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# Evangelical Review of Theology

*Articles and book reviews reflecting  
global evangelical theology for the purpose  
of discerning the obedience of faith*



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# Evangelical Review of Theology

GENERAL EDITOR: THOMAS SCHIRRMACHER

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# Editorial: Commending the Truth

We introduce a new volume of our journal with a stirring address by Nelly García Murillo (Universidad de Costa Rica) on the challenge of globalisation and other complexities of the modern world to Christian higher education. Her question is: 'How do we then orient Christian higher education in a way that organizes curriculum, methodology, and the school administration in such a way that the true objects of these educational concerns, the students themselves, are taken into consideration? ... And if we cannot reach this goal, what is our role as Christian educators?'

This leads us to the our second article, by Joel Carpenter (USA), which focuses on one aspect of the 'seismic' re-location of Christianity to the South—the unprecedented expansion of Christian higher education, worldwide, even in very poor nations'. As he points out, this raises 'intriguing questions about the relationship of gospel and culture in the new Christian heartlands where they are at work'. The challenge here is 'to restore wholeness by nurturing fully orbbed communities of scholarship and learning'.

These educational opportunities call for many different types of skills and insights, including aspects of leadership and spirituality. Derek Tidball (UK) tackles the tension between leadership and servanthood, suggesting that the answer is to be found in the first century context where 'Fathers were figures of authority and they gave direction to the families'. In the Christian setting, 'fathers were in charge' but 'because of Christ, simultaneously

[they were] the family's servant'.

Mike Parsons (UK) takes us to John Calvin's teaching on prayer as one element in a spirituality that is always needed, but is especially vital in the present context. He shows that Calvin emphasized the importance of recognizing and acknowledging our weakness and poverty. This then leads on to showing that is 'only by prayer to a God who has already proven himself in Christ to be faithful and capable can we truly seek to have any strength and influence'.

On this basis we can turn to one specific part of the present context of witness. Anthony McRoy (UK) shows how evangelical Christians need to be much more aware of the early history of their faith than is commonly the case to deal with contemporary Muslim propagandists who are utilising modern attacks on Christianity and the Bible in their polemics against Christianity.

We conclude with an article reproduced by permission of the original publishers showing how an Indian philosopher and social reformer, Vishal Mangalwadi, views the importance of the Bible and its vital and creative influence on the west. We also carry a review of this innovative evangelical book with its powerful message in the hope that readers will be inspired by it to see how they can use the insights of Scripture, along with the other topics addressed in this issue of our journal, to commend the truth of the gospel in our present complex world.

**Thomas Schirrmacher, General Editor**  
**David Parker, Executive Editor**

# Christian Higher Education in a Global Context: Implications for Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Administration

Nelly García Murillo

**KEYWORDS:** *Globalization, postmodernism, poverty, violence, migration, suffering, technology, Kingdom of God, dialogue, grace*

GLOBALIZATION<sup>1</sup> IS THE context in which we must reflect on all of our tasks—academic-professional, psychosocial, familial, religious, environmental, daily life, or whatever other issue we face.

## I The Global World

We used to live in a small community, but now it is global and this change has multiple consequences. It has been

said, and I am sure that we all agree: 'we do not live in a season of changes, but rather in a change of seasons'. Faced with a world that seems too complex from time to time, what is our reaction? Are we concerned with understanding it, or do we assume the attitude of the ostrich and hide our heads in the sand? Have we asked such a question? How should we respond? I invite you to reflect on the characteristics of this historical moment that, as we know, has been given the name 'postmodern'. In my understanding, there is no consensus about how to define it.

Faced with the difficulty of finding a satisfactory definition, let us explore some attempts by institutions and authorities that are qualified to do so.

UNESCO has characterized post-modernism as a time of uncertainty, where fear and uneasiness are the fac-

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<sup>1</sup> Special thanks is given to Alicia Hynes from Dordt College for the translation of this address from Spanish to English.

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*Nelly García Murillo has served as Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Coordinator of the Department of Communication and Language of the School of General Studies, University of Costa Rica. She is a graduate of the University of Costa Rica in 'Filología Española'. She has been active in the *Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana*. This article was the opening address at a conference of the International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education (IAPCHE) held in Nacaragua November 2006 and appeared first in the *Journal of Latin American Theology* Vol 3:1 (2008) pp 6-25; it is used with permission.*

tors that are common to all of us (Eduardo Galeano). It is characterized by 'presentism': What is important is today because we cannot count on tomorrow. Also, we live in a world of sensation. So much so that parents, along with educators, artists, merchants, and communicators, are concerned about offering varied and fast options if they want to capture their audience. Brian McClaren, a Christian leader in the United States, said a few weeks ago in the Universidad Bíblica in San Jose, Costa Rica, that children, adolescents, and adults now have available 'weapons of mass distraction'. These allow us to 'kill' time without feeling so bored. Lisbeth Queseda, head of the Office of Civil Rights of Costa Rica, in an appearance before a Commission of the Legislative Assembly, characterized the present culture in the following terms:

We are moving toward a culture that has changed the means into the end itself. It has left the person behind as a cause and an end of all of the activity of the institutional system. It is about a culture that changed wellbeing into 'well-having'.

This apparent play on words helps us to think about how the values of our societies have changed. We are taught to love people and use things. Often however, even among self-proclaimed Christians, there are those that passionately cling to things and use people, for example those that preach the 'Prosperity Gospel'. The struggle between being and having that was raised several decades ago by Erick Fromm is still valid. The most wonderful commandments, to love God above

all things and to love one's neighbour as oneself, remain and have even greater significance now.

Many experts point out that poverty continues to grow in and between countries, and not only in the Third World. No doubt this has many causes, but among them is the unjust distribution of resources with the increasing asymmetry between the rich and poor. Logically, this situation brings about perplexity, resentment and anger, as well as tension, anger and violence. Evidence of violence can be seen in street children, assaulted women, gangs, traffic accidents, suicides and murders.

*La Nación*, the Costa Rican newspaper, on September 25, 2006 had the following article, '*Violencia sin control. Grupos de Exterminio.*' (Violence out of Control. Extermination Groups), that mentioned some groups in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador that carry out what is called 'social cleansing' and concludes, 'In Honduras, since 1998 there have been more than 3,300 young people under the age of 23 that have been killed in alleged acts of social cleansing.'<sup>2</sup> Sometimes it seems that the only news that we hear is bad news. Could it be that nothing else happens in our countries?

The phenomenon of immigration is another characteristic that distinguishes our context. People have always moved for various reasons: to flee from an imminent threat like war; to find food; in search of better options for life like work, education, health, adventure; and many other reasons.

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2 'Violencia sin control. Grupos de exterminio' in *La Nación*, September 25, 2006.

The existence of this type of relocation today has several alarming characteristics. Since many people are moving to other places, it is important to be aware of potential dangers and the possibility of failure that they have to achieve their goals, knowing beforehand that there are barriers that are almost impossible to overcome. Through varied means of communication and from the stories of survivors, we hear about the thousands of people that die trying. They die from hunger, cold, heat, accidents, violence and from merchants' deceitful promises to cover large sums of money with the promise of helping immigrants cross the border. These groups include many children, as well as women who embark on difficult journeys in search of sustenance for children who often die in their mothers' arms.

The suffering does not end when they reach 'the promised land' where they are taken as prisoners and are searched for their papers. Upon returning 'home' they still do not have any hope or any belongings. This situation exists in many places, but currently the situation is particularly distressing for the thousands of Sub-Saharan Africans who are struggling to get to the Canary Islands, Spain, and other coastal European locations. How appalling!

Desperation can be seen in the faces of the people that have made every effort to improve their lives. When they find out that they are going to be deported, some say, 'Now I will not be able to keep the promise that I made to my mom to send her money for the family's sustenance and to buy back the cows that she sold to pay for my trip.' The destination countries in the European Union are frustrated and con-

cerned about these situations. A wall is being built on the border between the United States and Mexico that will prevent undocumented immigrants from crossing in hopes of reaching El Dorado.

In Costa Rica this phenomenon is seen in the exploitation of immigrants, especially those from Nicaragua. There are many corrupt acts that happen like granting fake permits for profit, paying smaller salaries to immigrant workers and avoiding paying social taxes for healthcare and retirement.

In the 21st century, as people are seeking greater equality, there is increased awareness about the difficulties that women have experienced throughout history. Women and children are among the poorest of the poor. Women constitute 70 per cent of the world's poor, as cited by Elsa Támez in her book, *La sociedad que las mujeres soñamos*. In some societies women are not considered worthy to deserve educational opportunities. In fact, they often receive discrimination at work. For the same working day and the same type of work, women are paid less just because they are women. Furthermore, many women suffer oppression, violence and sexual harassment by their bosses, co-workers, husbands and other men.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the violence in the home has increased in the last few years. And in macho societies where unemployment rates are high, men's frustrations are taken out upon the women, women's frustrations are taken out upon their sons and the boys' frustrations are taken out upon the little girls. The dream

is to break the vicious cycle of violence, which is impossible if the socioeconomic situation is not seriously considered.<sup>3</sup>

Our abusive relationship with nature explains many of the natural disasters that affect us today: global warming, droughts, floods, the hole in the ozone layer, water shortages, trash, lack of energy for cooking and working, and excessive heat and cold. We see nature as an endless resource that we can exploit for maximum profit. This all seems to indicate that we humans are not aware of the fact that we are part of nature that God created for our wellbeing, and that the abuses that we commit against creation directly and negatively affect us. We forget that we were called by God to care for the earth and cultivate it.

Today, there are many people that lack water, an essential resource, which translates into famines, disease and death. Experts say that the wars of the 21st century will be over water. If wars are currently being fought over oil, it will be more serious to undertake struggles over water, without which we cannot live.

This problem is tackled in various movies like *Si le vent souleve les sables* (*If the Wind Lifts the Sands*) by the French film director Marion Hansel, based on the novel written by Marc Durin Valois. Hansel refers to her work in these terms: 'It is a universal story. I wanted the whole world to be involved. Durin himself remembered

that 1.5 billion people around the world lack water.'<sup>4</sup>

The book that Al Gore, former vice-president of the United States, recently wrote led to a documentary. This documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*, has caught the attention of many people. It is a warning about global warming, the result of the greenhouse effect in the atmosphere, produced by the indiscriminate burning of combustibles. It also warns about the serious effects that global warming has on atmospheric phenomena which will hurl all of humanity toward an eco-catastrophe and back again like a boomerang, which will end life and its different expressions.

It is true that what we have alluded to is tragic and evil, but people are starting to act positively, which gives hope. Technological advances in the last decades let us communicate more efficiently. Just a few years ago, we could not have imagined such fast communication. How great it is that available technology allows us to instantly communicate with people on different continents! It also lets us learn about events that occur in distant regions. Above all, knowledge of this information can build empathy, solidarity and advocacy for those who suffer most.

What would happen if we were not able to learn about the disasters that provoked the war between Israel and Lebanon or about the aftermath of tsunamis, earthquakes, hurricanes and floods? People around the world are still reacting to the pain that our neighbours in Nicaragua, New Orleans,

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3 Elsa Támez, *La sociedad que las mujeres soñamos* (San José, Costa Rica: DEI, 1979).

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4 *La Nación*, September 25, 2006.



Sudan, Ethiopia, Palestine and other communities have suffered in the last few years.

## II Challenges for Christian Higher Education

How do we then orient Christian higher education in a way that organizes curriculum, methodology, and the school administration in such a way that the true objects of these educational concerns, the students themselves, are taken into consideration? If we do not dialogue with our context, we are dancing with danger, not only of being irrelevant, but also of being unable to offer necessary training to students who should be enabled to move forward in a world that is constantly becoming more complex. And if we cannot reach this goal, what is our role as Christian educators?

Educators like Simón Rodríguez (Simón Bolívar's teacher), José Martí, Gabriela Mistral, Carmen Lyra, Mariano Fiallos Gil, Paulo Freire, Omar Dengo, Joaquín García Monge and other excellent Latin American teachers have reiterated that education is an act of love and that it is formed in the dialogue between teachers and students with their environment. Along with the formal education that we have, we need to be conscious that there is a life-long informal education that includes the participation of many others. Families, friends, books, neighbours, the media, political and sports leaders sometimes have a greater educational influence than those called to be educators.

Today, people declare that education is a dialogue as if the idea were a

novelty, but this type of pedagogy was already practised by Socrates in ancient Greece and by Jesus in his ministry in Judea, Galilee and Samaria. Jesus' followers Peter, Paul and Luke also joined in.

Dialoguing, besides being a pedagogical strategy, demonstrates an attitude of honesty, transparency, and humility on the part of the professor. The professor recognizes that he or she does not know everything or have the absolute truth and that he or she has to learn from the people with whom they are in dialogue. Is this not what God was communicating when he said, 'Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. We all stumble in many ways' (James 3:1-2a).

What is the Christian's responsibility, then, as an educator, student, administrator, parent, communicator, business person, carpenter, mechanic, engineer, lawyer, or religious leader in a sad world where discouragement and confusion reign? *How do we re-encounter a love for the world that God made for us?* This question was asked a few weeks ago by a Brazilian theologian in a meditation in the Comunidad Cristiana Emaús in San José, Costa Rica.

## III Dialogue and the Kingdom of God

The theologian, Silvia Regina de Lima, reflected on the kingdom of God in her meditation. She pointed out that the reign of God has a place in history. *The time has come.* It is the time of God. The reign of God is near. We cannot fully

comprehend it, but it is near. This reign of God is proclaimed by a Christian community that undertakes life in the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is present in social and religious organizations. It has a liberating presence in people's lives and has a political impact. To proclaim the kingdom of God is to propose another way of doing things.

The kingdom of God is a different proposition from the image of God. It is presented like a seed that is fruitful and can make a difference. God is the fire that is under the coals, and with his action he can create a strong reaction in the world. This revolution can be seen in the life of service of the Christians who have been told to practise what is right, not only with their friends, but also with their enemies. By doing this, Christians accomplish what Jesus taught in the beatitudes (Matthew 5) and in many other passages like Mark 1:14-15.

For a true dialogue to exist, the participants must listen to each other. Often what happens is that teachers, professors, and all educators find themselves driven to speak and speak and keep on speaking, because they consider it their responsibility to provide information to their students. Frequently, they do not take the time to see if the students are interested in what they are saying or if they are day-dreaming. The Argentine writer, Julio Cortázar, used to say that for this reason, the fantastic or the unreal is much more real than reality and through what we imagine, we can find profound truths.

As we question what constitutes an academic dialogue, we should keep in mind that speaking is not the same as

communicating. How often do we find ourselves voiceless in a dialogue because no one is listening to what the other person is proposing? Sometimes we think that taking a few minutes to listen to the other person is a waste of time, when we could be able to provide more information to the students. We are faced with a problem that has to do with what we understand as the function of the educator in the process of teaching and learning. Is it really your mission to provide information? And if the information can be found through other means, what is left for you to do?

