed*, 85.

[29] Starla Luke, "A History of Sodari Samajam: Handmaiden of The India Pentecostal Church of God," unpublished paper, 2021.

[30] Luke, "A History of Sodari Samajam," 6.

ministerial leadership in building Pentecostalism in Kerala.[31] For Mammen, Holy Spirit empowerment was the only needed sign required for ministry. When asked once about her own thoughts of women's roles in Pentecostal ministry, she answered, "God does not show favouritism to men or women. God works with men as well as women. Men need to accept this truth."[32] Among Kerala Pentecostals, as Saju notes, "Annamma Mammen was unique. To those who doubted women's role in ministry, her life, gospel preaching, and itinerary ministry was a terrifying reminder."[33] On November 21, 2002, Annamma Mammen died at the age of 90,[34] leaving behind numerous inspirational stories[35] and, more importantly, songs that have since caught the attention of the wider public.

In Kerala Pentecostalism, Annamma Mammen's life undoubtedly stands out. Mammen's act of faith to leave her family for the sake of God's call, choice to remain single, itinerant missionary lifestyle, and leadership to establish *Sangethems*, set her apart among other men and women in early Kerala Pentecostalism. However, today, unlike any other contributions, Mammen's songs carry her missionary legacy. Annamma Mammen was a prolific songwriter. Although, due to the scarcity of written records, we cannot be sure how many songs Mammen wrote in total, Binoy Philip notes that at least twelve songs are popularly attributed to Annamma Mammen.[36] During hard times, both emotional and physical, Mammen resorted to reflecting upon the hope of Jesus Christ and penned her theological reflections as songs. Due to their devotional tone and theological depth, these songs gained popularity in recent decades and traversed denominational boundaries.[37] These songs stand as a reminder that Mammen

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[31] Binoy Eapen Philip highlights in his work that Annamma Mammen took the sole responsibility in building one of the *Sangethem* homes in Thiruvalla where she purchased the land by using her own personal funds (Binoy Eapen Philip, "The Invisible Mothers of the Church: Contributions of Select Indian Christian Women to the Growth and Development of the Indian Pentecostal Church of God in Kerala (1930-2005)," [master's thesis, Serampore College, 2008], 71).

[32] Aleyamma Abraham, "Pentecostal Women in Kerala," 68.

[33] Saju, *Kerala Pentekostu Charithram*, 331.

[34] Alice Paul mentioned this date. See Alice Paul, "A Wake Up Call for the Daughters," *Revive Me*, accessed 3 July 2021, https://revivemegod.org/articles/readarticle/565.

[35] Saju writes, "I have heard numerous unbelievable stories of Annamma Mammen. Her story of how she was able to enter a certain country without visa or documents to preach the Gospel . . . about a story of someone from abroad sending her money on behalf of Indira Gandhi . . . numerous such [stories]" (Saju, *Kerala Pentekostu Charithram*, 328).

[36] Philip, "The Invisible Mothers of the Church," 68.

[37] One of the songs, "*Shuddher Sthuthikum Veeda,"* which we discuss in this article, became a representation of Christian devotional song in a recent Malayalam movie, *The Priest* (2021). Another well-known song, "*Lokamam Gambhira Varidhiyil,"* is also recognized by Manorama Music (a well-known regional music label) as Popular Christian Devotional Songs. Manorama Music has released a cover version of this song with K. S. Chithra singing. For the full version of the song, see K. S. Chithra, "*Lokamam Gambhira Varidhiyil,"* 3 February 2020, YouTube video, 6:58, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fNT_9G87fE (22 May 2022).

was in fact a theologian—a singing theologian who captured the theological impetus of the early Kerala Pentecostals in her songs.

In what follows, to demonstrate the theological contribution of Mammen's songs, I will analyze one of Mammen's earliest songs and identify four theological components it carries. These theological distinctives not only represent a microcosm of Kerala Pentecostal theology, but they also subtly provide a prophetic vison for women's roles in contemporary Kerala Pentecostal theology.

Mammen's Theology through the Song, "*Shuddher Stuthikum Veeda*"

Although song lyrics that are limited to a few stanzas are "ill-suited to systematic reasoning," and "they are not dogmatic statements formulated for indoctrination,"[38] they provoke the imagination. While not lacking in rationality or dogma, songs invite singers to step into worshiping God. Such is the nature of the theology embedded in Annamma Mammen's songs that provokes the listener's imagination with its portrayal of contextual factors, scriptural allusions, admiration for the Lord Jesus Christ, and its strong emphasis on eschatological hope.

In writing songs that were born out of her sorrowful context following her call to mission, Mammen's songs embody theological commentaries integrating Scriptures, oral liturgical expressions, and her faith in God. To briefly highlight these traits in Mammen's theology, I shall examine one of her popular songs, "*Shuddher Stuthikum Veeda"* ("The Home of Holy Worshippers"), written immediately after her accepting the Pentecostal way of Christianity and committing to be a missionary. Through this analysis, I shall highlight four theological distinctives of Mammen's theology. Although scholars have taken both the "text and tune together"[39] in theological analysis of hymns and songs, the following analysis will focus exclusively on the text of the song and its theological content. Due to my lack of musical and poetic expertise, I will not focus on the linguistic qualities, stylistic form, or any musical factors, nor does the following discourse present an analysis of Mammen's song in comparison to other Kerala musical or poetic forms. Instead, the focus will solely be on extracting the embedded theology of lyrics through a Pentecostal theological lens.

[38] S. T. Kimbrough, Jr., "Hymns Are Theology," *Theology Today* 42 (1985), 62.
[39] Don E. Saliers, *Music and Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 35.

Lyrics of "*Shudhar Sthuthikkum Veeda"* ("The Home of Holy Worshippers")

1. ശുദ്ധർ സ്തുതിക്കും വീടേ
ദൈവമക്കൾക്കുള്ളാശ്രയമേ
പരിലസിക്കും
സ്വർണ്ണത്തെരുവീഥിയിൽ
അതികുതുകാൽ എന്നു
ഞാൻ ചേർന്നീടുമോ

1. [To] the home of the holy worshippers,
For the refuge for God's children,
Jubilation on the golden streets,
When will I join [you] with exceeding joy?

Chorus
വാനവരിൻ സ്തുതിനാദം സദാ
മുഴങ്ങും ശാലേമിൽ
എന്നു ഞാൻ ചേർന്നീടുമോ
പരസുതനെ
എന്നു ഞാൻ ചേർന്നീടുമോ

The resounding praises of angels in Salem
When will I join [you] my precious Lord?
When will I join?

2. മുത്തിനാൽ
നിർമ്മിതമായുള്ള
പന്ത്രണ്ടുഗോപുരമെ
തവമഹത്വം
കണ്ടിട്ടങ്ങാനന്ദിപ്പാൻ
മമ കൺകൾ പാരം
കൊതിച്ചിടുന്നേ;-

2. Twelve towers set with pearls
[To] rejoice after we see thy glory
The constant longing of my eyes.

3. അന്ധത ഇല്ല നാടേ
ദൈവതേജസ്സാൽ മിന്നും
വീടേ
തവ വിളക്കാം
ദൈവത്തിൻ
കുഞ്ഞാടിനെ
അളവന്യേ
പാടിസ്തുതിച്ചിടും ഞാൻ;-

3. The homeland without blindness,
The home shining with divine radiance,
Whose lamp is the lamb of God,
I will sing and worship Him beyond measure.

4. കഷ്ടതയില്ലാ നാടേ
ദൈവഭക്തരിൻ
വിശ്രമമേ
പുകൾ പെരുകും
പുത്തനെരുശലേമേ
തിരു മാർവ്വിൽ എന്നു
ഞാൻ ചാരീടുമോ;-

4. The homeland without suffering, the rest for godly believers,
The praise abounding new Jerusalem,
When will I lean on your shoulders?

5. ശുദ്ധവും
ശുഭ്രവുമായുള്ള
ജീവജലനദിയിൻ
ഇരുകരയും
ജീവവൃക്ഷഫലങ്ങൾ
പരിലസിക്കും
ദൈവത്തിൻ
ഉദ്യാനമേ;-

5. The pure and bright stream of living waters,
(With) fruits of living trees,
on both its shores
[To] dwell in this garden of God.

6. കർത്ത്യ
സിംഹാസനത്തിൻ
ചുറ്റും വീണകൾ
മീട്ടിടുന്ന
സുരവരരെ ചേർന്നങ്ങു
പാടീടുവാൻ
ഉരുമോദം പാരം
വളരുന്നഹോ;-

6. To sing along with the angels who play harps around the Lord's throne,
My joy is rising to its peak.

First, a preliminary reading of the lyrics undeniably demonstrates its strong eschatological allusions: every stanza is indicative of Mammen's longing for the coming heavenly home. While the words "When will I join?" in the chorus indicate a sense of Mammen's expectation to soon arrive at the end of this earthly journey, the various stanzas portray Mammen's imagination of her heavenly home, the home that is built

with "pearls," inhibited by "saints," "angels," and "divine radiance," decorated with "golden streets," natural "streams," "shores," "gardens that produce fruits," and filled with a worshipping atmosphere where there is "ongoing praises," singing of angels with harps and an overwhelming sense of joy and rest. These lyrics evidently portray Mammen's expectation of what is to come in a poetic and devotional expression.

Second, the numerous scriptural allusions in the song convey an evident influence of biblical literacy and devotion, which is pivotal to Mammen's theology. The song begins with the reference to a future worshipping home building the poetic imagination upon Jesus' assurance that "in my father's house are many rooms . . . and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (John 14:2, 3, ESV). The subsequent allusions to "shinning golden streets," "ongoing praises of angels," the "towers, built with pearls," "new Jerusalem," "the pure and bright stream of living waters," and "the angels who play harps around the Lord's throne," have strong associations to the book of Revelation, specifically 14:2[40]; 21:10–27; 22:1;[41] and 22:3.[42] In summation, the song "*Shudhar Sthuthikkum Veeda"* presents Mammen's scripturally robust theological imagination of longing for an eternal home for God's children.

Third, the contextual nature of suffering Mammen experienced appears in Mammen's eschatological theology. Reflecting on her songs in an interview, Annamma Mammen said, "All my songs were written out of my personal life experiences."[43] This song, most likely the first song she wrote after becoming a Pentecostal, embodies her immediate life context better than any other.[44] One story has been told that once, while returning home after a prayer gathering, Mammen's father asked Mammen to leave their home and find elsewhere to stay. The reason for this ostracizing was because "she decided to leave the tradition of their family. . . . Her father and [some] relatives could not accept this" decision from Mamman to follow Pentecostal faith.[45] This experience of being ostracized from her own home led to a season of theological

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[40] The "sound of harpists playing on their harps" (Rev 14:2).

[41] It mentions "the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God" (Rev 22:1).

[42] "No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him" (Rev 22:3).

[43] Annamma Mammen makes this comment at the beginning of her interview with Eapen, "Sister Annamma Mammen Testimony (1992)."

[44] Although the majority of the composition of the song came from this experience of being ostracized by her family, some stanzas were added later on. The fourth stanza ("A homeland without suffering, comfort for godly believers; praise abounding, new Jerusalem; When will I lean on your shoulders?") was a later addition and was understood to be added as she reflected upon her hardships in her early missionary journey to Andra Pradesh (Jijo Angamaly, *Ganolppathi* [Thiruvalla: Sathyam Publications, 2000], 553).

[45] Angamaly, *Ganolppathi*, 552.

formation for Mammen, leading her to pen the song "*Shudhar Sthuthikkum Veeda*." As Jijo Angamaly notes,

> When all the doors in this world were shut for her, with tears and with hope, she was able to see the heavenly door open for her. The lyrics of the song "*Shudhar Sthuthikkum Veeda"* came to her as she stood outside her home in solitude, being overwhelmed in her heart by the thought of the heavenly home.[46]

In light of the contextual suffering, the repeated use of terms *nadu* (homeland) and *veedu* (home) in the lyrics provides an indication of Mammen's emphasis on a future *redeemed* home and homeland in eternity. While Mammen lost her *veedu* in this *nadu,* Mammen's exhortation is not to remain in despair of the loss but to focus on the eternal home (stanza 1). At the same time, Mammen's continued use of the terms *nadu* and *veedu* to expound on the future home also carries a homey imagery of eternity, rather than *rajyam* (kingdom), which provides a kingly authoritative imagination. Such an imagination communicates Mammen's lament of her earthly lost home as well as a hope of redeeming the earthly *veedu*. In other words, the eternal home Mammen envisions is not a home that is run by an authoritative figure who shuns people, but by a God who welcomes and comforts her with all blessings.

These meanings, when placed within the broader context of the song, exemplify Mammen's theology as developed within the pain of abandonment from her own family. It is a word about God, who not only provides a safe home as a refuge for God's children (stanza one), but also provides a rich home built of pearls (stanza two), with all provisions such as gardens (stanzas four and five), streams (stanza five), and musical settings (stanza six) to enjoy.

Fourth, even though the name of Jesus Christ is not evident in the lyrics, the song's christological imageries are highlighted in Mammen's usage of terms such as "Lord" (stanza six), "precious Lord" (chorus), and "lamb of God" (stanza three). Although these are the only three instances in the song that use such characterizations, the biblical allusions embedded in these imageries makes it clear that they are speaking of Jesus Christ. They are a testament to Mammen's biblical knowledge, as well as her adoration and respect of Jesus Christ.

These four attributes—eschatological hope, scriptural integration, contextuality, and Jesus-centeredness—from the song "*Shudhar Sthuthikkum Veeda*" outline the nature of Mammen's theology. While these theological themes may share commonality with early classical Pentecostal themes from around the world, they undoubtedly reflect the shared theological imagination of the early Kerala Pentecostals. Most notably,

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[46] Angamaly, *Ganolppathi*, 552.The original quotation is in Malayalam, and this is the author's translation.

Mammen's allusions to suffering and reliance on Scripture find their resonance in Kerala Pentecostalism.

Mammen's Theological Resonance with Early Kerala Pentecostal Imagination

One of the key theological factors from Mammen's song that resonated with the local Kerala Pentecostals is the shared memories of suffering and persecution. It is common to hear stories of persecutions, hardships, and financial insecurities among the pioneers who left the local Syrian Christian denominations to join the Pentecostal community. The other contemporaries of Mammen, K. E. Abraham, A. J. John, and P. V. John, as A. C. George notes, "left their secular jobs to obey the Lord's call and went through privations and sufferings of various kinds."[47] Additionally for Mammen, being a single woman away from home doing missions may have added further emotional distress due to everyday acts of social persecution from extended families.

Furthermore, Mammen's reliance on Scripture to provide eschatological hope also captured the imagination of early Pentecostals. The underlying scriptural allusions from Mammen are a testimony of the deep reverence Kerala Pentecostals have toward the Bible. Historically, Pentecostal admiration towards Scripture could be attributed to the availability of the Bible in Malayalam that "breathed a new life,"[48] leading to the commencement of Mar Thoma and Pentecostal churches.[49] During the early years of Pentecostal expansion in Kerala, the Pentecostals were associated with their fervor for the Bible, to the extent, as George writes, the "Pentecostal believer [came to] be easily identified by the 'black book' (because of the black leather binding) he or she carried."[50] The accessibility of the Bible in the vernacular undoubtedly led pioneers like Mammen to integrate scriptural truths in the form of lyrics to shape the Kerala Pentecostal imagination.

Mammen's incorporation of her contextual experiences of suffering and deep conviction of Scripture enabled local Pentecostals to adopt Mammen's song as their own. In such a shared context, Mammen's lyrics provided a renewed vision for the early Kerala Pentecostals to live through earthly persecution with hope of the soon coming

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[47] A. C. George, "Pentecostal Beginnings in Travancore, South India," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 4 (2001), 236.

[48] George, "Pentecostal Beginnings in Travancore, South India," 221.

[49] It was due to the contribution of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) missionaries Benjamin Bailey, Joseph Finn, and Henry Baker, who came to be called the "Travancore Trio" (Gary McKee, "Benjamin Bailey and the Call for the Conversion of an Ancient Christian Church in India," *Studies in World Christianity* 24 [2018], 114), and namely through Benjamin Bailey's translation of the Bible to Malayalam (completed in 1841) that Keralites were able to read the Bible in their vernacular language.

[50] George, "Pentecostal Beginnings in Travancore, South India," 235.

Lord to take them to the eternal home. Although Mammen's theology (according to the song discussed) does not overtly communicate any premillennial ideas of eschatology, they evidently portray the fervency of expecting the Lord to take her to the heavenly home.[51]

So far, I have presented the Pentecostal world of Annamma Mammen, her life as a Pentecostal missionary, and her theological contribution through her song, *"Shudhar Sthuthikkum Veeda*." However, it is apt to conclude this discussion by emphasizing the potential legacy of Mammen's work and theology in shaping the Kerala Pentecostal imagination concerning women's roles in Kerala Pentecostalism.

Mammen's Theological Legacy: Its Challenge to Patriarchal Leadership

Annamma Mammen was an "adventurous woman" or a "courageous fighter"[52] who fearlessly went on with her missionary journey and made significant contributions through songwriting. However, she was not given any recognizable ministerial roles in the IPC or in any other Pentecostal denominations, nor was she ordained in any capacity. Although there are no writings until now that indicate that Mammen was remorseful or was unable to engage in mission because of her unordained status, the lack of ministerial recognition from the male-dominated Pentecostal church leadership to some extent stifled Mammen's effort to uplift the status of women leaders in Kerala Pentecostalism.

One may rightly see the establishment of *Sangethems* that provided housing for single missionary women as part of Mammen's life legacy. However, the decline of the *Sangethems* in the recent decades can be seen as the direct effects of the lack of recognition given to women's leadership by their male counterparts. The active participation of women in Pentecostal ministry that Mammen envisioned through the *Sangethems* did not come to its full fruition. Consciously or unconsciously, the lack of necessary action by Pentecostal male leadership to acknowledge, empower, and ordain women as co-workers in the Pentecostal mission led to the sidelining of women's roles in ministry, even during Mammen's lifetime. Over the years, the Pentecostal women pioneers' admirable roles in Kerala Pentecostalism were forgotten due to the

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[51] Michael Bergunder notes that "south Indian Pentecostals follow the prevailing dispensationalist teaching such as premillennialism and pretribulationism" (Michael Bergunder, *The South Indian Pentecostal Movement in the Twentieth Century* [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008], 136), where they expect the imminent second coming of Jesus Christ before the beginning of any kind of tribulations. Nonetheless, Mammen's lyrics do not provide any such indication of premillennial ideas.

[52] Thiruvanchur, "Annamma Mammen: Kurishinte Vazhiyile Deeraporali," 5.

institutionalization of Pentecostalism and male-controlled leadership structures. Saju writes, "[A]s years and decades passed, women's ministry became unadmirable among the Pentecostals. . . . Because of this Pentecostal attitudinal change against women's ministry, there is a lack of women from the new generation entering into the 'way of *Sangethems.*'"[53]

However, Mammen's theological legacy is imprinted through her songs. Even though Mammen's songs do not present an overt appeal towards women's oppression or women's roles in Christian ministry, one should not think that her Pentecostal fervor concealed her gender. In that sense, her songs testify to theological protest, survival, and flourishing, not only in the midst of persecutions related to her Pentecostal faith, but also in the midst of social and ecclesial patriarchy. Subsequently, one could see in her theology a rescripting of the "master narrative,"[54] where her life and theologically-laden song lyrics subversively rescript the social narrative of the patriarchal control of theologizing within Kerala Christian society and more specifically within Pentecostalism. Wherever her songs are sung, they stand as a reminder that God can and will use women to move forward God's mission and enhance theological imagination.

Mammen's songs, including the one discussed in this article,[55] also call the church to re-envision the role of women in Pentecostal ministry from an eschatological perspective, where women are co-equal in God's new order. Pentecostal theologian

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[53] Saju, *Kerala Pentekostu Charithram*, 331. From the second half of the twentieth century, Kerala Pentecostal Bible colleges train many female students who graduate yearly with undergraduate and graduate level theological degrees. However, most of them end up being pastors' wives and take on a supportive role to their husbands rather than to co-teach or co-preach with their husbands, let alone have their own mission-oriented ministries. Therefore, as South Indian Pentecostal scholar M. Stephen puts it, "It is quite right to say that the Pentecostal churches ensure the involvement of the women in the evangelizing activities of the church, but they have failed to offer them important positions in the church. They are given the freedom to sing, prophesy, to preach, and to exercise their gifts in the church. They may be even appointed as the secretary of the women's fellowship. But it is to be noted that their voices are always controlled by the church leaders. The structure of patriarchy plays a dominant role" (M. Stephen, *Towards a Pentecostal Theology and Ethics* [Kerala, India: Chraisthava Bodhi, 1999], 50, 51). In other words, as Edith Blumhofer puts it, "Pentecostalism values women's speech within boundaries," within the boundaries of patriarchal institutional control (Edith L. Blumhofer, "Women in Pentecostalism," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 57:3–4 (2003), 120).

[54] Elaine J. Lawless, "Transforming the Master Narrative," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 24 (2003), 61.

[55] One of the other popular Mammen songs is "*Lokamam Gambhira Varidhiyil*." The song speaks of being on the "faith ship voyage in an 'atrocious world journey'" (stanza one) and the waiting to be restful with the Lord in the eternal home. Furthermore, as the song progresses it exemplifies the eschatological theme with mentions of the "coming of the Lord" (stanza two) to take us to "the dreamed promised land of the forefathers" (stanza three) on the "pure crystal seashores" (stanza five); "Jerusalem above is the Eternal Home" (stanza six). Throughout the song, such eschatological themes are integrated with allusions of endurance in this present journey of earthly suffering.