Several remarkable teachers have made well-known statements that give us key ideas to better understanding of the function of the professor. One such teacher is Joaquín García Monge. Through his work as the Director of the *Revista Repertorio Americano* magazine, García Monge kept Latin America alive in the minds of many in the first part of the 20th century. This teacher used a well-tested metaphor, 'to teach is to give the soul wings'. I understand that he used the word 'soul' to express all that which characterizes human beings, who are unique and indivisible. Therefore, an integral and humanistic formation is required that takes into consideration all of the different facets of people: the rational, the affective, the feeling, the will and the spiritual. Jesus Christ taught us to see people as whole beings, not having false dichotomies.

Another famous educator, Simón Rodríguez, Simón Bolívar's teacher, stated in reference to education, 'that which does not make one feel, is of no interest; that which is of no interest, is not understood'. In the process of teaching and learning, we should

appeal to the whole human being. We should also concern ourselves with making the discussion appeal to the emotions, because we know that this can motivate the rest of the person. If we manage to motivate the student to have a desire to learn, we have achieved a fundamental part of our mission. A principle in education says this: '(N)obody can teach anyone anything (if they are not willing), people learn when they are motivated to do so, when they want to.'

#### IV Educators as Facilitators

Therefore we deduce that an educator is a facilitator who provides the conditions in which the educational process can be achieved. In many instances, it is the parents that take this role without realizing it. This challenge is an opportunity for service and a gift from God for people that facilitate learning. The educator should be an alert, inquisitive, observant person who loves his or her work and who is prepared to invest a great deal of time in personal preparation. He or she should be comprehensively trained and have up-to-date knowledge based on research. No one can give that which he or she does not have.

Students catch their professors' interest from the first moment. If the professor is apathetic, or unenthusiastic, he or she is not going to light the spark needed for the student to want to learn. The educational process runs the risk of becoming cold or even boring. In Costa Rica, the students have coined the phrase to describe this type of professor: he is a 'yawn'. Albert Einstein spoke many times about the importance of knowing how to raise

questions that create a desire to learn.

We can ask the questions of ourselves, others, or the context in which we live. Possible questions include: Who am I? What am I doing in the world? What is the meaning of my life? Why should I have relationships with others? Who is my neighbour? May I use natural resources for my personal benefit only? Who is God? Why would he want to relate to me? Why does evil exist? Who created it? Why is there so much violence in our time? And the questions continue—leading to other questions and the search for answers.

Jesus was called the Teacher from Galilee. Why? What did he teach? Did he have compassion on those with whom he spoke? How did he resolve the problems that were posed to him, for example, the multitude that was hungry after hours spent listening to him? How did he explain the miracle of multiplying the loaves and fish? Did he take into account the context in which he carried out his mission? Why was it necessary in that time and in that place to wash feet as a demonstration of love and consideration?

I know that some presenters will delve deeply into related subjects of the main theme in this conference. I would like to finish my part with two simple charges from Latin America: first, to all of the Latin Americans that are meeting here and, second to all of our friends and neighbours that are representing other countries.

#### V A local challenge

To the Latin Americans, I remind you that we have dignity because we are God's children, created in his image and his likeness. Nicaragua is a beau-

tiful place where we can appreciate the God-given ability to be creative human beings. This is a land of poets, singer-song writers, painters, sculptors, skilled artisans, and artists. I must mention Rubén Darío, the poet who dared to start the first clearly Latin American movement, Modernism, with it its own way of writing that did not take on foreign characteristics.

I hope that we have the opportunity to know other outstanding writers, not just Central Americans, but globally recognized authors, like José Coronel Urtecho, Ernesto Cardenal, Gioconda Belli, Sergio Ramírez and others too numerous to count. In the same way, each country from the so-called Third World represented here, has valid reasons to be grateful to God for the talents he has distributed around the world.

Latin America history has been difficult because some people came to Latin America saying that they represented God, but, in reality, they selfishly made us slaves. These people also made us believe that we were children of the treachery, which seems to have soaked deeply into the conscience and personality of our communities, to the point that we feel unworthy of God's grace. Thank God that along with the conquistadors and gold prospectors, people also came to Latin America that wanted to claim the Good News of salvation and wanted to share what they had learned from their experience with God. (Bartolomé de las Casas is an example.)

Today, Latin America is a region where we are learning to live together: indigenous, blacks, mixed-race, *zambos*, *mosquitos*, Asians, and many other mixes unimaginable in the past. The

Mexican philosopher, Leopoldo Zea, used to say that Latin America is the best prepared continent to succeed in this globalized world because we have the experience of having interacted with very diverse cultures, a factor that is very relevant in this time. Of course, there are other factors that do not work well for Latin America like the idea that foreign relations should be modelled like markets, where everything is the product of supply and demand.

For many decades, the dominant religious vision in Latin America was that described by Juan Mackay in his book *El otro Cristo español* (The Other Spanish Christ): Christ was hidden in great and beautiful cathedrals, but the people did not have access to him. The Peruvian novelist, José María Arguedas, refers to that Christ and his followers in his book *Los ríos profundos* (The Deep Rivers).

Because of the faithfulness of many Christians from around the world, including several educators, Latin Americans were able to know God who is the light, the way, the truth and the life. He has lived among us in mud shacks and rickety homes made out of cardboard, as well as in huge condominiums, schools, universities, coffee fields, banana plantations, lakes, volcanoes and markets. He has reached to the heights and depths of our continent; to the plateaux, rain forests, wet high lands and deserts. The security of knowing that we are his children allows us to grow, and for this reason we can move forward toward the consolidation of his kingdom.

In our churches we sing a song Gente Nueva that goes like this:

Gente nueva, creadora de la historia

Constructora de nueva humanidad,  
Gente nueva que vive la existencia  
Como riesgo de un largo caminar.<sup>5</sup>

(New people, authors of history  
Builders of a new humanity,  
New people that risk their lives  
To forge a new path.)

We are a diverse people with a mission that derives from being professors at the service of the kingdom, in a continent that cries out for justice, peace and a concern for the creation.

## VI A global challenge

Now this message for our friends from the so-called first world, members of economically powerful countries, and keepers of cutting-edge scientific and technological knowledge: The love of God drives us to tell you that, like Paul, we know that by the grace of God, we are what we are and that his grace has not been in vain among us.

The Colombian writer Gabriel García Márquez, winner of the Nobel Prize for literature, gave an address when he was in Stockholm. In the speech, he asked the more powerful peoples of the world to let us make mistakes, if necessary, in order to find our own way and not to have to spend another hundred years in solitude. Be our ambassadors, and being the Christian educators that you are, tell your countries that we can learn a lot from other people and cultures. Internationalizing the curriculum of our schools, our teaching methods, and the way we manage our

educational tasks should show that God is at the centre of our lives. We cannot be indifferent to the outcries of millions that live in helplessness, poverty, fear, violence and loneliness, as they also have the right to an education that allows them to develop the talent and potential that God has given them.

José Míguez Bonino, the Argentine Christian leader, in his book *Poder del evangelio y poder político* (*The Power of the Gospel and Political Power*), calls us to a deeper reflection. This is what he says,

God commissions us to work for 'a full life'—fertility, growth, vigor and fullness. Our responsibility is to defend the fullness of human life, humanity's access to the world's good resources, the possibility of growth and expansion, the cultural mandate to govern animals and things; and to defend the dignity of humans made in the image of God. This 'fulfilled Adam' is the object and goal of our mission.<sup>6</sup>

As Christian educators, we can indeed have hope in God's work in people and Christian communities. In Isaiah 65:17-19, 'Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth...be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.'

Is this not what we all yearn for?

<sup>5</sup> *Celebremos Juntos* (San José, Costa Rica: Seminario Bíblico Latinoamericano, 1989), núm 75.

<sup>6</sup> José Míguez Bonino, *Poder del evangelio y poder político: La participación de los evangelícos en la política en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Kairós/FTL, 1999), 61.

Dear colleagues in Christian higher education, let us remember the tools that technology provides. These advances should be used to increase awareness and to act Christianly in the world where we live, declaring the kingdom of God.

We cannot delay our commitment to include in our university's curriculum those topics that include respect for all forms of life and for all human beings. It is necessary to be aware that we are partly responsible for the environment. For this reason, we should denounce society's aggressive consumption that causes the emission of gases and the greenhouse effect, the hole in the ozone layer, and planetary consequences associated with accelerated climate changes, global warming, and the consequences of ultraviolet rays on the health of the ecosystem.

We need to remember that our vocation as educators is founded in the truth and knowledge of our discipline, historical reality, and the diligence and enthusiasm with which we serve. We remember that it is based on humility as we relate to one another in our collegiate environment, in the strength of Jesus' love, and in the grace that he gives us.

As Christians committed to higher

education, we need to renew our call to serve young people. We can do this by joining together in fraternity and solidarity in the context of a changing of seasons in which the coming generation will develop.

In conclusion, the final message is for everyone present here, for those from the North and the South and for those from the East and the West; it is a message of solidarity of communion and love that fills our lives of service to the kingdom of God and that allows us to sing Psalm 133 together:

How good and pleasant it is when brothers and sisters live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.

May God, our Lord and Saviour, allow us to be the salt and light in our universities. May he allow us to fully achieve the objectives of this conference, that each and every one of us would be able to respond to his or her call as obedient servants that want to say, 'Here am I Lord, send me!'

# New Christian Universities and the Conversion of Cultures

Joel A. Carpenter

**KEYWORDS:** *Higher education, educational aims, liberal arts, curriculum, privatization, commercialization, Christian scholarship*

READERS OF THIS journal are quite familiar with one of the great trends of our times: Christianity's place in the world has taken a seismic shift to the global south and east, and this momentous change is being driven mainly by rapid church growth and by renewal movements in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Those familiar with current developments in education likewise know of another huge trend, the unprecedented expansion of higher education, worldwide, even in very poor nations. It may seem surprising, given Christianity's historic role in fostering education, that more inquirers are not asking what these two trends might have to do with each other.

These trends do converge, and the results are striking. A recently con-

ducted study of Christian higher education worldwide discovered that new Christian universities are rising across the globe. Over the past thirty years, at least one hundred seventy eight of them have come into being, with forty six arising on the African continent alone.<sup>1</sup> These new, faith-based universities make up a tiny sub-trend in the larger field of international higher education, but they raise intriguing questions about the relationship of gospel and culture in the new Christian heartlands where they are at work. The new Christian universities come on the heels of awakenings, revivals and burgeoning church growth. They also ride the twin waves of ever-expanding

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<sup>1</sup> Perry L. Glanzer, Joel A. Carpenter, and Nick Lantinga, 'Looking for God in the University: Examining Trends in Global Christian Higher Education', *Higher Education*, 61:6 (2011): 721-55. To track current results in this very dynamic field, see the project's database at [www.iapche.org](http://www.iapche.org).

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demand for higher education and the desires of revived Christian people to bring God's blessings to the lands where they live. Yet these uncommon schools face powerful pressures to conform their education to the economic norms of our age.

In North America there is a vigorous discussion about the history and mission of Christian higher education, but very little has been said about the role of Christian universities in the faith's new heartlands of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. One prominent Christian thinker, however, has been asking how Christian thinking relates to the 'demographic transformation of the Church'. Andrew Walls, the eminent Scottish historian of missions and world Christianity, is eager to see the burgeoning Christian movements of the global South and East make greater progress in what he calls 'cultural conversion', of working the gospel down deep into the very roots of cultural identity. He identifies this work as a long-term and deeply scholarly task, and he calls today's Christian thinkers to take up this work. Believing scholars need to engage 'the thought processes of a whole civilization'.<sup>2</sup> While Walls lays this task first at the feet of theology, he recognizes that it is the proper work of Christian thinkers in every field of inquiry and action.<sup>3</sup>

So we need to ask: how vigorous is Christian scholarship in the new Christian universities that we see arising in Africa, Asia, and Latin America? Are new Christian universities showing a lively concern for Christian living and Christian witness in their host societies, and how does this concern translate into scholarly activity? What ideas and values are shaping these new universities' priorities and structures? What might get in the way of gospel-and-culture intellectual work? And what might be done to help such work flourish?

## I The Worldwide Growth of Higher Education

In North America, the byword in higher education is 'crisis'. We hear of the crisis of ever-rising costs, the crisis of educational purpose, the crisis of the professoriate, or the crisis of the for-profit, corporate invasion of higher education. I do not want to belittle these concerns, which play into the very centre of our story today, but outside of the North Atlantic region, higher education is expanding at an astonishing rate, and the main crisis in higher education is how to meet the huge and growing demand worldwide for a university education with anything resembling university-quality teaching and learning. A second crisis follows closely on the first, and that is how to answer the 'for what?' question: what are the proper aims and purposes of higher education? The forces driving the first global crisis and the second one are remarkably similar.

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2 Andrew F. Walls, 'Christian Scholarship and the Demographic Transformation of the Church', in *Theological Literacy for the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Rodney L. Petersen, with Nancy M. Rourke (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 172.

3 Walls, 'Christian Scholarship', 166.



### A Massification: Expanding to Meet Huge Demand

Today we are witnessing a historic shift in higher education's social role. Here is how the authors of a sociological study put it: 'In 1900, roughly 500,000 students were enrolled in higher education institutions worldwide, representing a tiny fraction of 1 per cent of college age people.... By 2000, the number of tertiary students had grown two-hundredfold to approximately 100 million people, which represents about 20 percent of the [university enrollment age] cohort worldwide.'<sup>4</sup>

Those totals and percentages mask some huge disparities, however. In India, for example, there has been a very rapid growth in higher education, but India currently enrolls only about 13 per cent of its relevant age group in higher education. The average across Africa is only about two per cent. In South Korea, by contrast, more than 40 per cent of traditional college-age young people are enrolled. In the United States, the number is about 34 per cent. Whatever the relative reach of higher education in each country, the historic growth curves are remarkably similar in all parts of the world, rich and poor. Even in sub-Saharan Africa, the most educationally disenfranchised region of the world, the growth curve for higher education continues to bend upward, decade by decade.

It is not difficult to imagine why the growth is taking place. Tertiary education is no longer expected only of elites. It is becoming a necessary basis for ordinary work in many realms today. The expansion of higher education thus reflects a radical change in the way the world is structured. We are seeing that a 'world dominated by more traditional elites', such as 'landowners, business owners, and [the heads of] political and military machines', is being replaced by one dominated by a new set of elites, and their status and authority comes to a large extent from 'schooled knowledge'. This historic change is occurring not only in rich and powerful countries like our own, but also in poorer countries as well.<sup>5</sup> In this new form of society, both the learned professions and more ordinary office work require increasingly specialized knowledge. These opportunities are expanding rapidly, and because they address these basic social and economic needs, universities are becoming central national institutions, not just the enclaves of the elite.

### B Unstoppable Demand and Unbearable Systemic Strain

As societies and economies worldwide are changing in knowledge-driven ways, demand for access to higher education continues to grow. In much of the world, the dominant assumption regarding higher education has been that it serves broad public purposes. Therefore the government was obliged to provide it. It has become clear, how-

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<sup>4</sup> Evan Schofer and John W. Meyer, 'The Worldwide Expansion of Higher Education in the Twentieth Century', *American Sociological Review* 70:6 (December 2005): 898.

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<sup>5</sup> Schofer and Meyer, 'Worldwide Expansion', 917.

ever, that in most of the world governments cannot expand higher education fast enough to meet this demand.<sup>6</sup> University systems in Africa, Asia and Latin America have been strained and damaged as campuses are being forced to accommodate more and more students. Meanwhile the professoriate is experiencing parallel strains. In many countries, the percentage of teaching staff holding the relevant terminal postgraduate degrees has declined.<sup>7</sup> Even in rich countries with mature higher education systems, government support for higher education is contracting even while enrolments continue to expand.

### C A Change in Values: Privatization

At the same time that higher education is under huge pressure to accommodate more students, it is experiencing a sea change in values. Since ancient times, higher education has been a craft, plied by highly skilled intellectual artisans, and imparted from one generation to another in highly personal ways. It is a process of formation, not just the processing of information. It involves acquiring perspective and discernment and sound habits

of mind and intellectual work. But now this long time pattern of teaching and learning is under assault for being too inefficient.

Also since the early years of the university, two basic sets of aims and values have been driving the enterprise. On the one hand are the 'liberal' or liberating values driving studies in the arts and sciences. They exist for the sake of making fresh discoveries and creations, for discerning what is true and worthy and what is not, and for inheriting humanity's store of wisdom and cultural achievement. On the other hand there are the more concretely 'practical' values driving studies in the professions and technological fields: for attaining the knowledge and skill needed to become a competent practitioner, and for engaging in practices that will make one's community flourish and prosper. Both of these sets of values were put into a larger frame called 'the public good'. Universities equipped graduates to serve the community. These two basic aims were in fact secular adaptations of the Christian vision of higher education: to serve the glory of God and the welfare of the earthly city.

In recent decades, however, we have seen these governing values become reduced and constricted. Contemporary policy makers are constructing ever narrower understandings of the purpose and value of higher education. Basic discovery research is fine, under this reasoning, if it can be related directly to efforts that boost the economy. And what one needs to know to be competent in practice as a professional or a technician is being pushed more and more into a skills-based orientation, and away from

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<sup>6</sup> Philip G. Altbach and Jane Knight, 'The Internationalization of Higher Education: Motivations and Realities', *Journal of Studies in Higher Education* 11:3/4 (Fall/Winter 2007): 290-305.

<sup>7</sup> Philip G. Altbach, 'Center and Peripheries in the Academic Profession: The Special Challenges of Developing Countries', in *The Decline of the Guru: The Academic Profession in the Third World*, ed. Philip G. Altbach (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 1-22.

broader perspectives and understanding. The belief that professionals and technicians might need critical thinking, or a broader sense of life's contexts and dimensions beyond the job, or wise judgment in order to do what is right and do no harm, are being downplayed while claims grow that the technical aspects of the job itself demand all of the educational time.

Educational time and expense are increasingly under pressure from the cost-cutting metrics of the corporate world. There is something like an 'industrial revolution' occurring, by which higher education is being thought of as a product, something capable of being rationalized and streamlined in production and traded like other commodities.<sup>8</sup> The logic of this process points to higher education as something that individuals acquire to enhance their own benefit. If higher education is as much a private benefit as a public good, why should its support come so heavily from public coffers?

In times when even wealthy western nations have been facing increasing pressures to control public spending, this economic approach has gained a great deal of support. In middle-income and poorer nations, the natural desire to 'build the nation' also has led to a narrowing of vision and value for higher education. All over Asia, observes Philip Altbach, a leading scholar of international higher education, the humanities and social sciences are experiencing rapid declines.

The traditional, 'public good' roles that these fields provided—'cultural analysis and critique, the interrogation of science and culture, and the preservation of knowledge—have been largely pushed aside'.<sup>9</sup>

These fields are sent to the margins because the massive demand for higher education is pressuring higher education systems to provide the programs students most want, and what they most want are courses that will lead most directly to lucrative employment. All of the budgetary pressure runs against keeping the humanities and social sciences programs that are less in demand. So we see the values of higher education shifting from public good to private gain, from formation to information, and from perspective and judgment to skills and techniques. This shift is driven by a seemingly insatiable demand for more access to higher education, and a decreasing ability of governments, in rich nations as well as poor ones, to pay for it.

## II The Big Surprise: the Global Growth of 'Private' Higher Education

In response to these pressures and demands, we are seeing the rapid growth of private higher education around the world—or at least outside of western Europe. While in the United States there is a long tradition of privately founded colleges and universi-

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<sup>8</sup> David Noble, 'Technology and the Commodification of Higher Education', *Monthly Review* 53:10 (March 2002): 26-40.

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<sup>9</sup> Philip G. Altbach, 'Globalization and Forces for Change in Higher Education', *International Higher Education* no. 50 (Winter 2008). *International Higher Education* is published online at [http://www.bc.edu/bc\\_org/avp/soe/cihe/](http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe/)

ties, in many parts of the world, non-governmental universities are relatively new, and they come as quite a surprise.

### A New nongovernmental players

In China, for example, where there was no non-governmental higher education from 1950 to the 1980s, now about ten per cent of total enrolments are in that sector; and in Latin America, the regional average for private higher education is about 45 per cent of total enrolment. Africa had a tiny percentage of non-governmental higher education before 1990, mostly in schools for Christian ministry. But today, in a number of African nations, the enrolment percentage is about 20 per cent.<sup>10</sup> In Ghana, for example, there were just two private universities in 1999, but only a decade later there were eleven, plus another nineteen private polytechnic institutes. Their students total 28 per cent of national tertiary enrolments.<sup>11</sup>

### B Commercial orientation, including for-profit universities.

Non-governmental colleges and universities are not news in the United States; today they make up nearly 60

per cent of the institutions and 23 per cent of the enrolments. The big news in the USA is the rise of for-profit colleges and universities, which now represent about 7 per cent of the total enrolments, and about one third of all private college enrolments. The largest of these is the University of Phoenix, which in 2010 enrolled 455,000 students nationwide, up from 25,100 fifteen years earlier.<sup>12</sup> This for-profit model is emerging all over the world. Laureate Education, Inc., a publicly traded American corporation, now operates fifty-five institutions around the world, enrolling 600,000 students.<sup>13</sup>

### C Common traits, according to PROPHE

Over the past decade, an organization at the State University of New York at Albany has been analyzing this remarkable worldwide trend. Its name is the Program of Research on Private Higher Education (PROPHE).<sup>14</sup>

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**10** Daniel C. Levy, 'An Introductory Global Overview: The Private Fit to Salient Higher Education Tendencies', PROPHE Working Paper #7 Program for Research in Private Higher Education, University at Albany, State University of New York, September 2006.

**11** Kajsa Hallberg Adu, 'Ghana: Private higher education on the rise', *University World News*, 28 June 2009. This publication is found online at <http://www.universityworldnews.com>.

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**12** Robin Wilson, 'For-Profit Colleges Change Higher Education's Landscape', *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 12 February 2010, A-1, A-16.

**13** 'Media Design School Joins Laureate International Universities Network; New Zealand's Top Institution of Higher Education in Digital Design,' press release, 14 February 2011. Laureate International website: <http://www.laureate.net/NewsRoom/PressReleases/2011/02/MediaDesignSchooljoinsLIU.aspx> See also Ann I. Morey, 'Globalization and the Emergence of For-Profit Higher Education', *Higher Education* 48:1 (July 2004): 131-150.

**14** Daniel C. Levy, 'Analyzing a Private Revolution: The Work of PROPHE', *International Higher Education*, Spring 2005.

PROPHE engages an international network of dozens of scholars, and they have found eight prominent characteristics in the new private universities.<sup>15</sup>

### 1. Working the Margins

Private higher education rarely comes as part of a nationwide effort to plan and develop higher education. It tends to arise more spontaneously, to address needs and demands not met by governmental and traditional independent higher education. It has come as a surprise wherever it has arisen. Increasingly, after the fact, governments are scrambling to impose quality standards and accountability mechanisms on private higher education.

### 2. Addressing Access Needs

The most commonly performed educational role of private higher education is to provide access to higher education that the state is unable to meet. The new private institutions are rarely students' first choices; they often are the fall-back options when students don't get into state institutions.

### 3. Offering Little Research or Postgraduate Study

Higher education is an integrated system that needs a supply of qualified scholars to discover new knowledge and to convert it into solid educational materials and teaching. Private institutions worldwide rely on scholars from other institutions to develop

ideas; they hire some curriculum writers to provide classroom materials. The teaching is done largely by adjunct or part-time instructors. If the new private universities offer post-baccalaureate programs, they tend to be for professional job fields, not for basic research. So these institutions feed off the larger system of creating knowledge, but do not feed back into it.

### 4. Cutting Costs and Focusing on Jobs

Private higher education tends to feature courses that are most in demand for immediate transfer into jobs. They offer various business majors, the information technology services end of computer science, and other commercial fields, such as hotel and tourism management. These programs are cheap to offer and they do not demand elaborate facilities like the experimental sciences or engineering. Likewise, these privates do not feature arts and humanities courses, which need good studios and libraries, but offer fewer direct career tracks.

### 5. Going Light on Cultural and Social Service

The new private higher education tends not to feature programs such as social work, nursing or teacher education, which require internship sites and which provide community service. Likewise, the new privates tend not to make culture or share it with the community, via art galleries, orchestras or drama programs.

### 6. Part-timing Professors

Private institutions tend not to retain full-time professors. Part-timers are

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<sup>15</sup> Daniel C. Levy, 'The Unanticipated Explosion: Private Higher Education's Global Surge', *Comparative Education Review* 50:2 (2006): 217-240.

more likely. In Latin America, where they are called taxi-cab professors, quite a few are state university faculty members who are picking up extra work. In the USA, the new for-profits disaggregate professors' tasks and feature instructors who use pre-developed materials and bear no responsibilities outside of the classroom.

### 7. Taking Orders from the Boss

Whether they are legally not-for-profit entities, proprietary businesses, or multi-site corporations, the governance structures in the new privates tend to be more authoritarian than is usually the case in state institutions or older church-founded institutions. The new privates are often run like a business. Faculty co-governance and student input are much less likely.

### 8. Narrowing the Mission

In sum, the new private universities tend to depart from the traditional higher educational aims, such as providing a cultural legacy, engaging in moral character formation, learning critical analysis and inquiry, or developing an ethic of service. The aims reduce down to this: equip the student with the knowledge and skills required to be certified into a particular line of work. Doing anything more, claim its advocates, costs too much, and is irrelevant to the main mission.

trend—the rise of new Christian universities. About ten years ago, by means of some rather quick networking and web surfing, I found 42 evangelical Protestant institutions that had been established since 1980.<sup>16</sup> Thanks to some careful and exhaustive work over the past two years, we now know that the evangelical Protestant institutions that I discovered are part of a larger movement, both Protestant and Catholic, that has resulted in the founding of 178 new universities outside of North America since 1980, and 138 of these were founded since 1990. Here are some highlights of the research:

- Africa has been a hot spot, with 46 new Christian institutions founded since 1990.
- In Europe, the main action has been in the formerly communist nations, where 17 of the 19 Christian universities formed in the past 20 years have been planted. There are only two recently founded Christian universities in Western Europe: one is Liverpool Hope University, a Catholic and Anglican joint venture in England; and the other one is the University of Ramon Llull, a Catholic institution in Spain.
- In Asia, we see a variety of trends, led by Indian churches,

## III New Christian Universities

### A Worldwide Movement

Within the scholarly literature on private higher education, there is very little being said about a trend within the

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<sup>16</sup> Joel A. Carpenter, 'New Evangelical Universities: Cogs in a World System or Players in a New Game?' in *Interpreting Contemporary Christianity: Global Processes and Local Identities*, ed. Ogbu U. Kalu and Alaine Low (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 151-186.

which founded 18 new Christian colleges during the 1980s and 13 more since 1990.

- In South Korea, there are dozens of Christian universities, including some new ones that now enrol several thousand students.
- Minority Christian movements in Indonesia, Taiwan and Thailand also have new Christian universities.
- All told, there are 25 new Christian universities founded since 1990 in Asia and Australia.
- In Latin America, 32 new Christian universities have arisen since 1990; 15 of them are Protestant.

In sum, Christian higher education is a dynamic worldwide movement, enlisting Christian scholars and communities of support to do something fresh in higher education. In Europe, Christian educators are building communities of learning that come out from under a pervasively secular academic shadow. It is an exciting time of fresh beginnings, under a worldwide variety of situations, each with unique opportunities and constraints.<sup>17</sup>

The most dramatic site for Christian university startups today is sub-Saharan Africa. In Nigeria, government chartered private universities now number 41, and 21 of them are Christ-

ian.<sup>18</sup> Some have become substantially sized institutions in a very short period of time. Bowen University, which grew out of a small Baptist teacher training college in Iwo, southern Nigeria, officially opened its doors in 2002 with fewer than 500 students, but today it enrolls nearly 10,000.<sup>19</sup> Not all institutions have seen such dramatic growth, but of the 27 African Christian universities for which we have recent student enrolment numbers, 18 currently educate more than 1,000 students.<sup>20</sup>

## B After the Awakenings: A 'Now What?' Moment

So what is prompting the rise of these new Christian universities? On every continent the story is somewhat different, but in very general terms, Christian university building is in part a response to the same trend that is prompting the rise of private universities of all sorts: the relentless growth of demand for higher education in the face of public constraints in higher education spending.

In African contexts, the higher education crisis has been made even more critical by its extremity. Government education budgets were racked first by

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<sup>17</sup> Perry Glanzer and Nick Lantinga, 'Tracking Global Christian Higher Education', research report presented at the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities' International Forum, Atlanta, Georgia, USA, 26 February 2010. Reports and data from their study are available at <http://www.iapche.org/> at the tab, 'Research.'