Cheryl Bridges Johns calls us to imagine "the conscientization of women"[56] in light of the Spirit's move within the "eschatological vision of God's new order."[57] In light of God's new order, where the Holy Spirit is poured upon both men and women, the old order of relegating women to serve only "in the court of women"[58] needs to be reconsidered. Hence, as Bridges Johns envisions, there is a need to recapture a Pentecostal spirituality with an eschatological vision for the active empowerment and involvement of women in Pentecostal ministry.

For the Malayalam-speaking Pentecostal world, Annamma Mammen's songs that are rich in eschatological language can provide such a vision for both women and men to renew not only their urgency for missions but also to acknowledge and establish women as equal ministry partners with men in mission activities, mirroring the eschatological vision of God's new order that is yet to come.

Conclusion

In this article, I brought forth the sidelined story of Annamma Mammen and argued that Mammen was not only active in missionary work and advocating for women's leadership in Kerala Pentecostal ministry, but through her songs she was also engaged in Pentecostal theologizing.

As a young single woman in colonial South India, where patriarchy reigned, Mammen embraced the Pentecostal faith and faced persecutions from family and community. In addition to her new-found faith that led to her persecution, it would not be an exaggeration to state that Mammen had to struggle through the patriarchal structures of Kerala religious space. Nonetheless, Mammen trusted her call and took steps to be active in Pentecostal missionary work in the midst of these challenges. In doing so, Mammen is in the company of early Pentecostal women missionaries from around the world who exclusively trusted God's call to engage in various mission activities. Barbara Cavaness highlights the pioneering work of women who went with the Assemblies of God for overseas missions. American Pentecostal women like Marie Stephany (to China in 1916), Lillian Trasher (to Egypt in 1910), and nurse Florence Steidel (to Libera) who went overseas for the mission went "not in rebellion against society, not because they were not gifted or could not succeed at home, not because some man refused to go, not as part of a feminist statement or unrequited love—but in

[56] Cheryl Bridges Johns, "Pentecostal Spirituality and the Conscientization of Women," in *All Together in One Place: Theological Papers from the Brighton Conference on World Evangelization*, eds. Harold D. Hunter and Peter Hocken (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 153.

[57] Bridges Johns, "Pentecostal Spirituality and the Conscientization of Women," 195.

[58] Bridges Johns, "Pentecostal Spirituality and the Conscientization of Women," 165.

answer to God's direct call."[59] To this list of western women from the global Pentecostal landscape, Annamma Mammen's name should also be added as she took the bold step of faith to respect God's call and went throughout India and abroad preaching and singing for Jesus Christ.

Although her life stands as a model of an exemplary Pentecostal missionary life where the reliance on the Holy Spirit was the sole guidance and criterion for ministry, it was her role as a songwriter that provided the theological language and imagination for the Malayalam-speaking Pentecostal world. Through difficult times, Mammen's songwriting became a model to make theological sense of her own sorrowful experiences. In doing so, consciously or unconsciously, Annamma Mammen influenced Kerala Pentecostalism as a theologian. Today, Mammen's songs and their theological themes stand as an encouragement and a challenge for the contemporary Kerala Pentecostal church: *encouragement*, as to actively engage in mission activities as their forefathers and mothers did; and a *challenge,* as Mammen's life and legacy invite the Kerala Pentecostal church to re-think their highly neglected and ambiguous stance on the role of women's ministry in Pentecostal churches.

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[59] Barbara Cavaness, "God Calling: Women in Assemblies of God Missions," *Pneuma* 16 (1994), 49.

Abiding in the Vine

A Relational Model of Spiritual Formation

Bill Buker

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Keywords *spiritual formation, managing differences, Farewell Discourse*

Abstract

In recognizing the significance of final conversations, the information Jesus shares in his Farewell Discourse (John 13–17) is considered especially important. During this conversation, in describing the new relationship he envisioned with his disciples following the events of his passion, he employs a vine and its branches as an analogy. Three core concepts seem critical to understanding this comparison—abiding in the vine, bearing fruit, and pruning. These concepts are explored within the context of Jesus' Farewell Discourse and defined relationally in connection with the new commandment he had just introduced. This new command to love each other as he had loved them (John 13:34–35) was to be the identity marker of his disciples and the key to their new relationship. From this exploration a model of spiritual formation is proposed that equates fulfilling this new commandment to abiding in the vine, emphasizing how loving those with whom a special bond is shared opens disciples to the life of the vine, which is the Holy Spirit whom Jesus promised to send. In learning to love as Jesus loved (abiding), we grant his Spirit access and freedom to work deeply within our lives (branches) resulting in increased fruitfulness (formation) as reflected in healthy relationships and loving communities that last (John 15:16).

Introduction

Final conversations are typically valued for containing information that the person facing imminent death deems important to leave with those who remain. Such is the context of the vine and branches analogy contained in John's gospel (John 15:1–8). Jesus has just celebrated the Last Supper with his disciples and, in what is known as his Farewell Discourse, is preparing them for what is about to occur. John captures Jesus' concern and efforts to reassure through statements such as:

"My children, I will be with you only a little longer" (John 13:33);

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me" (John 14:1);

"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:16,18);

"I am going away and I am coming back to you" (John 14:28);

"On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you" (John, 14:20);

"It is for your good that I am going away" (John 16:7);

"I have told you these things so that you may have peace" (John 16:33).[1]

These and similar comments suggest that Jesus was not only endeavoring to prepare his disciples for his death but also for how their relationship would subsequently change. He seems to be saying, in what must have sounded like enigmatic language, that the one who is currently living with them will be leaving, only to return to live within them.

As they left the upper room (John 14:31), presumably to walk toward the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus continues the conversation by employing an analogy to illustrate how their new relationship would work. His choice of a vine and branches for this illustration may simply have been influenced by the fact that vines, common in Palestine in those days, were readily visible, or it may have reflected a more premeditated, intentional choice.[2] Either way, it has been preserved in the gospel record as a picture of the type of relationship that would emerge between Jesus and his disciples after the transitional events of his death, resurrection, ascension, and outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

In this analogy Jesus described himself as the true vine with his disciples constituting the branches and his Father functioning as the gardener. As long as the branches abide in the vine, they will bear fruit, for by themselves they can do nothing. The Father will be checking for this fruit and will engage in pruning activities to encourage the production of more fruit, thus suggesting a formational process. From this illustration a model emerges that not only describes a new kind of relationship between Jesus and his disciples (they abide in him, and he abides in them) but also the means by which spiritual growth is facilitated (pruning in order to increasingly bear fruit). To apply this model to spiritual formation, three concepts seem central and, thus, important to define—abiding in the vine, bearing fruit, and pruning.

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[1] Unless otherwise indicated all scripture quotations in this article will be from the Holy Bible New International Version (NIV) (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011).

[2] James Boice, *The Gospel of John: An Expositional Commentary. Five Volumes in One* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 1022.

General Definitions

In a manner that seeks to be consistent with the analogy, the following general definitions are offered:

- Abiding—activities/practices that open a branch (person/community) to the life of the Vine (Holy Spirit);
- Fruit— perspectives/attitudes/actions that the life of the Vine produces within each branch and expresses through the capacities of that branch;
- Pruning—experiences/realizations that enhance strengths and/or expose growth areas in order to facilitate increased production of fruit (spiritual formation).

By offering these definitions in general terms it is hoped that this model of spiritual formation can be broad enough to embrace the diversity of practices by which individuals/communities have historically opened themselves to the life of the Vine, as well as specific enough to maintain the emphasis on relationship that permeates the context in which this analogy is embedded.

Contextual Emphases

Jesus' reference to the vine and branches occurs in the context of his Farewell Discourse. Prefaced with the phrase, "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (John 13:1) and concluding with a prayer to his Father that "the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them" (John 17:26), Jesus' final comments are threaded with an emphasis on connection. He knew that his relationship with his disciples was about to change. Initially it would involve an experience of loss, as he went where they could not follow (John 13:36), only to be replaced by one of indwelling, as he returned in the person of the Comforter to reside within them (John 14:15–20).[3] Subsequently, he desired that their relationships with each other be characterized by a special kind of love through which the world would know that they were his disciples (John 13:35). This love was to be their identity marker, distinguishing them as belonging to him. So important was this to Jesus that he put it in the form of a new commandment (John 13:34) emphasizing that just as he remained in his Father's love by keeping his commands, they also would abide in his love by keeping his commands (John 15:9–10). Since obedience appears to be the key to abiding, what, in addition to this new commandment, were the commands (plural) to which Jesus was referring?

[3] Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John,* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 650–55.

Jesus' Commandments

Essentially Jesus seems to have issued three commandments. Earlier in his ministry he summarized all of the Law and Prophets, calculated as containing 613 commands,[4] into two commandments—love God with all your being and love your neighbor as yourself (Matt 22:34–40). Now in this final conversation with his disciples he appears to add a third—a new commandment to love each other as he had loved them (John 13:34). In exploring whether this late addition is really new and not just a restatement of his previous directives, two distinctions seem significant—its focus and its standard.

The focus of the first and great commandment is on loving God, and the standard by which that love is to be expressed is with all of one's heart, soul, mind, body, and strength (Matt 22:37). The second commandment is focused on loving our neighbor. When asked by a lawyer "who is my neighbor" Jesus responded with the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), suggesting that loving one's neighbor involves responsiveness to need wherever it is encountered, even among strangers who may be significantly different from ourselves. The standard by which that love is to be expressed is as we love ourselves. Now in this new commandment Jesus appears to be narrowing the focus by emphasizing a distinctive love that should exist between those who share a special bond, in this case his band of followers, and the standard by which this love should be expressed is that of his own love for them.

Knowing that they would not be capable of obeying this new command on their own, Jesus assured them of help in the person of the Comforter he would send to indwell them (John 14:15–31). In employing the visual image of a vine and its branches to illustrate how this process would unfold, he seemed to be accentuating both the intimacy and interdependence of their new connection. In acknowledging that without him they could do nothing (John 15:4–5), he offered the reassurance that if they would abide in him as branches remain connected to the vine, they would bear fruit. Since abiding is central to receiving the empowerment needed to be fruitful, it seems important to understand what this involves.

The Nature of Abiding

Based on the general definition offered earlier, abiding is conceptualized as consisting of anything and everything that branches (disciples/communities) do to open themselves to the life of the Vine (Comforter/Holy Spirit). Traditionally, such openness to the Spirit has been pursued through a consistent practice of the classical spiritual disciplines, which have included cultivating habits such as prayer, meditation, study, fasting,

[4] Ronald Eisenberg, *The 613 Mitzvot: A Contemporary Guide to the Commandments of Judaism* (Esslingen, Germany: Schreiber Publishing, 2015), xix.

worship, service, confession, and simplicity.[5] Curiously, especially considering the relational nature of Jesus' new commandment, these conventional practices have tended to reflect more of an individual emphasis. The disciplines of abstinence (solitude, silence, fasting, frugality, chastity, secrecy, sacrifice) seem to involve distance from others while the disciplines of engagement (study, worship, celebration, service, prayer, fellowship, confession, submission) seem only partially focused on relationships.[6] Few, with some notable exceptions such as service, fellowship, and submission, appear directly related to Jesus' new commandment to love those who are closest as he loved them.

Certainly, an argument can be made for an indirect relationship between these traditional practices and Jesus' new commandment by calling attention to the connection between loving God and loving others, but without disparaging the importance of the classical spiritual disciplines as a means of opening oneself to the Spirit, Jesus actually specifies what abiding constitutes. After utilizing the image of a vine and its branches to illustrate the nature of the new relationship he would form with his disciples, he went on to explain that abiding involved keeping his commandments, especially this new one, which he reiterated (John 15:10, 12, 17). In other words, obeying Jesus' new commandment is a means of abiding, not just a result. By taking on the challenge of loving those who are closest as we have been loved by Jesus, we open ourselves to the life of the Vine, which is the Spirit that Jesus promised to send, the fruit of which is the creation of loving communities that he assured us would remain (John 15:16).[7]

Abiding in Jesus' love requires keeping his commandments, especially this new one, which is to be the identity marker of his disciples. Obedience involves cultivating a special love for those with whom an intimate bond is shared as reflected in Jesus' relationship with his disciples (John 13:35). In short, through the opportunities and challenges of learning to love those who are closest as Jesus loved us, we abide in the Vine, thus opening ourselves to the Comforter's activity who, as the life of the Vine, produces within us the Spirit's fruit and through us loving communities that last. Such communities, as described in the Farewell Discourse, become places of safety from a hateful world (John 15:18–25), support in times of confusion and loss (John 16), and healing from experiences of grief (John 16:20). They provide a place to belong where status is determined by relationship (John 15:14–15) not performance, and the Spirit's guidance is discerned corporately (John 16:12–15) as together the community embraces

[5] Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 1–11.

[6] Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers), 156–92.

[7] Rodney Whitacre, *John*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Westmond, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 372–75.

its purpose to testify about Jesus (John 15:26–27). Such are the relational dynamics of spiritual formation, but it is at this point that we encounter something of a dilemma. Since obeying Jesus' new commandment appears to constitute both the goal and means of spiritual formation, in that to love like Jesus, we must abide in Jesus, yet to abide in Jesus, we must love like Jesus, then where do we begin?

Jesus' New Commandment as Both Means and Goal

In what appears as conflicting messages, obeying Jesus' command to love as he loved is both the means and fruit of abiding. Since without Jesus' help we can do nothing (John 15:5), yet to receive his help we must abide in him; but to abide in him we must keep his commandments, yet to keep his commandments we need Jesus' help; then we end up with something comparable to a circular process where the beginning and the ending are the same. We begin by seeking to love as Jesus loved in order to end by loving as Jesus loved. In other words, to love like Jesus, we must abide in Jesus yet to abide in Jesus, we must love like Jesus. So how do we get started? In one of his later letters, John seems to provide the key. He states that we are able to love because Jesus first loved us (1 John 4:19). In other words, as we experience the love of Jesus, we are enabled to love as Jesus. The example of Peter, as John describes it in the Farewell Discourse and beyond, offers a helpful model.

The Example of Peter

John references Peter several times during his description of Jesus' final days, most of which are not complimentary (John 13:6–11, 36–38; 18:10–11, 15–18, 25–27; 20:3–10; 21:1–23). The Farewell Discourse begins with Peter resisting Jesus' efforts to wash his feet (John 13:6–11) and continues with his bold, even arrogant, assertion that he would lay down his life for his Master (John 13:36–38), a pledge that he was seemingly attempting to honor when he cut off the high priest's servant's ear upon the arrival of soldiers to arrest Jesus (John 18:10–11). After doing something he said he would never do in denying his Lord, Peter wept in acknowledgement of his failure and even after he knew Jesus had risen from the dead, decided to go fishing, a decision about which scholars have suggested several motives, e.g., his confusion, impatience, lack of purpose, and possible sense of disqualification from further usefulness prompting him to return to his former profession.[8] Whatever the reason, Jesus personally encounters Peter and provides him with an experience of love in the form of forgiveness, acceptance, and purpose that radically changed his life.

[8] Boice, *The Gospel of John,* 1450–51; Morris, *The Gospel According to John,* 861–62.

In restoring Peter, Jesus asked him the same question three times, "Do you love me?" (John 21:15–17). While an obvious comparison can be made with Peter's three denials, another dynamic may also be at play. In the first two questions Jesus probes Peter's love by employing the Greek word *agapao*, a term reflecting the highest form of love imaginable, characterized by its unselfish, unconditional, and sacrificial nature. When Peter responds, he uses a different Greek word, *phileo*, to express his love for the Lord, a term typically employed in reference to friendship.[9] In so doing, Peter may have been honestly acknowledging that his love for Jesus did not rise to the level of *agape*, for if it had, he would never have denied their association.

While scholars differ over whether too much should be made of Jesus' and Peter's use of different Greek words for love, since John often used them interchangeably,[10] the therapeutic value of this distinction is potentially significant, especially when considering that the third time, Jesus used the same term as Peter (*phileo*) in asking if he loved him. John states that "Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love (*phileo)* me?'" (John 21:17 NRSV). Was Peter's distress the result of Jesus asking him the same question three times or could it have been about Jesus' use of *phileo,* thus seemingly confirming Peter's honest acknowledgement that he had failed to measure up to his previous assertions? If so, then therapeutically Jesus could have been meeting Peter where he was at, offering forgiveness, acceptance, and purpose by essentially saying, "Let's start where you are and move forward from there." Whatever the case, after each answer, Jesus' response was the same in commissioning Peter to go feed his sheep (John 21:15–17).

The relevance of this example to the dilemma of how to get started in fulfilling Jesus' new commandment is found in Peter's honesty and Jesus' embrace. In finding the courage to honestly look into the mirror that his relationship with Jesus provided and humbly acknowledge what he saw, Peter positioned himself to be embraced. In contrast to the Peter we encounter at the beginning of Jesus' Farewell Discourse, whose lack of self-awareness was reflected in his resistance to being served (John 13:8) and his boast of unwavering loyalty (John 13:37), the man we see at the end is consciously self-aware and in his honest confession discovers the paradoxical truth, in a manner reminiscent of the prodigal son (Luke 14:20–24), that a humble acknowledgement of weakness actually positioned him to receive the acceptance and affirmation he so desperately desired. In Jesus' response to Peter, he both commissioned him to feed his sheep and predicted that he would die for the gospel (John 21:18), an outcome that tradition indicates not only involved crucifixion but also Peter's request to be crucified upside

[9] C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2017), 73–75.

[10] Morris, *The Gospel According to John,* 871–72; Edward Watson, personal communication with author, Tulsa, OK, 2021.

down because he did not feel worthy to be crucified in the same way as his Lord. It was as if Jesus knew that the love and grace he was extending would be so transformative that as a result, Peter would now be able to do what he was formerly unable to do, which was to follow him to the point of laying down his life (John 13:37).

From Peter's example we learn that fulfilling Jesus' new commandment to love others as he has loved us may begin with our own willingness to honestly acknowledge our inability to do so, which paradoxically positions us to experience the love that makes loving possible. We love because we have first been loved (1 John 4:19). It appears that this is the experience Jesus wanted his disciples to continue providing each other after he was no longer physically with them. It was as if he was envisioning a process through which his love would be perpetuated across time and space such that this new community and the multiple communities to follow would become places of transformation where the love experienced would become the love expressed. While the visible church has obviously fallen short of this ideal, the reconnection of spiritual formation with its relational context may be a step toward recovering that dream.

Spiritual Formation and the Primacy of Relationships

As disciples, our claims to love God and others are put to the test in our closest relationships where areas of weakness tend to be readily exposed. These intimate relationships comprise a crucible through which pruning experiences occur for the purpose of enlarging our openness to the life of the vine and thus, increasing our fruitfulness. To love God and neighbors is insufficient and even hypocritical without further application to those with whom we share a special bond. If the fruit of love is not manifested in increasing measure among our closest contacts, questions will naturally emerge regarding the legitimacy of our love for God and neighbor (1 John 1:9; 3:10–11; 4:20–21). Maybe this explains why Jesus told his disciples that it would be through their obedience to his new commandment that the world would know they were his disciples.

When considering the larger context in which the analogy of the vine and branches is embedded, it becomes apparent that relationships are involved in both the process and product of spiritual formation. Not only do relationships benefit from the fruit of increased love, they also help to facilitate the production of that fruit. One way this occurs is when we allow our relationships to function as mirrors by which we learn about ourselves, rather than just as windows through which we spotlight the struggles of those around us. In other words, we learn about ourselves by loving others. Through the challenges (pruning experiences) of loving those who are closest, disciples who are seeking to love as Jesus loved discover, as if revealed in a mirror, numerous obstacles that require the Spirit's help to overcome. Acknowledging these obstacles, e.g., selfishness,

fear, busyness, impatience, jealousy, pride, rudeness, keeping records of being wronged (1 Cor 13), exposes them to the light (awareness) where they can be more effectively addressed. By honestly confessing these impediments, we grant the Spirit access to those areas, thus allowing the agent of change to increase our fruitfulness. Three sources of light are particularly useful and regularly used by the Spirit to facilitate this process.

Relational Discipleship and Three Sources of Light

In emphasizing a relational approach to spiritual formation, Ferguson[11] identifies three sources of light as especially important—Jesus, his Word, and his people. Developing an intimate relationship with each source is vital to the process of discipleship. Fresh encounters with Jesus, frequent experiences with Scripture, and faithful engagement with God's people are primary avenues through which the Spirit works to enable disciples to fulfill Jesus' commands to love God, their neighbors, and each other.

Fresh Encounters with Jesus

The first source of light involves fresh encounters with Jesus.[12] While these encounters can occur in numerous ways, maybe none are more meaningful than those experienced while seeking to follow his Way. As part of his Farewell Discourse, almost immediately after giving them the new commandment to love one another, Jesus declared, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6). This oft-quoted statement was in response to Thomas' question regarding where Jesus was going and how to follow him there. Jesus had just indicated that he was going to prepare a place for them and even though they could not join him now, he would come back to get them. Then in a rather cryptic comment he said, "You know the way to the place where I am going" (John 14:4), which subsequently prompted Thomas' question and Jesus' response.