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<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth Archibong, 'Nigeria Gets Seven Additional Universities', *NEXT*, 22 October 2009, found at <http://234next.com/csp/cms/sites/Next/Home/5472553-146/story.csp#>

<sup>19</sup> For more information, see the Bowen University website: <http://www.bowenuniversity.edu.org/home.php>

<sup>20</sup> Perry L. Glanzer, 'Examining the Worldwide Growth of Christian Higher Education', draft article in possession of the author, Baylor University, February 2010.

falling commodities prices in the 1980s, then by IMF and World Bank directives to reallocate government spending in the 1990s, and throughout these decades, by on-going serious leakages in revenues because of widespread corruption. In many nations, civil disruptions and even civil wars brought higher education to near-halt. Many African universities have been crowded far beyond their capacities while they starved for budget resources. Frequently they have been focal points of civic unrest, with entire academic years lost to faculty or student strikes. And in eastern and southern Africa especially, universities were hotspots in the HIV/AIDS pandemic. So it is no wonder that educationally minded people, whether in religious communities or other networks, have taken the initiative to provide alternatives.<sup>21</sup>

So are Christian universities merely riding this wave of secular privatization, or might there be some dynamics internal to the Christian movements that prompt the founding of new universities? Several historians of modern Christianity have seen echoes in this

movement of something that happened in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century, in what was then the American West, roughly the territory stretching from the Appalachian Mountains to the Mississippi River, and southwest into Texas. This was a time of major cultural organization, when the young nation was moving, said American historian John Higham, from a state of boundlessness to consolidation.<sup>22</sup>

It was a time also when, in the wake of the Second Great Awakening, American evangelicals, led by the Methodists, were 'organizing to beat the devil'. Out of this era of rapid western settlement and church growth came a wave of new institutions—missionary agencies, Bible and tract publishing firms, social reform movements and institutions, and academies and colleges.<sup>23</sup> These new Christian colleges, according to historian Timothy Smith, 'were the anvil upon which the relationships between the people's religious traditions and the emerging political and social structures were hammered into shape.'<sup>24</sup>

So once again, it seems, in many

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**21** On the multiple crises of African higher education, much has been written, but see Demtew Teferra and Philip G. Altbach, 'African Higher Education: Challenges for the 21st Century', *Higher Education* 47:1 (January 2004): 21-50. On the privatization of higher education in Africa, see Wycliffe Otieno and Daniel Levy, 'Public Disorder, Private Boom? Inter-sectoral Dynamics Illustrated by the Kenyan Case', PROPHE Working Paper #9, Program for Research in Private Higher Education, University at Albany, State University of New York, July 2007.

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**22** John Higham, 'From Boundlessness to Consolidation: The Transformation of American Culture, 1848-1860,' in *Hanging Together: Unity and Diversity in American Culture*, ed. Carl Guarneri (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001), 147-165.

**23** Donald G. Mathews, 'The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process', *American Quarterly* 21 (1969):23-43.

**24** Timothy L. Smith, *Uncommon Schools: Christian Colleges and Social Idealism in Midwestern America, 1820-1950* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana Historical Society, 1978), 5-6.



places around the world, new Christian movements and denominations are coming out of a season of awakenings and facing a ‘now what?’ moment. People have experienced personal transformation, and have shared the good news with many others. Churches have been planted and are growing. Many good works and the agencies to drive them have resulted. But Jesus has not come back yet. So now what? Shall Christians just do more of the same? But these Christian movements are not in the same social place that they once were. In many societies they have a new salience where they were once marginal and nearly invisible. With new status comes a new responsibility.

The second half of the gospel mandate, after spreading the good news of personal salvation and baptizing those who accept it is what Walls calls the conversion of cultures. The mandate is to teach the nations about God’s larger plan of redemption. So in addition to founding community development agencies, publishing and media outlets, health clinics, women’s associations, youth groups, and, in some cases, political movements and parties, Catholics and evangelicals alike are going into education. They are developing hundreds of primary and secondary schools, seminaries, and indeed, universities.

#### IV Is Christian Higher Education ‘Private?’

What are we to make of this trend? Are these Christian groups resorting to higher education for Christian purposes, that is, to make good on commitments to deepen Christian living and Christian witness in broad cultural

terms? In some respects, the answer is quite positive. I think of a report from the Rev. Dr. Musiande Kasali, a distinguished theologian and educator who left a well-established theological seminary in Nairobi to found the Christian Bilingual University of the Congo. This new university is in Beni, the city in eastern Congo that was at the epicenter of the recent civil war. Kasali reports that

‘the government, the Church and the whole nation are now faced with enormous challenges to rebuild their nation after years of war, poverty and neglect.... The time has come for the people of God to rise up and be agents of a life giving transformation.’ So the university started its academic year, Kasali reported, by holding a public consultation on ‘the role of the Church in nation building’.<sup>25</sup>

There is no comprehensive study available on the mission and vision of Christian universities in the global South or East, but it is remarkable how often that nation-building language appears. It is evidently a rather common aim for higher education in Africa and Asia, where building or rebuilding one’s nation is very much on educators’ minds, and often is a government mandated university mission. But might Christians mean something deeper by this phrase? To what extent

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<sup>25</sup> David Kasali, *Congo Initiative—Université Chrétienne Bilingue du Congo (CI -UCBC) Annual Report (2007-2008)*, p.3. Found at the website of the Congo Initiative, a U.S. based support corporation for this university. [http://www.congoinitiative.org/view.cfm?page\\_id=48](http://www.congoinitiative.org/view.cfm?page_id=48)

do new Christian universities apply their faith to a public role? Or do they simply follow the privatization of purpose and values that drives the new secular private universities?

The more that new Christian universities resemble the secular privates, one might argue, the more problems they will have in generating what Professor Walls calls a 'sense of Christian vocation to scholarship'. So, are the new Christian universities structured like the more commercially and technically oriented private institutions that springing up all over, or are they distinctly different? Current scholarship does not drill deep enough in any one place to get definitive answers, but here are some impressions.

### A Some differences

In some important ways, most of the new Christian universities look rather different from the secular, commercially oriented private ones. Recall that the new secular privates tend to fashion their course offerings to match the job structures of the business world. They don't teach much basic science, music or philosophy. But in Chile, one researcher found, the five new Catholic institutions founded since 1980 had more comprehensive course offerings than the secular privates, and they communicated a broader humanitarian purpose.<sup>26</sup> A researcher from Thailand

found a similar pattern among Catholic and Protestant universities in her country.<sup>27</sup>

Another point of concern: the new private higher education relies on part-time instructors rather than developing professorial expertise of its own. In Kenya, however, the more mature Christian higher education institutions such as Daystar University and the Catholic University of Eastern Africa have higher percentages of full-time professors than do the state universities.<sup>28</sup>

How about course offerings in the new Christian universities—is their main idea of how to help 'build the nation' pretty much confined, like the secular privates, to supplying more business workers and computer technicians? Using information gathered from the global survey mentioned above, we examined the main courses of study of all the new African Christian universities where such details were available. Of the 62 institutions across the continent where we had data,

- 51 showed a broader array of course offerings than just commercial or technical 'market-driven' fields—or those plus Bible college courses.
- Among the Catholic institutions,

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<sup>26</sup> Andrés Bernasconi, 'Does the Affiliation of Universities to External Organizations Foster Diversity in Private Higher Education? Chile in Comparative Perspective', *Higher Education* 52:2 (2006): 303-342.

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<sup>27</sup> Prachayani Praphamontripong, 'Inside Thai Private Higher Education: Exploring Private Growth in International Context', PROPHE Working Paper #12, Program for Research in Private Higher Education, University at Albany, State University of New York, September 2008.

<sup>28</sup> Otieno and Levy, 'Public Disorder, Private Boon?' cited above, p. 4.

the tally was 13 with academic breadth to two without it; among the Protestant schools, it was 38 with breadth and nine without.<sup>29</sup>

These are quick tallies, based on rather surface-level information. But compared to the secular private universities, Christian institutions, by and large, seem mission-driven to be more comprehensive. It also appears that the older and stronger the cultural tradition of the church, the more likely that its universities are going beyond commercial studies, or commercial plus Bible and theology. Thus there were stronger patterns of comprehensive studies among Catholic institutions than among Pentecostal ones.

### B Some similarities, too

Even so, it appears that the most fully developed curricular areas, and presumably those most heavily enrolled in many of the new Christian universities, are the commercial fields. Indeed, all of the new African Christian universities offer these fields but few offer a comprehensive array of programs across the arts, sciences, social sciences and humanities. They show other signs of fairly shallow educational development as well, such as very little evidence of a research emphasis. Contact with a number of these schools leads me to believe that like the new secular privates, they tend to be rather top-down and authoritarian in governance. Many of them rely quite heavily on part-time instruction. And frequently

their libraries and laboratories are scantily equipped.

But let us be fair about these observations. Some of these patterns and traits are fairly common to African higher education more generally. The new Christian universities are no worse off than many of the state universities in facilities and services, and in many cases, they are much better. One has to wonder whether some of the lack of educational breadth and depth we see are functions of an early developmental phase.

Will these institutions look different as they mature? We see some indications by looking more closely at two African Christian universities that are fairly well developed now: Babcock University, the Adventist institution in southern Nigeria, and Bowen University, the Baptist institution in the same general region. They do look more solid than younger institutions. Babcock, with a legacy of Adventist teacher training and healthcare ministries, has a very broad and comprehensive curriculum, plus a set of general education requirements that apply to all degree programs. This latter feature is rather unusual in Africa.

Bowen University, by contrast, has a much stronger emphasis on agriculture and business, but is also strong in the natural sciences. Yet it offers only two social science fields, and it has no humanities or arts faculties at all. Surprisingly, there is no faculty of theology, either. I do not know how such an institution can contribute to the process of Christian thinking and cultural conversion that Professor Walls calls us to engage.

In other ways, both universities do seem Christian mission-driven. Both

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<sup>29</sup> Again, see Glanzer and Lantinga's research reports and institutional profiles at <http://www.iapche.org/>

put a heavy emphasis on the Christian quality of campus life, and they have a heart for outreach in surrounding communities. But in the great academic and intellectual centre of these enterprises, where does critical and creative Christian thinking happen? At Babcock, there are built-in places for it to happen in the curriculum. If there are any such Christian intellectual strongholds inside of Bowen, they do not show up in public documents.

So while the idealism, courage and energy of these new Christian communities is heartening, they are worrisome as well. As we have seen, there are tremendous pressures to reduce education to gaining knowledge and skills for a station in the workplace. In developing countries, where funds are scarce and the need for knowledgeable workers is great, governments relentlessly push for business and technology education over all else.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, Christian movements often arise out on the margins of society, and it is a fundamental matter of social justice for them to equip people to prosper. The Bible's vision of prospering, however, includes far more than commercial work and the creation of wealth.

### C Making Higher Education Christian

If there is one message that one would hope to leave with our creative and

intrepid new colleagues in Christian higher education, it is this: the very structures of what we do academically have values driving them. The Christian vision of peace, justice, and the full flourishing of people and place is more ably considered and conveyed within the older and broader models of university education than by the relentlessly focused new models of market-driven higher education. So we have to ask: what is it that makes higher education Christian? How do Christian universities advance the gospel's transformation of culture? With all the pressures that exist in the world today to reduce, commodify and instrumentalize higher education, how can we place much hope for new flowerings of Christian thought within fragile and vulnerable new Christian universities?

Professor Walls saw these formidable pressures at work a decade ago on the Euro-American scene. He saw a pervasive degrading of higher education's nobler ideals in favour of private interest, so that 'the universities thus find themselves the pensioners of global capitalism'. He did not spare theologians from his exposure of this new wave of intellectual corruption, and he called for its cleansing, for a 'reorientation of Christian theology to Christian mission, a return to the ideal of scholarship for the glory of God, a return to the ideal of the academic life as a liberating search for truth'.

Walls voiced little hope that this renewal would come from within the western academy, but perhaps, he said, 'it will be in the non-western world that the scholarly vocation will begin anew and a new breed of scholars arise who, working in community, will break the chains of Mammon and

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<sup>30</sup> In some ways, South Africa, with its relentless drive for economic growth, epitomizes this trend today. See, e.g., Christine Winburg, 'Undisciplining Knowledge Production: Development Driven Higher Education in South Africa', *Higher Education* 51:2 (March 2006): 159-172.

throw off the impediments of careerism.<sup>31</sup> But alas, we have seen that private interest and career focus powerfully shape many new Christian universities.

So what are we to do? Not long ago, at a presentation of these ideas to an international forum in Christian higher education, the question came out in very poignant terms. A professor from Guatemala arose and said,

I am from a university founded by evangelicals 40 years ago. We wanted to honour the Lord in higher education, and we wanted to serve the needs of our people. But today, we are exactly the kind of private university you describe. Most of our professors are part-time, and not Christian. We teach mostly business and technical topics, and the idea of a Christian worldview or a Christian perspective on our subjects is unknown. But some of us wish that we could become a Christian university once again. What can we do?

There are, in fact, Christian professors and Christian university leaders all over the world who are asking that question. For some, there is still plenty of opportunity to build their universities into communities of Christian thinking and culture making. For others, the die may be cast, but they as individuals want to make a difference for the gospel's sake. Whatever the relative strengths of Christian universities worldwide, they are now worldwide. There are Christian institutions of learning in places where none

existed twenty years ago. More are coming, for certain. Despite the daunting structural problems they face, it is difficult to believe that the Lord has enabled so many of them to spring up, only to see them all turn over to the forces of Mammon. How can they be transformed and transforming, by the renewing of their minds?

By God's grace, an organization exists to encourage and strengthen Christian educators and their universities worldwide. It is the International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education (IAPCHE), and its main mission is 'to serve Jesus as Lord by fostering, worldwide, the development of integral Christian higher education through networking and related academic activity'. Today there are 65 member institutions worldwide, and nearly 900 individual members. IAPCHE's forté is the formation of faculty and educational leaders, and it offers many resources, published and online, and regular regional seminars. IAPCHE institutions come from all over the world, some young and some quite old, some quite adept at gospel-and-culture encounters, and others quite new at it and wondering what can be done, given their context and current framing. But they go at it together, North and South, East and West. IAPCHE shows quite clearly what can be done by banding together for the purpose of asking gospel-driven critical questions and posing creative alternatives in higher education.

IAPCHE's influence is evident in the remarkable ferment at one of its South Korean member institutions, Handong Global University. Handong was driven, in that development driven nation, to become the Christian MIT of

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31 Walls, 'Christian Scholarship', 174-175.

East Asia. Yet there was virtually no place in the curriculum for Christian reflection, critique and creativity. Thanks to interaction with IAPCHE colleagues, that issue is being addressed at Handong now. I think too of some of the remarkably fresh and creative thinking by Dutch members of IAPCHE. They serve at one of the newer Christian technical universities in the Netherlands, where their teaching drives them to consider what a Christian approach to professional practice should mean.<sup>32</sup> And one of the sharpest critiques of the commercialization of higher education that I have heard came from IAPCHE's current board president, Dr. José Alcántara Mejía, a professor from Mexico.<sup>33</sup> So networking to share ideas and build a body of Christian thought and strategies is one powerful thing that Christian scholars can do.