Apparently, Jesus believed that his disciples already knew the way and seemed to express some surprise and even disappointment that they did not understand (John 14:8–14). To this day, however, the Way of Jesus seems to be a source of confusion and conflict among Christians. Although all agree that it constitutes the way to God, disagreement exists over what that involves, with some interpreting it primarily in propositional terms while others view it more relationally.[13] Those who lean toward a propositional approach tend to emphasize the importance of believing certain "truths." They claim that for Jesus to become the way to God, one must first embrace particular

[11] David Ferguson, *Relational Discipleship* (King's Lynn, Norfolk: Relationship Press, 2005), 7.
[12] Ferguson, *Relational Discipleship,* 115–50.
[13] Diana Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus: Rediscovering Jesus as Friend, Teacher, Savior, Lord, Way, and Presence* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2021), 244.

beliefs or doctrines.[14] Unfortunately, arguments often ensue over what beliefs are essential.

Those who lean toward a relational approach point out that if the goal of the Christian life is to become like Jesus, right beliefs alone are inadequate.[15] As the Apostle James (2:19) acknowledged, even devils believe and tremble, yet that does not seem to facilitate much change. When conceptualized as a relational process, however, following the Way of Jesus by seeking to imitate his example of loving others cannot be pursued without a resultant renovation of one's entire being. In this sense the Way of Jesus becomes a pattern, not just a set of propositions. Characterized by the archetype of losing life to find it, the pattern of Jesus' Way is the blueprint for transformation,[16] and thus the path to truth and abundant life. Furthermore, disciples who follow his Way regularly experience fresh encounters with Jesus who promised to love and show himself to his friends, i.e., those who keep his commands (John 14:21; 15:14–15).

Frequent Experiences of Scripture

In containing what Christians often refer to as the Word of God, Scripture provides a primary means through which the Spirit speaks and disciples encounter truth.[17] Serving both as a general word (*logos*) and a personal word (*rhema*), Scripture speaks to the human condition at every level. Like relationships, it serves as a mirror revealing important issues that the Spirit wants to address. While it is often difficult to take an honest look into this mirror, it is always beneficial. Scripture functions as a double-edged sword in not only exposing but also providing insight and guidance on how to respond to what is revealed (Heb 4:12–13). While it is not within the scope of this article to discuss all of the means by which the Spirit makes use of Scripture,[18] let it

[14] Marcus Borg, "An Emerging Christian Way," in *The Emerging Christian Way,* ed. Michael Schwartzentruber (Kelowna, BC, Canada: CopperHouse, 2006), 17.

[15] Borg, "An Emerging Christian Way," 18–20; Butler Bass, *Freeing Jesus*, 244–45; Brian McLaren, *Faith after Doubt: Why Your Beliefs Stopped Working and What to Do About It* (New York: St. Martin's Essentials, 2021), xvi.

[16] Bill Buker, "Expanding God's Redemptive Fractal: Spirit-centered Counseling and the Transformative Wisdom of Jesus," *Spiritus: ORU Journal of Theology* 6:2 (2021), 218, 226–28.

[17] Ferguson, *Relational Discipleship,* 99.

[18] Eric Johnson, "A Place for the Bible within Psychological Science," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 20 (1992), 346–55. Johnson identifies common roles of Scripture, which include an experiential role (source of wisdom for maturity), a foundational role (source of assumptions/beliefs), a contextual role (source of meaning/purpose), an axiological role (source of standards/values), an anthropological role (source of understanding the nature of persons and the redemptive story), a canonical role (provides a standard of truth), a dialogical role (provides resources for interacting with other disciplines, e.g., psychology), and a creative role (provides a different worldview that allows for a discussion of concepts others may not consider).

suffice to say that encountering and practicing its wisdom is critical to the process of spiritual formation.

Disciples who are serious about following the way of Jesus will intentionally seek to experience Scripture frequently. Experiencing Scripture is more than merely reading to gain knowledge; it involves applying the principles and patterns contained therein. Approaching it in this manner requires an openness to being encountered by what is read and a willingness to apply its instructions. For instance, when reading Jesus' admonition to pray for those who persecute us (Matt 5:44) or Paul's encouragement to rejoice in the Lord always (Phil 4:4.), the proper response is to intentionally practice this wisdom and in so doing, experience its power. Of special relevance to spiritual formation are the principles and patterns contained in the Bible's meta-narratives as reflected in the Exodus, Exile, Priestly, and Wisdom stories, all of which are incorporated within Scripture's overarching theme of Redemption. Since meta-narratives speak to the human condition, they have universal appeal and provide a bridge by which our personal stories connect with God's. In so doing, we discover how Scripture's themes and patterns serve as a template for understanding and managing our own experiences.[19]

For instance, the Exodus story speaks to our experiences of bondage, powerlessness, shame, and the longing for deliverance and freedom. It emphasizes the empowerment of the Spirit in delivering through signs and wonders and guiding us through life's wilderness toward a promised destination. The Exile story describes experiences of separation, loss, marginalization, oppression, shame, victimization, and the longing to return where we belong. It emphasizes the work of the Spirit as light, revealing the way home. The Priestly story portrays experiences of sin, guilt, shame, and the longing for forgiveness and acceptance. It emphasizes the action of the Spirit in facilitating encounters with grace. The Wisdom narratives reflect our experiences of disorientation, confusion, searching, and the desire to clearly see the way forward. It emphasizes the activity of the Spirit as the guide into truth, revealing the Way of Jesus and enabling us to walk that path.[20] All of these motifs unfold within the Bible's overarching theme of redemption, whose pattern has special relevance to the human condition.

The meta-pattern of God's redemptive story depicts the universal experience of life not going as intended and our ensuing struggles to ascertain and correct what we think is wrong.[21] In our attempts to exert control, regrets are often incurred as we further complicate what are already difficult situations. Fortunately, this pattern also

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[19] Marcus Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* (New York: Harper/Collins, 1994), 121–37.
[20] Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time,* 121–27.
[21] Buker, "Expanding God's Redemptive Fractal," 218.

emphasizes the work of the Spirit in facilitating a redemptive process out of which new creations can emerge. Cooperating with this process involves learning to follow the Way of Jesus, but since that path is characterized by the archetype of death and resurrection, it tends to be instinctively resisted and often necessitates the humbling of pruning experiences to make us small enough to squeeze through the narrow gate that guards its entrance (Matt 7:13–14). Making that transition requires the humility to honestly acknowledge our shortcomings and the courage to release control (surrender), experiences that often feel like defeat yet paradoxically, as both the prodigal son and the Apostle Peter discovered, position us for renewal. As with each of the meta-narratives, the redemptive pattern provides a bridge through which our stories connect with God's as we discover that he identifies with our experiences and we with his.

Faithful Engagement with God's People

A third source of light the Spirit employs to facilitate spiritual formation is faithful engagement with God's people.[22] By commanding his disciples to love each other as he had loved them, Jesus was creating an opportunity for a new type of community to emerge that would have multiple benefits for its members. One benefit would be the creation of healthy, safe environments conducive to the growth and healing of all involved.

Earlier in his Gospel John quoted Jesus as using the metaphor of being "born again" (John 3:1–8) to indicate that entering the Kingdom of God was analogous to rebirth. Now, in this final conversation, it is as if Jesus is suggesting that his disciples are to become a new family into which others also will be born and where the experiences they generate for each other as they follow his command to love as he has loved will offer the possibility of therapeutic encounters through which old wounds are healed and new identities discovered. Consequently, in providing experiences of value and acceptance, people are enabled to love out of a sense of their own desirability rather than deprivation.[23] In being loved, we are empowered to love.

As we find value and acceptance in the family of God and learn to base our identity on that secure and lofty status, we discover it is easier to embrace others who are longing to belong. When we feel good about ourselves, loving others seems effortless. Take for instance an athletic competition in which the winner, by virtue of the heightened self-esteem that comes with the thrill of victory, finds it much easier to be gracious to the loser than vice versa. In the same way, our sense of being loved enhances our ability to provide others with similar experiences, thus empowering them

[22] Ferguson, *Relational Discipleship,* 151–70.

[23] David Schnarch, *Constructing the Sexual Crucible: An Integration of Sexual and Marital Therapy* (New York, W. W. Norton & Co., 1991), 576–84.

to love more freely in return. As a result, this community Jesus envisioned (John 17:20–23) is energized for continual expansion as new members, looking for a place to belong, are attracted to and embraced by those who, through abiding in his love, are empowered to love. While this vision may seem too good to be true, it is actually commanded. Those who are willing to obey often discover that the Spirit births these communities with those who are closest, beginning with our families who provide us with some of the most challenging yet meaningful opportunities to love, often by first exposing our areas of resistance.

Faithful Engagement with Family

Jesus' new commandment to love one another, while arguably the most challenging of all the commandments, may also be the most conducive to growth. Loving those who are closest to us is not an easy task. In loving God and strangers, options exist that allow for separation, rest, and renewal, whereas in loving those who are closest, with whom life is done 24/7, there are only the ongoing challenges of togetherness, where extended escape may not be possible. The relentless intensity of close relationships exposes shadow-sides and activates unresolved issues. Consequently, seeking to love those who are closest necessitates a commitment to address all of those obstacles to love that will inevitably be revealed.[24] While at times uncomfortable, this relational process encapsulates what obeying Jesus' new commandment involves, which in turn facilitates the desired outcomes of greater openness to the life of the Vine and increased fruitfulness (John 15:9–10, 12). To reiterate, loving others as Jesus loves us is not just a result of abiding in the Vine; it is the means of abiding. As relational beings embedded in relational networks, spiritual formation literally hits close to home. Our closest relationships constitute the crucible in which spiritual growth occurs.

Application

As was suggested at the beginning of this article, we treasure final moments spent with those we love and tend to remember them often. In the concluding hours with his disciples Jesus not only commanded them to love each other but also illustrated that love in ways that must have been frequently recounted. John's account of the Farewell Discourse begins with a depiction of Jesus exhibiting the humility of service in washing his disciples' feet (John 13:1–17) and continues with descriptions of other loving actions emerging within the context of relational challenges. These included Jesus' concern with how his departure would affect his followers (John 14:1–7), his frustration

[24] John Wellwood, *Journey of the Heart: The Path of Conscious Love* (New York: Harper/Collins, 1990), 22–23.

at not being understood (John 14:8–14), the pain of betrayal from two of his disciples (John 13:18–30, 38), his desire to stay connected with those he loved (John 15:5–6), the responsibility he felt to help them bear fruit (John 15:7–8), the vulnerability he displayed in self-disclosing (John 15:11–15; 16:12, 19–33), the strength he demonstrated in praying for others when facing his own passion (John 17), and the overall care he expressed for how his upcoming death would impact his friends. All of these relational challenges are portrayed as occurring within a matter of hours during what are presumably the most stressful moments of Jesus' earthly life. Yet, in spite of whatever elevated anxiety he may have been experiencing, he handled these trials with the kind of sacrificial love that he in turn commanded his disciples to exhibit toward each other, thus providing an inspiring yet seemingly unrealistic example to emulate (John 15:13). Is it any wonder we need his Spirit to help?