What else might be done? Professor Walls poses the idea of developing communities of scholarship that are more attuned to the realities of intellectual life within the southern continents, or on the margins of the northern secular knowledge industry. He speaks of modelling them after the Indian *ashram*, 'a community of people living a simple life of worship and study together'. Walls alludes to some out-

standing examples of such agencies already at work in the global South and East, thinking no doubt of the Akrofi-Christaller Institute in Ghana, or the Institute for Asian Church and Culture in the Philippines.

However, he adds that 'the Christian *ashram* could arise in a pre-existing institution', thus prophesying, perhaps, the rise of Christianity and culture study centres in the global North as well. The idea is to refocus the Christian scholarly life with a more disciplined, collegial, and pioneering spirit, not dependent on large institutional frames or big money, and free to pursue a dual orientation, toward biblical and Christian thinking, and toward the local culture.<sup>34</sup> What Walls envisages, he has said more recently, is not unlike the monasteries of early Europe.

But we should not give up on the broader vision of a Christian university. Great things can happen in a comprehensive Christian institution of higher learning that is devoted, as one of Professor Walls' favourite theologians, Origen of Alexandria, put it, to bringing 'every trend of existing philosophy and science into Christian service'.<sup>35</sup> That is the vision at Calvin College, where I work. And it is the dream of many a new university, serving under much more adverse conditions.

What a powerful thing it might be, then, for like-minded Christian universities to make common cause, side by side, worldwide. Gerald Pillay, the vice-chancellor of Liverpool Hope Uni-

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32 Bram de Muynck, Johan Hegeman, and Pieter Vos, eds., *Bridging the Gap: Connecting Christian Faith and Professional Practice in a Pluralistic Society* (Sioux Center, Ia.: Dordt College Press, 2011).

33 José Ramón Alcántara Mejía, 'Transculturalizing the Humanities in Christian Higher Education', 101-112; in *Christian Higher Education in the Global Context*, ed. Nick Lantinga (Sioux Center, Ia.: Dordt College Press, 2008).

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34 Walls, 'Christian Scholarship', 181-182.

35 Walls, 'Christian Scholarship', 167.

versity, a robust, recently merged and reorganized Christian institution in England, observed that Christian universities 'may find their allies less in their own country than among like-minded institutions in non-Western societies. It is even more likely that there would be mutual benefits in coming together across continents and... forming a global alliance to support their mission and values.'<sup>36</sup>

Such work, Professor Pillay goes on to say, needs to be rather subversive, because in the West, universities have become dominated by pecuniary values and a managerial mood. Christian universities, by contrast, are called to restore wholeness by nurturing fully

orbed communities of scholarship and learning. We have much re-framing to do, in every field of inquiry and practice, and we do it swimming against the current. Whether we are in Seoul or Sao Paulo, Lagos or Grand Rapids, we are all outside of Christendom now, and the main political and economic tides flow in adverse directions.

According to Professor Walls, however, Christian intellectuals have done their best work when they cross boundaries, moving out of their customary haunts, taking risks, entering other worlds, becoming vulnerable once again as basic learners, and making their way as guests, on someone else's turf and terms.<sup>37</sup> Repeatedly, some of the most creative Christian scholarship of all time has come from such tenuous situations. May it be so once more, by God's grace.

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36 Gerald Pillay, 'Education as Mission: Perspectives on Some New Opportunities,' in *Mission in the 21st Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission*, ed. Andrew Walls and Cathy Ross (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2008), 172.

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37 Walls, 'Christian Scholarship', 170.

## Wesley as a Pastoral Theologian

### Pastoral Theology in the Context of the doctrine of Perfection

David B. McEwan

Wesley as a Pastoral Theologian examines Wesley's life from his time in Oxford to the point at which he becomes the leader of the Methodist Movement and beyond and demonstrates that he was a theologian concerned more with the living relationship between humanity and God than with an academic comprehension of propositional truths about God.

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# Leaders as Servants: a Resolution of the Tension

Derek Tidball

**KEYWORDS:** *Leadership, servanthood, authority, deacon, family, egalitarianism, patriarchy.*

## I The Issue

Christian leadership is meant to be different from other forms of leadership because Christian leaders are called to be servants. Jesus stated the distinctive mandate of Christian leaders succinctly when he said to his disciples,

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:25-27).<sup>1</sup>

The way in which Jesus characterised the Roman and secular leaders of his day may have been a stereotype but it was close enough to the truth for no one to want to contradict him. Leadership was masculine, powerful and concerned with status. It was dedicated to accomplishing the task, no matter what the cost to ordinary people. But Christ introduced a new way of leading which was to be incumbent on all his followers, that of leading by serving, even sacrificial service.

In introducing this form of leadership, however, Jesus posed a problem for his disciples which many still find it hard to resolve. How can one simultaneously be a leader and a servant? Are not the roles of leader and servant irreconcilable? Do they not call for opposing abilities and characteristics? Are they not more readily in conflict with each other than in harmony? The popular image assumes leaders command and servants obey; leaders determine the direction and servants follow. Leaders supply vision and strategic thinking; servants deal with the mun-

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1 NIV Inclusive Language edition is used throughout this article.

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dane and everyday maintenance jobs. Leaders are proactive; servants are reactive.

The tension is a very real one for many pastors who daily seek to practise servant leadership, often putting themselves under some degree of stress as they do so. Trained to preach, teach and lead in mission, many pastors end up putting out the chairs, dealing with the plumber and locking up the church—more caretaker than pastor. Seeking to avoid the constant worry of being able to affirm that they are both leading and serving, some resolve the tension by emphasising one pole at the expense of the other.

So, some pastors are task orientated, visionary, achievers, committed to forging forward, even if it means leaving those who cannot keep up with them behind. To these pastors, the church in the West has floundered long enough, been complacent about its mission, and too defeatist in accepting decline. The church must change and adapt to exercise a ministry which is active and relevant to today.

Others shun such images of leadership and seek to serve their flocks and meet their every need. They will often find themselves undertaking menial tasks and putting themselves out to keep the flock contented and, as much as possible, united. It means the pace of any change is often set by the slowest of the sheep and great attention is shown to the stragglers in the flock. These stereotypes—the pastor as leader and the pastor as servant—may be overdrawn, but not by much.

The questions this poses are: is there not a better way to understand servant leadership and is this what Jesus had in mind when he taught it to

his disciples? How do these twin aspects of Christian governance cohere? How can they be integrated?

On a wider scale, the history of the church suggests some forms of ministry have focused on the one almost to the exclusion of the others.<sup>2</sup> The more radical wing of the church is very suspicious of the language of leadership and shuns anything that places one group of Christians on a higher plane than another, rejecting anything that smacks of a clergy/laity divide. The more institutional wing of the church is more at home in the secular world of national, political or business affairs and more relaxed about hierarchies and leadership and more cautious about emphasising servanthood too much. In its extreme forms this was evidenced in the ‘prince bishops’ that were once common, at least in the English and Roman churches during much of their histories.

## II The Biblical Basis

Give the recurring tendency for individuals and institutions to resolve the tension of servant leadership by deferring to one pole rather than the other it will be helpful briefly to review what the Bible teaches in respect of both.

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<sup>2</sup> This relates to the sect-church typology introduced by Ernst Troeltsch with the sect tending to equality and the church tending to hierarchy. But the correspondence is not exact as a number of sects are, in reality, quite hierarchical. See, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Church*, vol. 1 (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1931), 331-343.

## 1. Leaders

It is not uncommon to read comments that suggest leadership is downplayed in the New Testament. Mark Storm, for example, 'Paul avoided the vocabulary of leadership...preferring (instead) to use metaphors of service and care from work and the household'.<sup>3</sup> It is undoubtedly true that Paul never describes pastors as leaders of congregations, presiding over church activities and services and as being the head of a complex organisation. It is also true, as we shall see, that he stresses that leaders were servants. But to draw the implication that leadership, as such, was unimportant or a topic to be avoided in the New Testament would be misleading.

First, we must acknowledge that a great deal of attention is paid to leaders and leadership in the Bible as a whole. The form and focus of leadership varies over time. The Patriarchs give way to the tribal leaders who then acknowledge the authority of Moses, the exceptional leader, and his heir Joshua, and who are then followed by Judges who summon the tribes as a whole to fight for deliverance from oppression. This period of 'erratic' leadership gives way, first to the leadership of the priest, Samuel, and then to the more regular pattern of kingship, with all its attendant problems (1 Sam. 8:1-21). Kings did not rule alone but in conjunction with the priests and wise men of Israel, and the Prophets, who came largely from outside the

institutional structures (Jer.18:18). Concurrent with all these forms of leadership the role of the family head continued to be influential.<sup>4</sup>

The Old Testament suggests that leadership is essential if any society is to be healthy. Hence Moses pleaded with God to 'appoint someone over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so that the Lord's people will not be sheep without a shepherd' (Num. 27:18). The absence of leadership tends to weakness and chaos, as the book of Judges demonstrates (Jdg. 21:25).

In the light of all this it would be surprising if there was no concern about leadership in the church. But there is, as a brief but far from exhaustive study establishes. Consider the following:

- The metaphor of the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-18) applies not only to Jesus Christ but in a derived sense to the 'under-shepherds' in the church (Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11 and 1 Pet. 5:1-4). The metaphor of the shepherd not only had overtones of the person who feeds, protects and leads the flock but also of ruling over it. In the ancient world the shepherd was a metaphor for the king and carried connotations of authority.<sup>5</sup>
- Leadership is demonstrated throughout the Acts by the apostles and elders

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<sup>4</sup> For a fuller exposition see, Derek Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds: Explorations in Pastoral Theology* (Leicester: Apollos, 1997), 31-54.

<sup>5</sup> E. Beyreuther, 'Shepherd', *NIDNTT*, vol. 3, 564-569, J. Jeremias, 'poimēn' *TDNT*, 6:485-502 and Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds after My own Heart* (Downers Grove: IVP and Leicester: Apollos, 2006), 58-74.

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<sup>3</sup> Mark Strom, *Reframing Paul: Conversations on Grace and Community* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000), 180.

under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

- Paul appointed elders and recognised deacons as leaders in the church (Acts 14:23 and Phil. 1:1). While not too much is made of them, their existence is established. Furthermore, Paul encouraged the church to submit to its household leaders (e.g., 1 Cor. 16:15-16; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; 1 Tim. 5:17).
- The metaphor of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-31) implies structure and order, with some parts providing direction to other parts. Paul writes of God having placed in his church 'first apostles, second prophets and third teachers' (1 Cor. 12:28) and so places them in a guiding role in the church.
- While there is much dispute about the actual meaning of the terms and the role they indicate, the Pastoral Letters<sup>6</sup> make clear the church had leadership in the form of elders (*presbuteroi*) or overseers (*episcopoi*)<sup>7</sup> and deacons (*diakonia*).<sup>8</sup> In addition, they show clear apostolic leadership being exercised, through authority delegated to Timothy and Titus, because of Paul's restricted circumstances.
- In spite of shunning language that inflates his role Paul describes himself in 1 Corinthians 3:10 as an *architektōn*,

that is, a master or an expert builder. The suffix *archē* usually refers to a ruling authority.

- Among the spiritual gifts that Paul mentions in Romans 12:8 is that of leadership. The word he uses, *proistēmi*, is used in Greek literature to mean 'to lead, conduct, direct, govern'.<sup>9</sup> It is used altogether eight times in the New Testament, mostly to refer to leadership, but, as Bo Reicke points out, usually in the context of caring for others, (as is explicit, for example, in 1 Thess. 5:12).<sup>10</sup> A related term is that of the pilot (*kubernetes*) in 1 Corinthians 12:28.<sup>11</sup>
- The role of the teacher implies leadership and authority (1 Cor. 4:6; Col. 1:28, 1 Tim. 2:7; 6:1; 2 Tim. 1:11).
- Leadership language is to be found elsewhere in Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24. Significantly, Hebrews uses the secular word *hēgoumenoi* for church leaders without any embarrassment. The term is usually used of military leaders, princes, pagan priests and other great men.<sup>12</sup>
- John Elliott's careful examination of Jesus' disciples and the community of the early church has convincingly concluded that neither was an egalitarian movement. Not only is egalitarianism a

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6 Whatever one's view of the authorship of these letters they (and Ephesians) are part of the Pauline corpus and will be treated as authentic primary evidence, not to be relegated to some secondary division.

7 I take *presbuteroi* and *episcopoi* to be interchangeable. See my *Ministry by the Book: New Testament Patterns of Pastoral Leadership* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2008), 151-157.

8 On *diakonia* see further below.

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9 Rieke, '*proistēmi*', *TDNT*, 6:700.

10 Rieke, '*proistēmi*', *TDNT*, 6:701-703. Reicke writes, this emphasis 'agrees with the distinctive nature of office in the NT, since according to Lk. 22:26 the one who is chief (*ho hēgoumenos*) is to be as he who serves'.

11 For an exposition see, Derek Tidball *Builders and Fools: leadership the Bible way* (Leicester: IVP, 1999), 103-21.

12 F. Buchsel, '*hegeomai*' *TDNT*, 2:908.

modern concept, which it is anachronistic to impose on the writings of New Testament, but the overwhelming use of family language undermines egalitarianism. Families are warm, personal and living organisms but also small face-to-face communities in which people adopt defined roles and operate with different degrees of authority.<sup>13</sup>

- Negatively, it should be said that the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, does not, rightly understood, imply equality of leadership. This doctrine concerns equality of access to God but it is a confusion to assume this implies that everyone is a leader in the church. It does not and to abuse it in this way would be to conflict with what has been said above, and especially the concept of the church as a body.
- Everywhere, however, the character of the leadership mentioned is different from the accepted patterns of leadership in wider society. Elsewhere, leaders are concerned about title, status, position and the honour they are due. They would be quick to take offence and to defend their honour. Words for honour are significantly absent in any discussion of leadership in Paul's writings.<sup>14</sup> People were there to serve leaders, not to be served by them.

In contrast Paul delights in using the prefix *syn*, making himself a colleague rather than a superior to a host of other who work for the gospel (Rom. 16:2, 9, 21; 1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25; 4:3; Col. 1:7; 4:7, 10,11; Phlm. 1, 2, 23,24; 1 Thess. 3:2). And he provides a typical insight into Christian leadership as when he writes of Stephanus and his household that they 'have devoted themselves to the service of the Lord's people' (1 Cor. 16:15). Prevailing secular models of leadership are eschewed and new patterns put in place.<sup>15</sup>

Four conclusions can be drawn from this brief survey. They are that:

- the provision of proper leadership is a matter of frequent concern in the New Testament;
- the church is not egalitarian and leadership carries overtones of authority and governance;
- contrary to some contemporary Christians who are afraid to use business or military models of leadership the New Testament is not afraid to adopt secular terminology for its leaders, in spite of the counter-cultural nature of Christian leadership and potential misunderstanding in doing so;
- leadership is recast into servant and caring leadership.

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**13** John H. Elliott, 'Jesus was not an egalitarian. A critique of an Anachronistic and Idealist Theory', *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, 32 (2002), 75-91 and 'The Jesus Movement was not Egalitarian but Family-Oriented', *Biblical Interpretation*, XI (2003), 173-210.

**14** Andrew D. Clarke, *Serve the Community of the Church: Christians as Leaders and Ministers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 233.

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**15** The best discussion is in Clarke, *Serve the Community of the Church, passim*. Clarke, however, does, I think, overstate his case in writing 'Avoiding the notion of leader, Paul did, however, regard himself as a servant' (250). See also his *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth: A Socio-Historical and Exegetical Study in 1 Corinthians 1-6* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006)

## 2. Servant

The concept that the Christian leader is a servant is less disputed although there is one debate about it to which we shall come. Even those who do not model it in practice are unlikely to disagree with it in theory.

- Jesus presents himself consistently as a model of service. When his disciples were discussing when they would partake of the benefits of leadership, as conventionally understood, Jesus specifically contrasts his style of leadership with that of the Gentiles and says, ‘for even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many’ (Mark 10:45 and parallels in Matt. 20:20-28 and Luke 24-27 in which the ‘ransom’ motif is absent).
- In a transparent demonstration of the principle, even though the language of *diakonia* is not used, Jesus washed his disciples’ feet (John 13:1-17), telling them, ‘I have set you an example that you should do as I have done’ (John 13:15).
- In reflecting on the self-humbling of Christ, Paul describes Jesus as ‘taking the very nature of a servant’ (Phil. 2:7).
- Paul describes himself in a number of ways (‘apostle’, ‘teacher’ etc.) but most persistently as a ‘servant’ (*diakonos* = 1 Cor. 3:5; 2 Cor. 6:4; 11:23; Col. 1:23, 25; Eph. 3:7), or ‘slave’ (*doulos* = Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:10; Phil. 1:1; Tit. 1:1), or ‘household steward’ (*oikonomos* = 1 Cor. 4:1). He is variously serving God, Christ, the gospel or the church.
- Paul describes several of his fellow workers as servants, including Phoebe

(Rom. 16:1); Apollos (1 Cor. 3:5); Timothy (Phil. 1:1); Tychicus (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7) and Epaphras (Col. 1:7; 4:12); as well as leaders in general (2 Tim. 2:24).

- In his most extended reflection on the matter Paul describes himself and Apollos as ‘only servants’ (*diakonoi*) and emphasises their unimportance and lowly status in contrast to how the Corinthians speak of themselves (1 Cor. 3:5-4:13).
- A local church leader, Stephanus, together with his household, as we have seen, are commended for having ‘devoted themselves in the service of the Lord’s people’ (1 Cor. 16:15).
- More generally, serving one another is to be characteristic of the whole Christian community (Gal. 5:13).
- Other New Testament writers adopt the same stance. James describes himself as ‘a servant (*doulos*) of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ’ (Jas.1:1)—a remarkable description if this James is the half-brother of Jesus, as is most likely. Peter (2 Pet. 1:1) and Jude (1) use the same term of themselves.
- 1 Peter 2:16 uses the term servant (*douloi*) to apply to all Christians but, without using the exact words, then teaches that leaders are to be servant leaders in a way that obviously echoes the teaching of Jesus (1 Pet. 5:1-4). They are shepherds who must not lord it over their flocks and must remember they are accountable themselves to the Chief Shepherd.

While the data here may be uncontroversial, the full meaning of *diakonos* is not. Traditionally it has been seen as referring to those who undertook menial tasks, such as waiting at

tables.<sup>16</sup> In a fairly recent monograph John Collins has re-examined the use of *diakonos* in Hellenistic Greek literature and his analysis leads him to conclude that although it often does refer to undertaking lowly tasks and household chores, in a significant number of cases it refers to the less menial task of being a go-between. The word is particularly used of those commissioned to deliver a message or carry out an activity on behalf of a god. It is also used of commercial activity as when a trader exports or imports goods.

So, he concludes, ‘the sense of “to serve at table” cannot be called “the basic meaning” ... If the words denote actions or position of “inferior value”, there is at the same time often the connotation of something special, even dignified, about the circumstances’.<sup>17</sup> So they do not necessarily carry a sense of low status or servility. True, the one serving is in a subordinate position to the one he serves and subject to his authority, ‘and yet, as a representative of the one he serves, he carries the responsibility and authority that derives from the one he serves’.<sup>18</sup>

Collins does not see that the usage in the New Testament differs from this. Therefore, he argues, it is incorrect to see the term *diakonos* as always implying servility and referring only to the undertaking of menial jobs. Instead, the word indicates the high privilege of being the representative of God or Christ in the world and of bearing the message of the gospel. This puts it in an altogether different light.

Andrew Clarke declares himself ‘unpersuaded’ by Collins’ discussion of the word in the Synoptic Gospels on which so much of his argument rests.<sup>19</sup> The notion of lowly status is present in a good number of references in the New Testament and in 2 Corinthians it is explicitly used in the context of Paul’s suffering as an apostle. But the word is also used of a range of tasks and so, Clarke adjudges, in spite of the specific reservations, it is correct to say that subordination and servility are not ‘essential ingredients(s)’<sup>20</sup> of the concept of *diakonia*.

As he points out, the use of the word in English, as when we speak, for example of the Civil Service or Military Services, does not necessarily involve doing unskilled tasks and on many occasions refers to positions of great standing as people serve as emissaries of the Government. To be a servant is not inevitably merely to be responsive to someone else’s demand for the performance of a menial chore.

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16 The noun *diakonos* does not occur in Acts 6 but the verb infinitive occurs of ‘waiting on tables’ (*diakonein trapezais*). Many have traditionally traced the origin of the diaconate to this passage.

17 J. N. Collins, *Diakonia: Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 194.

18 Andrew D. Clarke, *A Pauline Theology of Church Leadership* Library of New Testament Studies (London & New York: T & T Clark, 2008), 64. Clarke helpfully expounds and critiques Collins in pp. 63-67.

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19 Clarke, *Church Leadership*, 66

20 Clarke, *Church Leadership*, 67.

### III Common Suggested Resolutions

Having seen that the New Testament affirms the importance of leadership but then defines Christian leadership in terms of being a servant, we are left with the conundrum as to how one can lead and serve simultaneously. Whilst national leaders and politicians often speak of the idea of leading as a serving vocation, the reality is often quite different. Leadership involves high status, at the very least, making it difficult for those who are ranked more lowly to do other than comply with what leaders say. A degree of authority or power,<sup>21</sup> not just status, is nearly always inherent in leadership and power is insidiously corrupting. It is likely in some measure to colour even the most innocent act of service. So how can they fit together?

Several ways of seeking to resolve the tension are commonly proposed.

#### 1. Redefinition

A classic example of this is seen in Collins' proposal, outlined above, that the word *diakonos* did not imply adopting a lowly position and doing a menial task but could refer to people who held important commissions, carrying the authority and status of the one who commissioned them. Though the argument has some merit, it only reduces the problem rather than resolves it, for

*diakonos* continues to mean doing acts of lowly service much of the time.

Others have attempted to resolve the problem by widening the definition of leadership and thus removing the sting of power from it.<sup>22</sup> Influencing others is an essential ingredient of leadership but to define leadership solely as influence, and thus to suggest that in some respects we are all leaders, is to render the concept too vague and somewhat devoid of common sense meaning. It may be true, to a point, and is certainly helpful in encouraging leaders to accept that they cannot enforce their influence on others. Leaders need to recognise that leadership has to be a reciprocal transaction in which people are prepared to be influenced by them. But it is neither a sufficient definition of leadership, which involves other dynamics as well as influence, nor is it altogether useful in tackling the tension we are investigating.

So the redefinition of terms does not resolve the tension with integrity.

#### 2. Redemption

More helpfully, it has been suggested that the heart of the problem of the tension between being a leader and a servant lies in the power factor. In itself power may be morally neutral but given that it is channelled through us

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<sup>21</sup> I take the difference to be that while power may be imposed, whether it is accepted or not by those on the receiving end of it, authority is power which is legitimately recognised and willingly accepted.

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<sup>22</sup> An example is seen in David Cormack, *Team Spirit: People Working with People* (Bromley: MARC Europe, 1987), 9-10 and more recently see discussion in Walter C. Wright, *Relational Leadership: A Biblical Model for Leadership Service* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000), 29-44.

who are fallen creatures, in spite of our salvation, it can too easily become a moral and spiritual liability. Tom Marshall has listed the potential pitfalls to which it leads as pride, arrogance, self-aggrandisement, insensitivity, domination and tyranny.<sup>23</sup> These can creep up on leaders without their realising that they have been ensnared by them. Marshall's answer is to suggest that power has been redeemed in the incarnation and by the cross of Christ on which the tyrannical powers of the world were defeated.<sup>24</sup>

Marshall suggests that in Christ the power issue has been settled. First, Christ put the Father's will, not his own, first. His action demonstrated, secondly, that the goal of every activity is to be the Father's glory. Success, achievement and results are never the end; the glory of God alone is the goal. And, thirdly, the cross we embrace in Christ means that we have 'died to all self-seeking, self-glorification and the will-to-power'.<sup>25</sup> If we are clear on this, then, it will follow through into the practice of a redeemed leadership.

This approach is much more beneficial than the previous attempted resolution because it is grounded in the theology which is at the heart of the gospel, namely that of the cross of Christ. But it perhaps suffers from being insufficiently linked to the practice and realities of everyday leadership.

### 3. Restricted understanding

A third way in which people have sought to resolve the conflict is to restrict the understanding of what it means to being a servant. Rather than relating it to doing a range of menial tasks people have said it is about the way any task is undertaken rather than what task is being undertaken. Tom Marshall, for example, explains, 'The first thing we have to get clear is that we are dealing with a question of character or nature, not a question of function'.<sup>26</sup> He then goes on to say this involves (1) always seeking the best interests of those they lead; (2) always finding satisfaction in the progress of those they lead; (3) willingly accepting the obligations of leadership; (4) having a desire to be accountable; (5) expressing caring love for those they lead; and, (6) being willing to listen.

The leader continues to lead and give direction. Ken Blanchard, an advocate of servant leadership, has written, 'I want to make it clear that when we're talking about servant-leadership, we aren't talking about lack of direction'.<sup>27</sup> In fact, the leader who fails to give direction fails as a servant of the body he is called to serve.

Having been a theological college principal, I served the college best by giving direction to its academic, financial, legal and spiritual management and to leading its staff. What made it servant leadership was that I was

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23 Tom Marshall, *Understanding Leadership* (Chichester: Sovereign World, 1991), 45-51.

24 Marshall, *Understanding Leadership*, 55-65.

25 Marshall, *Understanding Leadership*, 64.

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26 Marshall, *Understanding Leadership*, 68.

27 Ken Blanchard, 'Servant-Leadership Revisited' in *Insights on Leadership*, ed. Larry C. Spears (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1998), 23.



called to do this without arrogance and pride, and by putting the needs of the college as an institution, and of its staff and students, before my own. I might have looked more servant-like if I had acted as its caretaker, its maintenance man or its caterer and shifted the chairs around, done the odd jobs and repairs and done the cooking and washing up. I should not have been (and wasn't) above doing some of those tasks when necessary. But I did not serve the college by my undertaking those tasks. In fact, it would have been a failure in service for me to have done so. My skills did not lie in maintenance (as my wife knows) and the law forbade me to do the cooking as I did not have the necessary certificates. I served best by managing, rather than by interfering in the responsibilities which had been given to others.<sup>28</sup> The key issue was one of style rather than role.

The academic grounding for these views, as for those of many in this area, is found in the work of Robert K. Greenleaf who wrote a seminal work for business leaders, called *The Servant as Leader* in 1970.<sup>29</sup> In a later summary statement he speaks of it as leadership without hierarchy and says, 'The servant-leader is servant (not leader) first ... (It) begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. The servant-leader takes care first to make sure

that other people's highest priority needs are being met.<sup>30</sup>

A whole industry has grown around the concept of servant-leadership and one participant, Joe Batten, has expanded Greenleaf's concept into thirty-seven values in his 'Manifesto for Tough-minded Servant-Leaders'.<sup>31</sup> In summary they are: openness and emotional vulnerability; warmth; consistency; unity; caring; positive listening; unstatisfaction (not dissatisfaction); flexibility; giving; involvement; tolerance of mistakes; values; psychological wages; simplicity; good use of time; winning formula = integrity + quality + service; open-mindedness; development of people; self-discipline; physical fitness; enjoyment of life; a broad perspective; faith in self and others; vision; positive thinking; a desire to learn; enjoyment of work; enrichment of others; integrity; results not activity; candour; management by example; a clear philosophy; accountability; purpose and direction; expectation of excellence; and, finally, laser-like focus.

How do we evaluate this approach? It has much to commend it and there is much from which I would not wish to dissent.<sup>32</sup> The discovery that the best form of leadership even in the business world is not one where leaders are tough bosses who have been trained to demonstrate the hard characteristics

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<sup>28</sup> I recognise that in a smaller institution or church it may be necessary for the leader to undertake a range of these tasks as well as leading because of the lack of personnel.

<sup>29</sup> *The Servant as Leader* (Indianapolis: Robert Greenleaf Centre, 1970). See also, *Servant Leadership* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977).

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<sup>30</sup> In Spears (ed.) *Insights on Leadership*, 19.

<sup>31</sup> Joe Batten, 'A Passion to Serve', in Spears (ed.) *Insights on Leadership*, 38-53.

<sup>32</sup> Wright helpfully applies much of it to Christian leadership in his *Relational Leadership*, 23-61.

of leadership but one more akin to that advocated by Jesus Christ is a positive gain.<sup>33</sup> To emphasise that one can do any job as a servant, and that this is what we should be doing, provides us with a true and significant understanding of leadership.

Yet there are some reservations. In one sense it does not completely resolve the tension between leadership and servanthood and it may even aggravate it, as it places leaders under renewed obligations. At face value, for example, making 'sure that other people's highest priority needs are being met' may be a snare around a Christian leader's neck. What people think of as their highest priority may not be a worthy priority at all. The Christian leader is called to critique people's misguided priorities not just to affirm them and attempt to meet them.<sup>34</sup> Secondly, however much we may wish to re-interpret the notion of service, and restrict it to the manner in which we fulfil our roles as leaders, an uncomfortable nagging thought remains that biblically-speaking, it does involve undertaking menial tasks, like washing people's feet!