Since the focus of Jesus' new commandment is on those with whom a special bond is shared, perhaps it would be of value to consider how it might apply to what is generally the most intimate of the chosen relationships in which we participate—marriage. For those who may be single, what follows has relevance to any close relationship.

Marriage as a Path to Spiritual Formation

Scott Peck,[25] in his classic work, *The Road Less Traveled*, defined love as "the will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth." He went on to say that even though marriage requires the collaboration of mutual care, time, and energy, it exists primarily for the nurturing of each spouse's spiritual growth. This growth is facilitated as relational challenges are addressed by spouses who are willing to risk being changed in order to mature. Peck's concepts of love and marriage emphasize the volitional rather than the emotional side of love and, in so doing, seem similar to Jesus' suggestion that fruitfulness comes as a result of obedience. Jesus indicates that as his disciples choose to extend themselves in obeying his command to love each other, they will mature (be fruitful). With this dynamic in mind, a growth-oriented conception of the marriage relationship emerges.

Marriage, as the closest chosen relationship a person typically experiences, provides a natural path to spiritual growth. It comprises a naturally occurring crucible in which the heat of relational challenges brings various impurities (growth issues) to the surface, thus presenting spouses with numerous opportunities to learn more about themselves and each other.[26] Each moment of learning represents an opportunity to love. As spouses

[25] Scott Peck, *The Road Less Traveled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values, and Spiritual Growth* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978), 81.

[26] Schnarch, *Constructing the Sexual Crucible,* 158–73.

consistently choose to "love one another," they are essentially "abiding in the Vine," and in so doing, increasing their openness to the life of the Vine (Holy Spirit), which positions them for growth (fruitfulness). In this sense, the marriage relationship, as well as any close relationship, has the inherent capacity to facilitate the spiritual formation of its participants. But in practical terms, what does this process look like?

Insights from Research

In attempting to answer the basic question of why some couples are able to develop and maintain satisfying and stable relationships while others are not, researchers identified one factor as being a key distinctive—repair.[27] Spouses who were able to repair their relationships after the occurrence of inevitable regrettable incidents were the ones who ended up with great marriages. Rather than just putting band-aids on their hurts or sweeping issues under the carpet, these "masters of marriage"[28] sought to learn and grow from their painful experiences so that they did not continue repeating them. This commitment to growth was reflected in the concern each partner developed, not so much for the experience they were having as for the experience they were giving. Instead of obsessing over their own disappointments, for which it would have been easy to blame their spouse, they were able to look into the mirror of their partner's feedback in order to see and acknowledge their own complicity, however inadvertent. This capacity for honest self-assessment was particularly helpful in enabling couples to effectively manage their differences, a challenge that serves as one of the best predictors of marital success.[29]

Managing Differences

Managing differences, especially in an increasingly polarized society, is arguably the signature challenge of our time. In marriages, the differences that emerge between partners, which in many cases seem small and even insignificant, can over time bring couples to the brink of divorce, primarily due to their chronic nature and the ways they

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[27] John Gottman, *Marriage Clinic: A Scientifically Based Marital Therapy* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1999), 48–51.

[28] John Gottman, *The Science of Couples and Family Therapy: Behind the Scenes at the Love Lab* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2018), 74–78.

[29] Andrew Christensen, Brian D. Doss, and Neil S. Jacobson, *Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy: A Therapist's Guide to Creating Acceptance and Change* (Eisenberg, OH: W. W. Norton & Co., 2020), 47–49; John M. Gottman, *The Science of Trust: Emotional Attunement for Couples* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2011), 176–250; Howard Markman, Scott Stanley, and Susan L. Blumberg, *Fighting for Your Marriage: Positive Steps for Preventing Divorce and Preserving a Lasting Love*, 3rd ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2010), 25–26; Sue Johnson and Kenneth Sanderfer, *Created for Connection: The "Hold Me Tight" Guide for Christian Couples* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2016), 58–63; Everett L. Worthington, *Hope-focused Marriage Counseling: A Guide to Brief Therapy* (Wesmond, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 168.

are easily mishandled. When not managed well, wounds are incurred, perceptions turn negative, and relationships become unsafe.[30] While challenging, these perpetual issues also create opportunities for growth. By intensifying the process of fitting together in mutually satisfying ways, managing differences produces naturally occurring and highly efficient crucibles in which areas of growth are exposed as partners discover through the mirror of their relational patterns the underlying biases, assumptions, and expectations the Spirit wants to address.

For instance, a common bias influencing spouses' attempts to manage differences is reflected in the belief that my way is best. It is as if both are saying, "If you will just become more like me, then our differences will be resolved and everything will be fine." While generally well-intended, the trap of this strategy is that it is not focused on personal growth. Whenever we are trying to manage our own experience by seeking to change someone else's behavior, it means we are attempting to accomplish something over which we do not have complete control. While not implying that change does not need to occur, it is important to remember that attempts to change another person are typically not experienced as expressions of love and, when continued, tend to feel like control, which invites resistance and distancing. Consider a common area of perpetual difference that plagues many relationships—punctuality.

Let us imagine that a husband for whom punctuality is important is married to a wife who is less time-conscious and tends to consistently run five to ten minutes late. Initially in a gentle manner, he lets her know how he desires to arrive on time for events and feels that it is disrespectful to arrive late. He asks that she pay more attention to the clock, a request to which at first she typically consents. She may even improve her punctuality for a while, but since she is not naturally oriented to time, she eventually defaults to familiar ways and once again starts running late. At this point the husband reminds her of their agreement and while she may apologize and continue seeking to improve, she will likely never become as punctual as he and on each occasion when running behind, he will express frustration, often in progressively harsher terms. Eventually his attempts at coercion will evolve into vilification, as he blames her for being selfish in not caring about what is important to him. Ultimately polarization ensues, characterized by increasing gridlock and distance.[31]

At some point the wife may stop trying to be punctual as a way of expressing resistance or resentment at what she perceives are her husband's efforts to change her behavior, which over time (pun intended) have given her recurring experiences of feeling controlled, possibly even emotionally abused, especially if his initially gentle

[30] Gottman, *Marriage Clinic,* 68–74.

[31] Gottman, *Marriage Clinic*, 235; Christensen, Doss, and Jacobson, *Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy*, 53–58.

requests have become increasingly critical and contemptuous. From his perspective, since he has repeatedly told her how important punctuality is to him, and even secured her agreement to become more time-conscious, her tardiness must be intentional, as though she is deliberately disrespecting him. In the end, if they do not learn how to effectively manage their differences, the frustration over running five to ten minutes late can result in a lifetime of misery.

Managing Differences and Jesus' New Commandment

When seeking to manage perpetual differences in a manner that is consistent with Jesus' new commandment, several principles are helpful to keep in mind. First, it is important to focus on what we can control. Second, change occurs best in contexts of acceptance, and third, acceptance is facilitated through a deep understanding of our partner's experience.

Keeping our focus on what we can control essentially involves the challenge of managing ourselves. To use a golfing term as an acronym, we seek to shoot PAR by choosing our Perspective in order to influence our Attitude, which helps us manage our Responses. While it is easy to call attention to the differences in others that we find annoying, the more we focus on them, the more magnified they become to the point of dominating our perspective, thus influencing our attitude and response. Ultimately, we cannot control what others do, only how we choose to respond, and that response is influenced by our perspective and attitude. If we are to love as Jesus loved, a shift in perception is often necessary, especially regarding how those irritating differences are viewed. One approach is to enlarge our perspective by placing those differences into a larger context that includes counterbalancing features, such as other qualities about our partner that we find attractive and admirable. Another possibility is to explore the differences in an attempt to better understand our partner so that it becomes possible to interpret their behavior less personally. In so doing, we manage our perspective in a manner that lends itself to greater acceptance, which in turn enables those frustrating behaviors to assume new meaning or at least lose significance as we gradually allow them to fade into the background of our perception. Trying to shoot PAR does not mean that changes do not need to occur; it only serves to remind us, in a manner similar to the famous Serenity Prayer, that we need to prioritize what we can control. Paradoxically, our willingness to pay attention to our own issues enhances the conditions for change in our larger relationship systems.

In what is known as the Great Marital Paradox, it is purported that spouses will never change unless they do not have to.[32] The capacity to accept the differences that emerge in marriage actually increases the probability of change. When feeling secure in

[32] Gottman, *Marriage Clinic*, 97.

their partner's acceptance, spouses often find themselves voluntarily moving toward each other out of consideration for what they know their partner desires. In other words, they tend to become less concerned with the experience they are having and more conscious of the experience they are giving. As a result, they discover the wisdom of the principles Jesus taught and modeled: to receive, we must give; to find our lives, we must first lose them; to be great, we must learn to serve; to be forgiven, we must forgive; and to truly love, we must be willing to die (John 12:23–26; 13:12–17; 15:13).

Our ability to accept differences has much to do with the level at which we understand each other.[33] A superficial understanding of differences does little to foster acceptance, but when that awareness deepens to include the capacity to validate our partner's perspective, and especially to empathize with their experience, then we have connected at a level where we are likely to be influenced by what we learn. Just as Jesus was moved with compassion, so also partners who allow themselves to feel what the other is feeling tend to naturally respond in ways that are loving. This type of deep understanding is what Jesus demonstrated in addressing the differences that emerged between himself and his disciples and it is what he invites from those he now refers to as his friends (John 15:12–15).

While not every difference should be accepted, as some may be too offensive to the values/beliefs of another or so complicate the process of fitting together that healthy functioning is not feasible, people are generally capable of a wider embrace than they thought possible. Those who have the courage to venture beyond the familiar by exploring areas of difference often discover an enhanced ability to more meaningfully engage with others whose distinct ways of being in the world challenge our own. As our understanding of differences deepens, our borders tend to expand, enriching our lives with diversity and enabling our relationship networks to increasingly reflect the inclusion and embrace with which Jesus loved us.[34] Through this growth process redemptive communities emerge characterized by the kind of love that identifies us as Jesus' disciples.

Creating such relational systems, whether in marriage or in faith communities, requires a strong commitment to Jesus' third commandment. The Apostle Paul seems to apply this command directly to Christian marriages by exhorting husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church (Eph 5:25). His instruction strikingly parallels Jesus' new commandment in both its focus and standard, i.e., loving those who are closest (spouse) as Jesus loves us (Christ loved the church). Certainly, a marriage between

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[33] Gottman, *The Science of Trust*, 176–250; Christensen, Doss, and Jacobson, *Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy*, 333–63.