Thirdly, we need to be aware that as the Greenleaf schools has expanded its teaching, so the definitions have come to reflect more and more American culture than biblical essentials. I doubt,

for example, if physical fitness, or enjoyment of life, or faith in self and others, or positive thinking, would have figured in Paul's understanding of what it was to be a servant! Indeed, in many respects the call to be a servant of Jesus was counter-cultural at precisely these points. As Ken Blachard has warned, 'when people talk about servant-leadership, Jesus is often a model, without even referring to (his) ultimate sacrifice'.<sup>35</sup>

The cross is the missing step in the argument. Some writings in this school smack more of contemporary American culture than of a true understanding of biblical servant leadership.

#### 4. Manipulation

Robert Greenleaf's venture into the field of servant-leadership came about through reading Hermen Hesse's *Journey to the East* where a party of travellers, sponsored by a monastic order, are served by a man called Leo. He does their menial chores and sustains their spirits and then, one day, disappears with the result that the party fall to bits. Some time later the narrator of the story becomes a member of the Order and finds that Leo is its head and guiding spirit. He is adjudged as 'a great and noble leader'. While serving the group of travellers his true status was disguised but his true character was utterly transparent. On the basis of Philippians 2:5-11, we could say that he was patterning himself on Jesus, the one co-equal with God who chose to become a slave.

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<sup>33</sup> Greenleaf is a Quaker and sees the concept as rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Robert Banks and Bernice C. Ledbetter, *Reviewing Leadership: A Christian Evaluation of Current Approaches* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 108.

<sup>34</sup> See William Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 95-97.

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<sup>35</sup> Quoted by Banks and Ledbetter, *Reviewing Leadership*, 110.

There is indeed something noble and Christ-like in this portrait. But there are also dangers. Satan is a master at taking what is good and, through a slight distortion, twisting it into something corrupt (2 Cor. 11:14). His influence plays on our still-sinful natures that lust for power, and easily twists this model with its emphasis on an unpretentious and healthy attempt at influencing people and turns it into a means of manipulation.

British comedy thrived throughout the twentieth century on the servant figure who demonstrated just that. P. G. Wodehouse's stories portray a hopeless aristocrat, Bertie Wooster, whose life is not only held together but controlled by his butler Jeeves. Equally amusing, and many say true to life, was the book and TV series *Yes, Minister*, in which an incompetent Government Minister is constantly being manoeuvred by his senior civil servant, Sir Humphrey. In both cases the servants in the lowly position exercise a controlling influence which is both necessary and benign without their superiors being in the least aware of it. There is a fine line, however, between humble service and manipulative control.

Paul's relations with the Corinthians could have taken this direction but in 2 Corinthians he repeatedly stresses the need for him as a Christian leader to shun the manipulation other public figures might have adopted and, as is consistent with the gospel, lead and speak plainly. Service can easily transform itself into control where this is absent.

#### IV A More Biblical Resolution?

Are these the only ways in which the

tension between leadership and service might be resolved? May not an examination of the broader context in which the twin poles of governance occur provide us with more clues?

It can be argued that the pervasive image of the band of disciples that gathered around Jesus, and the church that developed from them, is that of the family.<sup>36</sup> Other metaphors are certainly used of the church<sup>37</sup> but the overall framework and language is that of the family and household.<sup>38</sup> The household was the basic family structure of the time of the New Testament and although there may have been variation between Judea and the wider Greco-Roman world, Elliott points out, it was never egalitarian in form but always

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**36** See Elliott, 'Jesus was not an egalitarian' and 'The Jesus Movement was not Egalitarian but Family-Oriented'.

**37** E.g., Flock (John 10:1-21; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2), Body (1 Cor. 12:12-30; Eph. 4:11-13; Eph. 5:30; Col. 1:18), Bride (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25-33; Rev. 19:7) and Army (Gal. 5:25-6:5 [employs military language throughout]; Eph. 6:10-18; 2 Tim 2:3).

**38** The evidence is pervasive and too numerous to detail. It is found in explicit references like Jesus' sayings in Mark 3:31-35 and 10:29-31 but is implicit throughout in the language of father, brother and sister, which occurs frequently. S. Scott Bartchy, states that Paul uses sibling language 118 times in the letters generally regarded as authentically Pauline alone, ('Undermining Ancient Patriarchy, The Apostle Paul's Vision of a Society of Siblings' *BTB*, 29 (1999), 70.) The church is referred to as 'the family of God' or 'of believers' (Gal. 6:10; 1 Pet. 4:17) and 'household' (Eph. 2:19; 1 Tim. 3:15). Much use was made of the household structure in the mission of the early church and this influenced the shape of the church in its early days.

hierarchical.<sup>39</sup> He counters those who would read extensive egalitarianism into the New Testament in a number of ways. The texts that are read in this way 'are open to different and contrary interpretation' and there is no actual evidence of egalitarianism in the early church and it would have been a historical anachronism.<sup>40</sup> As to the key text often cited, Galatians 3:28, is, he argues, about the equal access of all to God by faith rather than about social or economic realities.<sup>41</sup>

Having cleared the confusion of interpretation caused by the imposition of recent egalitarian theory on the text, the way is now open to ask what early families were like in practice, particularly with regard to leadership and service. The most significant factor, it is commonly argued, is the place of the father in the Roman family and household. The *pater familias* was in a position of power within the family.<sup>42</sup>

The father ruled his children absolutely, even after they had reached the age of majority, as long as they were alive. The father also ruled over all females. Sons were trained for an aggressive and competitive role and 'to pursue a never-ending quest for honour and influence'.<sup>43</sup>

The near absolute and coercive authority was curtailed in practice by social pressures and was mitigated by a number of factors, such as the shortness of life expectancy.<sup>44</sup> The full powers may have rarely been invoked even while in force. So it is possible to distort the picture by an over-emphasis on the power of the father and there is evidence of much affection between children and their family. Sons grew up not only wishing to honour their father but imitate them too.<sup>45</sup> The Roman father also had great responsibilities in providing and protecting, nurturing and educating his children.

Patriarchy is a tricky concept and has become the *bête noir* of many libertarian and feminist theologians today, who frequently present a one-sided picture of it. It needs therefore to be approached with care and free from the assumption that it was always domineering, authoritarian and negative.

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39 There is extensive literature on the household. See, *inter alia*, R. Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1980), 33-43, 52-61; R. Gehring, *House Church and Mission: The Importance of the Household Structure in Early Christianity* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004).

40 Elliott, 'The Jesus Movement was not Egalitarian but Family-Oriented', p. 175.

41 Elliott, 'The Jesus Movement, 178-187.

42 For a recent exposition see, S. Scott Bartchy, 'Who should be called "Father"?' Paul of Tarsus between the Jesus Tradition and *Patria Potestas*', in *The Social World of the New Testament: Insights and Models*, Jerome H. Neyrey and Eric C. Stewart (eds.), 165-180; Stephen J. Jourbert, 'Managing the Household: Paul as *paterfamilias* of the Christian household group in Corinth', in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social Scientific studies of the New Testament in its context* (London and New York:

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Routledge, 1995) pp. 213-223; and Eva Lassen, 'The Roman Family: Ideal and Metaphor', in *Constructing Early Christian Families* in Halvor Moxnes (ed.) (London and New York: Routledge, 1997) pp. 103-119.

43 Bartchy, 'Who should be called "Father"?' 166.

44 Lassen, 'The Roman Family', 106-107.

45 Lassen, 'The Roman Family', 107, and W. P. de Boer, *The Imitation of Paul* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1962).

The patriarchal head of the family was quite capable of ruling without arrogance or loss of affection on the part of the family members he ruled. Galatians 3:26-4:7 gives some inkling, for example, of the qualitative difference of relationship enjoyed between a father and his sons and the *pater familias* and his slaves.

Jesus teaches that no man should be called 'Father' except God (Matt. 23:9) and yet Paul is happy, in a different context, to use the designation for himself,<sup>46</sup> although he restricts it to churches he had founded (1 Cor. 4:14; 1 Thess. 2:11) and he clearly relates to members of those churches as his children and therefore in an inferior position.<sup>47</sup> He claims authority over them, assumes the right of disciplining them (1 Cor. 4:14-21, 2 Cor. 10:8), and encourages them to imitate him (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 1 Thess. 1:6; 2 Thess. 3:7).

In this respect Joubert is correct in his conclusion that in relation to Corinth, 'his authority as their *paterfamilias* was beyond dispute. Members who threatened the cohesion of the new family of believers were therefore disciplined in order to instil subordination and obedience to himself and restore harmony within the household.'<sup>48</sup> But this is not the whole story.

While apparently claiming the authority of the *pater familias*, at the same time, Paul also claims to be their servant (1 Cor. 3:5). Furthermore, it is the positive aspect of fatherhood rather than the authoritarian one that is uppermost in his relationship with his children. This is seen in his reminding the Thessalonians that 'you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory'. Bartchy summarises the position well: 'When Paul refers to himself as "father" ... he clearly intends to focus attention on a spiritual "begetting and on a nurturing relationship.'<sup>49</sup> He does not put himself forward as a ruling patriarch.

Gerd Theissen introduced the idea that Paul softened conventional patriarchy by revising it into the form of what he calls 'love-patriarchy'.<sup>50</sup> Love-patriarchy was essentially a compromise: the social structures were left in place but the wealthier members of the community were encouraged to be more considerate of and generous to their inferiors. His argument is based on Paul's advice in 1 Corinthians 11:27-34 and is found, he claims, 'most clearly in the household codes'<sup>51</sup> of Colossians 3:18-4:1 and Ephesians

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<sup>46</sup> Bartchy has rightly pointed out that 'in the light of the patriarchal culture in which Paul was raised and continued to work, it must be striking that he avoids using the term "father" for leaders in his communities' S. Scott Bartchy, 'Undermining Ancient Patriarchy', 73.

<sup>47</sup> See my *Ministry by the Book*, 113-122.

<sup>48</sup> Joubert, 'Managing the household in Paul', 222.

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<sup>49</sup> Bartchy, 'Undermining Ancient Patriarchy', 73.

<sup>50</sup> Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity* trans. John Schütz (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1982), 164. Theissen owed the concept to Troeltsch.

<sup>51</sup> Theissen, *The Social Setting*, 164.

5:21-6:9. Love-patriarchalism was a negotiation between the sociological reality and a theological ideal.

Bartchy does not believe Theissen's concept of love-patriarchy is radical enough and dismisses his claim that Paul was not concerned to regulate social conflicts.<sup>52</sup> To Bartchy, Paul teaches that 'a house-church functions as the "Body of Christ" when and only when patriarchal values are reversed by giving its weakest and least honourable members the greatest honour' (1 Cor. 12:22-24).<sup>53</sup> This, however, seems to me to stress the ideal situation; the household codes and the letter to Philemon, as well as Paul's occasional use of his Roman citizenship (Acts 16:35-40; 22:22-29; 25:10-12), suggests Paul mostly worked within the given social structures and used them or subtly undermined them from within, rather than working for their abolition.

A recent study has challenged the whole approach which generates these debates and may point to an even better way of resolving the tensions than those proposed above. Kathy Ehrensperger has convincingly argued that to interpret Paul's authority on the basis of the Roman *pater familias* is to build on a false foundation. She proposes that Paul's discussion of authority resonates with the father/mother

discourse of the Second Temple period and has deep roots in the education tradition of Judaism.<sup>54</sup> As such, Paul's role was essentially functional rather than hierarchical and the primary objective is not one of maintaining dependence but of supporting their own growth and of empowerment.

This is further underlined by the fact that Christ was the pattern for their leadership. He was crucified in weakness (2 Cor. 13:4). He deconstructed hierarchy, and proclaimed a message of grace.<sup>55</sup> To be authentic, Christian leaders have to embody these alternative values and demonstrate their message in the manner of their leadership. The use of power is subordinate to the goal of empowerment.<sup>56</sup> Placed in this context, the idea that leadership means power over others disappears and the tensions between leadership and servanthood evaporate.

It seems that Paul had little difficulty in reconciling leadership and service and that the meeting point was found in his role as father of the Christian families or households to which his preaching of the gospel had given birth. Here he uses a Jewish form of parental authority to govern the churches he has founded while also acting as their servant. So, although he could command and on occasions did (1 Cor. 7:10; 2 Thess. 3:4-6, 12 cf. Gal.), he would pre-

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52 Bartchy, 'Undermining Ancient Patriarchy', 75-76. Theissen explicitly says, '...Paul's intention in no way (or at best only marginally) lay in regulating social conflicts' (*Social Setting*, 165).

53 Bartchy, 'Undermining Ancient Patriarchy', 76.

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54 Kathy Ehrensperger, *Paul and the Dynamics of Power: Communication and Interaction in the Early Christ-Movement*, LNTS 325, (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 118-119.

55 Ehrensperger, *Paul and the Dynamics of Power*, 151-154.

56 Ehrensperger, *Paul and the Dynamics of Power*, 196-199.

fer to persuade and usually employs the language of advice or pleading (e.g., 1 Cor. 7:6, 25; 2 Cor. 5:20; 6:3-13; Eph. 4:1; Phil 4:2; Phlm. 8-9).

It also meant he was not above working manually (1 Thess. 2:9-12; 1 Cor. 9:1-18); undertaking voluntary and self-imposed disciplines (1 Cor. 9:24-27); and suffering many, humiliating hardships (2 Cor. 11:16-33) for the sake of his children. The self-sacrifice that he demonstrated in sharing his life with his spiritual children (1 Thess. 2:7-9)<sup>57</sup> was exactly what one would expect of any father or mother worthy of the name. From one angle, fathers are the leader of the family, but from another angle they are quintessentially servants.

## V Conclusion

The resolution of the tension between leadership and servanthood is found when we place the concepts back into the New Testament social world and understand the nature of being a father. Fathers were figures of authority and they gave direction to the families. Their conversion to Christianity meant that Jewish, Greek or Roman households adopted a Christian identity (cf. Acts 16:31-34). So, while

fathers were in charge they were, because of Christ, simultaneously the family's servant. The family looked to them not only for decisions and direction but also for support, maintenance, encouragement and practical service. For all their authority, most fathers would have known what it was to undertake menial tasks, without detriment to their position as a leader.

Fathers were not perfect and no doubt their personalities meant that one pole would have been more apparent than the other. Some would have permanently got the balance wrong and either been too severe or too servile in their role, causing damage to their families. All would have got the balance wrong on occasions. Yet, for the most part, although imperfect, the tension between leading and serving was happily resolved in creating an enjoyable and wholesome family life. In fact, the tension might not usually even have been noticed. Being a leader and being a servant happily co-existed in daily life. It was the way it was.