[34] Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 22–25.

believers ought to be a place where Christ's love is clearly demonstrated such that those observing receive an accurate and compelling picture of Jesus' love for them. Loving in this manner both facilitates and reflects the spiritual formation of those involved.

Conclusion

Our close relationships provide natural and influential contexts in which Jesus' dream of a world where his disciples would be recognized by their love for each other can be fulfilled. While loving those who are closest may be the most challenging commandment of all, for those who seek to obey, it constitutes a primary means of abiding in Jesus' love. By growing in our love for those with whom a special bond is shared, we increase our openness to the Spirit, the life of the Vine. In other words, as we seek to fulfill Jesus' command to love one another, we grant the Spirit greater access and freedom to work within and through our branches. The resulting fruit is experienced both individually and corporately. Individually, our actions and attitudes transform to increasingly reflect those of Jesus, and corporately, our communities become safe and healthy places where wounds are healed and growth nurtured. While on one level such relationships sound idealistic, on another they are commanded. Maybe the critical issue in spiritual formation is our willingness to follow the Way of Jesus by adopting his mindset to humbly regard others as better than ourselves (Phil 2:5–8). Such an attitude tends to naturally translate into loving one another as he loved us.

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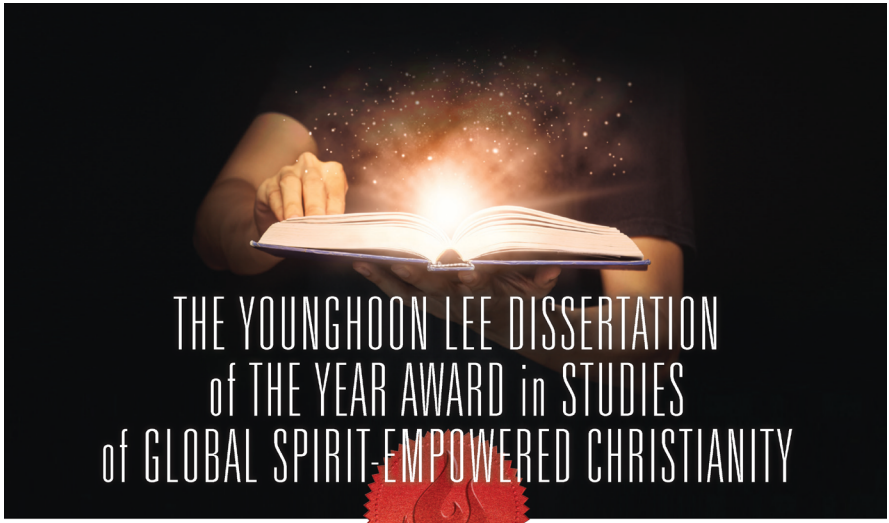

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Reviews

The Spirit of God in the Torah: A Pentecostal Exploration. By Steffen G. Schumacher. Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2021. 462 pp.

Steffen G. Schumacher, a faculty member of the European Theological Seminary in Kniebis, Germany, offers an exploration of the Spirit in the books of the Torah through a Pentecostal lens. Offered as his "scholarly" attempt at contributing to the Pentecostal understanding of the Spirit in the Old Testament, Schumacher extensively investigates Pentecostal literature and utilizes the concept of *Wirkungsgeschichte* in his analysis of Pentecostal hermeneutics. He also offers themes for constructive Pentecostal pneumatology after applying a Pentecostal literary-theological method to nine Spirit-related texts in the Torah. He distinctively provides a dialectic between literary-theological scholarship and contemporary scholarship of non-Pentecostals and Pentecostals on the Spirit in the Torah.

Schumacher progressively presents his propositions by first offering an extensive literature review on the Spirit of God in the Torah from 1878 to the present. Second, he provides a Pentecostal reading method that includes the concept of *Wirkungsgeschichte* in Chapter 3, a literary-theological approach to Spirit-related texts in Chapter 4, and a thematic-dialectic process of constructing Pentecostal pneumatology in Chapter 5. Third, he concludes his discourse by highlighting the significant contributions of his study in Chapter 6.

Schumacher's extensive study in Chapter 1 includes notable authors like Hans Hinrich Wendt, who first presented a biblical theological investigation of *ruach* in 1878 (5). Notable amongst Wendt's discussion is his view of the *ruach* as a "moving spiritual power that reveals itself externally" rather than as "a dormant possession of the individual" (6). Other authors, like Wilf Hildebrandt, Christopher J. H. Wright, and John R. Levinson, were among recent scholars conducting *ruach* studies with a pneumatological approach (84). Schumacher joins the conversation by also going through the pneumatological route, but delimiting his scope (the Torah) and affirming a Pentecostal approach to his contribution to the academic discussion of the Spirit.

After an extensive literature review, Schumacher examines Pentecostal hermeneutics in Chapter 2. Here Schumacher admits that Pentecostal reading (at least by those impacted by Holiness Revivalism) is influenced by Arminian theology and the Wesleyan view of sanctification (88–89). He mentioned Howard M. Ervin as the first Pentecostal scholar to articulate the need for a Pentecostal hermeneutic. Ervin claimed that through "a Pentecostal encounter with the Holy Spirit, a believer respects the

witness of Scripture more and reads it within the pneumatic continuity of the faith community" (93). Schumacher also highlights Lee Roy Martin, a Holiness-Pentecostal theologian, who demonstrated the emerging "Wesleyan-Pentecostal literary-theological method" in his writings (97). Schumacher concludes the chapter by profiling the contours of Pentecostal hermeneutics.

In Chapter 3, Schumacher traces the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of early Pentecostal periodicals and literature. His goal was to "highlight early Pentecostal interpretation . . . and to explore the way the results shape the interpreter as a Pentecostal reader/hearer" (132). Accordingly, early Pentecostal writings used perspectival approaches in biblical interpretation. For instance, *The Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, a publication of Holiness Pentecostals, pervadingly emphasized concepts of holiness and sanctification in their readings of the Spirit in the Old Testament (183). While the publications of the Assemblies of God, USA (i.e., *The Christian Evangel*, *The Weekly Evangel*, *The Pentecostal Evangel*) and Pentecostals of the Finished Work tradition generally read the Spirit in the Old Testament "in light of the NT and their personal experiences with the Spirit (which, for them, confirm the NT)" (217). Schumacher concludes that a Pentecostal reading affirms that biblical interpretation is always contextual (223).

In Chapter 4, Schumacher utilizes a Pentecostal literary-theological reading of Spirit-related texts in the Torah, within the framework of "faithfulness to the Spirit, to Scripture, and the community" (225). His reading manifests the role of the Spirit in God and Israel's relationship (362). Despite the strength of the reading method, Schumacher may be in danger of relying too much on secondary references to support his suppositions. To improve this chapter, the author may have provided more robust internal evidence to augment textual theological claims.

After extensive reviews and literary-theological analyses, Schumacher converges his data by offering a constructive pneumatology of the Spirit in the Torah (363). His reading reveals a sovereign, powerful, cooperative, and intimate Spirit, which significantly affirms the Pentecostal pneumatological consensus. He ends his monograph with dialectical overtures offering multiple silhouettes from which a wholistic Pentecostal pneumatology may emerge.

Overall, Schumacher's study is relevant to the development of Pentecostal pneumatology. Using a literary-theological method in studying Spirit-related texts in the Torah offered new avenues for understanding the Spirit in Old Testament texts. His unabashed use of a Pentecostal framework and a technique appropriate for analysis of the Torah resulted in a highly academic Pentecostal output. Many Pentecostal scholars will benefit from the extensive literature reviews and his critical analysis of Pentecostal hermeneutics. His exploration of periodicals and literature from both streams of Pentecostalism (i.e., Holiness and Finished Work) also widens the contextual relevance of his propositions.

In the final analysis, one can commend the theological framework of "faithfulness to Scripture, to the Spirit, and the community" because it included essential elements in the hermeneutical and theological undertaking. First, faithfulness to Scripture ensures the observance of proper exegetical methods. Second, faithfulness to the Spirit presumes the continuity of the Spirit's charismatic activity. Third, faithfulness to the community recognizes the contextual horizons of its interpreters (i.e., the Pentecostal community) and offers opportunities for dialogue, accountability, continuity, and convergence. Schumacher's entire monograph remained faithful to this framework, producing a distinctly Pentecostal offering to the development of pneumatology in the Torah.

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Los Profetas: The Prophetic Role of Hispanic Churches in America. Edited by Daniel Flores. Nashville, TN: Wesley's Foundry Books, 2022. 254 pp.

As a diverse collection of writings in contextual theology, the chapters in *Los Profetas* interact with how the Hispanic/Latino church in America should respond to pressing contemporary challenges that warrant prophetic and Spirit-inspired theologies and practices of healing, correction, and reconciliation. Salazar references the prophetic engagement model in his chapter and defines prophetic expression, in part, as "the minister as one who desires to see Christian principles actualized beyond his or her faith community and within the broader civil construct" (115). Prophetic practice includes embodied expressions of actualized Christian principles in specific contexts. Yet, the proposed contextual theologies only remain prophetic to the extent that they seek to actualize Christian principles by undergirding culturally informed practices that respond to the problems of Hispanic/Latino churches and communities. The voices of clerical academics actively involved in ministry and community add to the ongoing conversation that bears witness to the work of Latin American Catholics in the United States. Their voices illuminate the impact of Hispanic/Latino American churches across Protestant, Evangelical, and Pentecostal communities.

The contexts engaged in this work range from settings of interpersonal ministry within the church and para-church environments to explorations of theological commitments that bear considerable consequences on a community's ability to speak and live prophetically in response to spiritual, material, and relational needs. For example, Thelma Herrera Flores in "Profetas in the Fields" brings attention to experiences of spiritual and economic poverty from migrant Hispanic/Latino agricultural workers in the United States (6). In response, she presents how *La Mesa Campesina* functions as a theological paradigm that fosters community and spiritual life when spiritual and economic poverty generates experiences of isolation (1). Vinicius Couto, in "Profetas with a Latin American Mission," engages the issue of Christian passivity towards public issues, illustrating how passivity perpetuates social injustices within the context of Brazilian neo-Pentecostalism, hence navigating a critical conversation on the relationship between theology, church, and culture (147). He observes the assimilation of theology with culture in the example of Brazilian neo-Pentecostalism, emulating individualism and consumerism. In contrast, the church should identify, denounce, and transform these social ills while remaining accountable, compassionate, and empathetic (153).

Gretchen L. Avila-Torres, in "Profetas in Community," considers the impact of a thin incarnational theology for Pentecostal communities, which generates insular practices and disjoined self-understanding of the church in relation to its wider

community (25). She discusses how the incarnation primarily speaks theologically to soteriological values and expressions. She also recognizes the limited impact of incarnational theology on individual and communal discipleship within the church (29). A theological, anthropological framework of the *imago Dei* in conversation with the immanent and economic life of the Trinity impacts expressions in ministry, ecclesial practices, and Christian discipleship (35).

Joseph A. Ocasio's reflection on the importance of particularizing theology for Hispanic/Latino communities and experiences is captured in the previous explorations of contextual theologies. Just as there is no ideal culture, there is no ideal way for Christ to relate to culture, and therein lies space for embodied and concrete expressions of God's kingdom culture (95). The call to action presented across various works in this edited volume is that the church must contextualize the culture of the kingdom of God within Hispanic/Latino cultures. This book will benefit church and community leaders who are seeking to engage their community to affect the culture and the Christian tradition. The language and style of writing ensure that the theological framework provided in the book remains accessible to readers without formal training in theology or church tradition.

This book addressed how the church can find authentic and Spirit-filled expressions within Latino/Hispanic communities in the USA. One of the book's strengths is that it is faithful to the commitments of Christian theology and the Christian tradition in its response to contemporary issues within Latino/Hispanic communities in the USA while suggesting a way forward by actualizing the culture of the kingdom of God in the lives of individuals and communities.

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Genesis: A Pentecostal Commentary. By Brian Neil Peterson. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2022. 517 pp.

Genesis (A Pentecostal Commentary) is the eighth volume in the Pentecostal Commentary series, with the initial volume released in January 2007. This series' development has been slow, likely due to a transition in publishing houses. However, the release of the seventh and eighth volumes in 2022 may indicate the pace of this series is increasing. The series intends to appeal to lay and scholarly readers by blending first-rate scholarship with an approachable writing style that incorporates footnotes sparingly and reduces the technical academic aspects of the writing. The series aims to reach a Pentecostal audience using a popular writing style relevant to pastors, students, and laypeople in the tradition—a challenging but worthy goal.

The preface acknowledges that Pentecostalism can be misunderstood and eclectic. The editors specify that the commentary uses the five-fold gospel to highlight the uniqueness of the tradition: Jesus as Savior, Sanctifier, Holy Spirit Baptizer, Healer, and Coming King. Each element is vital but not unique to that tradition. With this clear Christological emphasis, writers of the Old Testament commentaries in the series are presented with the creative challenge of engaging this personality of Pentecostalism with the Hebrew tradition. In keeping with Pentecostal "ethos and spirituality," commentary writers have been asked to pray and follow the Spirit's leading as part of the writing process while also challenging readers with the "literary equivalent to an altar call" in the commentary's reflection and application sections (xiii).

Author Brian Peterson (Ph.D. Wycliffe College at the University of Toronto), Assistant Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Lee University (Cleveland, TN), is suited for this hefty task, having lectured and written on Genesis while also engaging the Pentecostal community. Peterson's introduction outlines his approach and pertinent background considerations. He covers Genesis' title, date, audience, genre, compositional unity, themes, theological emphasis, chronology, and contested areas such as authorship and composition. This material encompasses twenty-seven pages and includes questions regarding Genesis' teaching on the Holy Spirit, which are answered throughout the commentary. Peterson employs a forward-looking methodology, drawing parallels between Genesis and the New Testament, such as identifying Noah and Joseph as Christological figures and connecting the Spirit in Genesis 1:2 with the Spirit in Acts 2:2. Here, it would be helpful to understand what criteria the author uses to identify parallels, allusions, or echoes between testaments.

Peterson navigates the introductory content of this Genesis volume concisely, fairly, and usefully in a manner that engages both the academic and lay audience. The exception is the final section titled "Excursus," which discusses the Pharoah's identity during the

time of Joseph. The section comprises over 10% of the introductory space, yet the author does not explain why this discussion is important. After this section, the introduction ends abruptly.

Peterson brilliantly navigates through each narrative chapter by chapter in the commentary section, creating a striking balance of pertinent scholarly material communicated in an impressively readable format. He references contrasting perspectives, including the "gap theory," which is limited mainly to more fundamentalist circles prompted by the *Scofield Study Bible*. Peterson also discusses the Enuma Elish of Babylonian creation mythology. Walking between the scholarly and ecclesial worlds is a serious task.

Peterson's section on Sodom and Gomorrah demonstrates the thoroughness with which he writes for both lay and scholarly readers. Peterson relates the Sodom and Gomorrah narrative's application with today's "culture wars." He alerts readers to Genesis' relevance concerning homosexuality, gender identification, gender relations, and issues of creation versus evolution. He acknowledges the significant divide in viewpoints on these issues, even among Pentecostals. Peterson frames these issues from a conservative position. He states, "It is clear that many self-proclaimed, Spirit-filled believers struggle with the effects of acculturation," which "serves as a reminder that the Enemy often quenches the work of the Spirit in our lives little by little through acculturation until we are faced with the devastating reality of coming judgment unless we repent" (182). These issues, however, are allocated appropriate but minimal space, avoiding turning the work into a mechanism operating within the "culture war." Peterson wisely focuses on developing a theological worldview from the text that enables readers to create their own spirituality and decide for themselves about God's will in these matters. This not only steers the publication from venturing into space beyond the scope of intention but also avoids restricting the contemporary conversation to the author's viewpoint alone, enabling the commentary to remain relevant to a broader audience.

The Genesis commentary's engagement with Pentecostal sources and the five-fold gospel Pentecostal perspective is limited because of the juxtaposition of the content from Genesis with resources from a Pentecostal perspective. Some narrative offers only limited potential for the desired application. However, in other portions, Peterson gives needful attention that caters to the reader's devotional life while providing a limited but helpful homiletical aid to preachers.

This publication accomplishes its goal of being a hybrid commentary that blends serious scholarship with devotional space. The Genesis volume is suitable for the intended audience of Pentecostal students, pastors, and educated lay persons who are looking for readability and inspiration. Although initially intended for retail at an affordable price, the commentary likely prices itself out of bounds for many laypeople and pastors. Meanwhile, the limited scholarly dialogue and footnotes potentially restrict the engagement of

academic readers. However, Peterson includes an impressive bibliography and indexes a high volume of New Testament scriptural references, which is a credit to the broader intention of bridging the devotional and Pentecostal contexts. This commentary is a worthwhile addition to the Pentecostal scholarly body. Those within the tradition should celebrate Brill's commitment to this series.

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Intergenerational Missiology: An African Pentecostal-Charismatic Perspective. By Christian Tsekpoe. Oxford, United Kingdom: Regnum Books International, 2022. 213 pp.

Intergenerational Missiology is a thoughtful contribution by a seasoned reverend minister, with his church affiliation as a focus. He assesses the African Pentecostal-Charismatic mission and reflects upon the generational gap between the older generation, who passionately hold on to "indispensable" church practices, and the newer generation, who belong to a vibrant global culture that projects their Christian worship in innovative ways alien to the older generation. The author claims that the Great Commission is a mandate to make disciples (xxiii). He contends that the incarnational nature of the church's mission requires that the gospel is presented to persons of all geographical and generational contexts defying cultural barriers. He discusses the historical highlights of the Pentecostal mission in Africa. He shows how the generational gap has been a challenge that limited African Indigenous Churches (AIC) in the late twentieth century.

The author discusses replication (ethnocentric), indigenization, and the more dynamic concept of contextualization mission models. The third becomes foundational, emphasizing how Pentecostalism has thrived through oral liturgy, testimonies, and songs. The author then describes his denomination, the Church of Pentecost (CoP). Rev. James McKeown, a British missionary to the Gold Coast (Ghana), founded this denomination. McKeown's focus on vernacularization, simplicity of liturgy, non-condescending relationship with indigenous/black ministers, and his direct mentorship approach in fathering the largest Pentecostal church in present-day Ghana has proven to be an effective approach to mission praxis. The critical lesson in McKeown's mission theology and spirituality is what the author calls "reflective pneumatology." Reflective pneumatology allows one to assess spiritual manifestations critically while demystifying prophetism and curbing manipulation without downplaying the role of practical demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit in Christian mission (82). McKeown established a contextual church for his generation by leaning on indigenous principles that were self-supporting, self-propagating, self-governing, and self-theologizing.

With the gospel's relation to culture established through historical accounts, the author responds to the generational gap in the contemporary church from a biblical perspective—"New Wine in Old Wineskins" (116). By this principle, the author argues that the new generation must not be routinized into McKeown's mission praxis, which itself was an indigenous cultural adaptation. Instead, the new generation must be allowed to worship in the uniqueness of the present-day culture.

The CoP has experienced negative feedback about idealizing outmoded traditions and imposing them on the new generations. Many young elite Christians left the church to fellowship in newly-established Charismatic churches with contemporary mission models that accommodate the youth. Bold interventions by the CoP's leadership to curb the challenge include the establishment of Ghanaian English Assemblies and International Worship Centres in 1992 to meet the needs of the youth. These churches modified some "negotiable" practices while maintaining the "non-negotiables" practices, thus creating a niche for the CoP (123–24). The author rightly described how the CoP addressed the trouble of traditions about women's head-covering, fashion, and other conducts at church gatherings that often led to embarrassing situations, especially for the youth, visitors, new converts, and foreigners. These leadership efforts helped the CoP successfully retain its youth and elite in a Christian atmosphere that tolerates their culture, allowing it to grow into the largest Pentecostal church in Ghana.

The author proposes a model to bridge the generational gap between the different generational blocs (children, the youth, and the elderly) by fostering intentional mutual interactions. The author refers to this approach as the "Intergenerational Mission Approach" (IGMA) (139). The CoP has practiced age-segregated models to attend to the unique needs of the different generations in the church. However, the author claims this approach has created a problem of self-preservation and fragmented the church into generational blocs. He argues convincingly that this further widens the gap between the style of worship of the different blocs. The IGMA, therefore, is relevant in bringing together the different generational blocs for cohesive relations, fostering opportunities for mentorship by the older generation, and reciprocity of resources, care, and regard. The children and youth must be encouraged to join the elderly to know, understand, and be inspired by their way of worship. The elderly must also tolerate and mentor the younger generations in love. However, the unique ministries that still target the holistic needs of the various generational groups also have a role in addressing the unique challenges of the Christian in an ever-changing world.

A flaw to the careful reader, which may be insignificant in light of the book's many great ideas, is the misspelling of Kwadwo Duku's surname as "Kuku" (17). The author rightly noted that Duku walked from Kumasi to Asamankese (over 250 kilometers) to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of glossolalia in the early 1930s. The author also wrongly identifies the secular singer King Promise in chapter seven as a gospel artist because of his song, "CCTV," which describes the omniscience of God as a CCTV that sees us wherever we go (148). Nonetheless, the importance of the author's message is evident: the current generation theologizes in light of their technological culture, which often leaves the older generations alienated unless they seek to understand the ideas being shared. Overall, *Intergenerational*

Missiology is a must-read for the young and the old and contributes to discussions about generational gap crises and contemporary missiology.

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