What was true of the ancient world remains evident in the contemporary western world, even though parental authority has been diminished and somewhat undermined by the power of the state. Good parents still lead the family, making the major decisions, determining its moral and spiritual framework, and, when necessary, exercising discipline. But much of the time parents are earning the money, doing the washing, cooking the meal, being the taxi-driver, listening to the uppity teenager, tidying the home, attending the sporting fixture or concert performance and paying the bills. For most, leadership and service coalesce in the role of the parent and the

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<sup>57</sup> The reference in 1 Thess. 2:7-9 is to 'a nursing mother' rather than the father. But Paul immediately changes his metaphor and writes of himself as a father who displayed the positive aspects of fatherhood, namely, dealing with them individually 'encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God'. For a discussion of the parental motif and the background to 1 Thess. 2:7-12, see Derek Tidball, *Builders and Fools: leadership the Bible way* (Leicester: IVP, 1999), 87-102.

context of the family very naturally without too much difficulty.

The New Testament suggests that this 'parental'<sup>58</sup> model is the model which should be adopted by servant-

leaders. It is there that the tensions of leader and servant are largely overcome. If we adopted this perspective, some of the personal *angst* experienced by those called to lead might be reduced and some of the distorted historical models might be assigned to the museum of yesteryear. We will have a healthier church, because we will have a healthier leadership, a leadership that leads but in the manner that Christ intended.

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**58** I hesitate to use the word 'parental' because it is often given a negative, preachy connotation. But I use the word in its best sense which combines the disciplinary and nurturing aspects of the role.

## STUDIES IN BAPTIST HISTORY AND THOUGHT

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# John Calvin on the Strength of our Weak Praying

Michael Parsons

**KEYWORDS:** *Reformation, Zwingli, Luther, Melancthon, Lord's Prayer, dependence, adoration, beggar*

At one level, the sixteenth century Protestant reformations were explicitly pastoral movements. Peter Matheson suggests that 'the reforming process was not fundamentally about ideas in the mind or structures in church and state but indicated much more elemental changes in spiritual direction'.<sup>1</sup> He says, further, 'Biblical images are being reworked here, released and unleashed to emphasise gratuity, access, intimacy. From this perspective the Reformation can be seen as an infinitely varied, but coherent and extended, metaphor for the bountifulness of God's grace.'<sup>2</sup>

So, then, at the specifically pastoral level those involved in 'spiritual direction', those preaching, teaching and leading congregations, sought to draw people to a living relationship with a more intimate God through Jesus Christ, and sought, too, to enable believers to live more closely to that God on a day to day basis, calling for and experiencing 'the bountifulness of God's grace'. Small wonder, then, that the Word of God was continually emphasised and spoken, singling out for exposition among other things, biblical narratives,<sup>3</sup> the commandments and passages on prayer.

There was certainly no shortage of works on prayer—many of the reformers wrote on the subject, all of them preached upon it. The common emphases in these works, those we might term 'reformational emphases',

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1 P. Matheson, *The Imaginative World of the Reformation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000), 6.

2 Matheson, *Imaginative World*, 8.

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3 See Michael Parsons, *Luther and Calvin on Old Testament Narratives. Reformation Thought and Narrative Text* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen), 2004.

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seem to have included the sovereignty of the God who answers prayer, the fatherhood of God, the importance of faith and hope in the supplicant, the central significance of Jesus Christ to the divine hearing and answering, the pivotal position of the Lord's Prayer for understanding, and so on. Naturally, the reformers had different perspectives on the theme and stressed different things, but on these key topics they seem to have agreed.

The following outlines some representative works on prayer by Zwingli, Luther and Melancthon. This will give a broader context for an examination of John Calvin's theology of prayer from the *Institutes*, stressing the pervasive idea in his thought that the strength of prayer is found in an honest and vulnerable acknowledgement of our inherent weakness before a sovereign Father.

## I Reformation prayer

### 1 Huldrych Zwingli

In the Swiss city of Zurich, Huldrych Zwingli wrote on the subject of prayer in the context of a self-conscious reformation. He speaks in *True and False Religion* of the prayers of former ecclesial practice as hypocrisy, as 'an insult to God', as mercenary ('hired prayers'), concluding, that previously 'the devotion of the heart has dared to sell itself as a work of merit'.<sup>4</sup> This, in itself, is part of Zwingli's repeated con-

trast between faith in the divine and faith in external things.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, in his *Reply to Emser*, for example, he distinguishes between the faithful who depend on God, resorting to him alone, and the unfaithful who turn from God to creatures, hoping for aid from them.<sup>6</sup> A little earlier he had defined it at some length:

Prayer, therefore, is the conversation which as a result of faith you have with God as with a father and a most safe and sure helper. Prayer, then, is the uplifting of the heart, not of the breath or voice to God. We pray, therefore, when the heart draws near to God, when it speaks with him, when in sincere faith it seeks help from him alone.<sup>7</sup>

In discussing prayer as adoration towards God, Zwingli states, 'Adoration is... the devoting of the heart to God, that is, to the Lord who *can* do all things and to the Father who *will*'.<sup>8</sup> We notice in these quotations those reformational emphases mentioned above: God as sovereign and as Father, the importance of faith. However, it is also evident that he stresses above all that

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<sup>5</sup> See W. P. Stephens, *Zwingli, An Introduction to his Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 141–2. Also, F. Büsser, 'The Spirituality of Zwingli and Bullinger in the Reformation of Zurich' in *Christian Spirituality. High Middle Ages and Reformation*, edited by J. Raitt (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 300–317.

<sup>6</sup> Zwingli, *Reply*, 3.383–8. Also, Zwingli, *Exposition*, 2.238–43; *True and False Religion*, 3.282.

<sup>7</sup> *True and False Religion*, 3.281.

<sup>8</sup> *True and False Religion*, 3.279. See also, 3.282. Also, T. George, *Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville: Broadman, 1988), 130.

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<sup>4</sup> See Zwingli, *True and False Religion*, 3.279–83 in H. Zwingli, *Latin Works of Huldrych Zwingli*, translated by S. M. Jackson (Philadelphia: Heidelberg, 1922).

prayer is the individual believer reaching out of the heart in communion with the eternal God—that is, he speaks of prayer essentially as relational experience. Given the strongly theocentric character of Zwingli's theology, this existential element is quite remarkable.<sup>9</sup> And, indeed, G. R. Potter's estimate of the reformer in this respect is that his understanding (given that it was early on in the Reformation) 'was something almost original'.<sup>10</sup>

## 2 Martin Luther

Martin Luther evidences similar teaching on prayer and certainly echoes some of Zwingli's emphasis. In an early work, *An Exposition of the Lord's Prayer for Simple Laymen* (1519), he stresses that prayer is a 'spiritual good' and that the essence of true and acceptable prayer is 'a lifting up of heart or mind to God'.<sup>11</sup> Prayer from the heart is an inner longing, sighing, desiring. What comes across in Luther's exposition at this point is the relational aspect of prayer; believers need to move God to mercy, but their confidence resides in the fact that the

sovereign God is actually their Father ('a friendly, sweet, intimate, and warm-hearted word').<sup>12</sup>

Later, in 1528, we find the reformer again expounding the fatherhood of God for an understanding of prayer. In a sermon, preached in that year, he uses the metaphor of a sack that the faithful hold open before their Father, in which they receive more and more the longer they hold it open, for the Lord mercifully desires to give.<sup>13</sup>

Another emphasis is added in this work—that of prayer as obedience: Luther states, 'You should pray and you should know that you are bound to pray by divine command.' Again, 'This work I have been commanded to do and as an obedient person I must do it.'<sup>14</sup> In fact, Luther attaches the spiritual exercise of prayer to the second commandment; it is a requirement that believers use God's name in worship and adoration—that is the positive corollary to the negative commandment concerning the wrongful use of the Lord's name. This, in itself, gives added confidence to those who would call on the name of the Lord; as God has commanded it from them, he will answer their obedient petition.

In his later work, *A Simple Way to Pray* (1535), Luther singles out the Lord's Prayer as evocative of true supplication: 'To this day I suckle at the Lord's Prayer like a child, as an old man eat and drink from it and never get

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<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Stephens, *Zwingli*, 36, 69, 141–42; Stephens, 'The Theology of Zwingli' in *The Cambridge Companion to Reformation Theology*, edited by D. Bagchi and D. C. Steinmetz (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), 80–89; G.J. Miller, 'Huldrych Zwingli (1484–1531)' in *The Reformation Theologians. An Introduction to Theology in the Early Modern Period*, edited by C. Lindberg, 157–169 (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 157–169, particularly, 160.

<sup>10</sup> G.R. Potter, *Zwingli*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1976), 114.

<sup>11</sup> Luther, *Exposition*, LW 42.26, 25, respectively.

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<sup>12</sup> *Exposition*, 42.22.

<sup>13</sup> Luther, *Sermon*, LW 51.169–176, specifically 51.171.

<sup>14</sup> *Sermon*, 170. See also, *Tabletalk*, no. 5510, LW 54.439.

my fill.<sup>15</sup> Here the reformer is at his most practical, for example, advising believers of the importance of prayer, and of letting it 'be the first business of the morning and the last at night'.<sup>16</sup> However, the exceptional element in this work is that the reformer refuses to be tied to rules, and, noticeably, he allows space for an intimate experience of the Holy Spirit:

[I]f in the midst of such thoughts [on reading the Lord's Prayer] the Holy Spirit begins to preach in your heart with rich, enlightening thoughts, honor him by *letting go of this written scheme*: be still and listen to him who can do better than you can.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps with an eye to Paul's words in Romans 8:26–27<sup>18</sup> and certainly in the context of his own relational theology, Luther himself moves and directs his readers away from an empty and idolatrous rote and towards an experiential piety.<sup>19</sup>

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15 Luther, *Simple Way*, LW 43.200. See also, *Tabletalk*, no. 495, LW 54.85; B. Lohse, B. Martin Luther. *An Introduction to his Life and Work* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1987), 106; T. Koch, 'Luthers reformatorisches Verständnis des Gebets' in *Das Gebet. Veröffentlichungen der Luther-Akademie*, edited by V. Ratzeburg, 47–66 (Erlangen: Martin-Luther-Verlag, 2002), 47–66.

16 Luther, *Simple Way*, 43.193.

17 Luther, *Simple Way*, 43.201–202, emphasis added.

18 This is likely because the apostle speaks of the Holy Spirit interceding for us and speaks of it in the context of the Spirit knowing our hearts.

19 See S. Hendrix, 'Martin Luther's Reformation of Spirituality' in *Harvesting Martin Luther's Reflections on Theology, Ethics, and the Church*, edited by T. J. Wengert (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 240–260.

### 3 Philip Melanchthon

Philip Melanchthon examines the topic of prayer in his influential work, *Loci Communes* (1543).<sup>20</sup> In the reformer's theological system, according to Scheible, prayer was the second pillar of the church, next only to doctrine—though, interestingly, the reformer himself speaks of it as 'the chief bastion of the church' in this particular writing.<sup>21</sup> Characteristic of reformational theology, Melanchthon repeatedly argues that one should adore rather than investigate the mysteries of God<sup>22</sup> and it is within that context of adoration that prayer is found.

The reformer speaks of prayer as 'this highest of all virtues', even if it remains 'only a brief groan'.<sup>23</sup> The writing is at once pastoral and personal.<sup>24</sup> For example, he encourages prayer in times of trouble, saying, 'In my own case I know that by the help of God many calamities have been mitigated.' The broader context and some of the emphases can be deduced from the following short paragraph of pastoral advice,

Let your prayer be in the Spirit, that is, not in hypocrisy, not in babbling of words, but in godly emotion of the heart, and let it be in truth,

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20 P. Melanchthon, *Loci Communes* (1543), translated by J.A.O. Preus (St Louis: Concordia, 1992).

21 *Loci Communes*, 196a.

22 See H. Scheible, 'Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560)' in *The Reformation Theologians. An Introduction to Theology in the Early Modern Period*, edited by C. Lindberg (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 80.

23 *Loci Communes*, 196a, 204a, respectively.

24 *Loci Communes*, 200b.

that is, in true recognition of God. Let it be directed to the true God and to the mediator.<sup>25</sup>

Together with these emphases on true prayer as spiritual, genuine, from the heart, in recognition of God and Jesus Christ, comes a stress on confidence, obedience and faith,<sup>26</sup> and on the gospel, specifically, and on the Word of God.<sup>27</sup>

The scaffolding upon which he builds his theology of prayer is a list of five points that he enumerates to help his readers' understanding. The five points act like rules for what Melancthon considers true prayer, or what he terms 'a well-expressed form of prayer'.<sup>28</sup> The five points are as follows:

- The supplicant must consider what God they are invoking.<sup>29</sup>
- It is 'a very great sin' not to render worship, gratitude and requests to God.<sup>30</sup> That is, similarly to Luther, Melancthon ties his understanding of prayer to the second commandment, but he appears to make less of it than his Wittenberg colleague.<sup>31</sup>
- We must remember the importance of the promises of God—particularly, his promises to be reconciled to us through Christ,

and to supply all our needs.<sup>32</sup>

- Though he recognises that faith is stronger and more evident in some than in others, faith must be added to prayer. He says, for instance, 'Faith must shine forth', or again, 'We must always in every petition present this faith to God'. We must believe that God's desire is to give.<sup>33</sup>
- It is of central importance that we hold that 'Prayer is the worship of God, because worship attributes this honour to God—that in our great miseries He will bring help to those who call upon Him. His name is not an empty thing.'<sup>34</sup>

This last point reminds us that the reformers, generally, speak of prayer in the context of our weakness. Zwingli, Luther and Melancthon recognise that believers cry from a position of weakness to a strong, capable and merciful God. Indeed, Melancthon says a great deal about it. He employs the following prolonged image, for instance,

[T]hose who have tasted our common miseries judge far differently and understand that this whole life is filled with troubles, like a city which is besieged on all sides and attacked sharply by its enemies, which now on this side and now on that side is attacked by the enemy who starts fires, tears down buildings, and can scarcely be held in check. It is a certainty that all wise

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25 *Loci Communes*, 205a.

26 For example, *Loci Communes*, 196a, 196b. Elsewhere, he says that 'God wants our faith to be increased by these exercises of piety', 204a.

27 For example, *Loci Communes*, 198a.

28 *Loci Communes*, 204b.

29 *Loci Communes*, 197a. Also, 207a.

30 *Loci Communes*, 197a–b.

31 *Loci Communes*, 196a.

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32 *Loci Communes*, 198a.

33 *Loci Communes*, 198b, 199a, respectively.

34 *Loci Communes*, 201a.

men wonder why this present and still weak nature of men is burdened down with such great evils, which our nature *by its own powers* cannot endure.<sup>35</sup>

The italicised words indicate the image as the context for prayer: we supplicate God because without his aid we are unable to sustain life against all that would trouble us. Melanchthon returns to the image later, saying, '[W]henever you think you are living in a besieged city which is being sharply attacked on all sides, these very circumstances should instruct you to seek help.'<sup>36</sup>

The reformer, then, speaks of 'our great weakness'.<sup>37</sup> By this he affirms both a weakness of nature and a weakness in behaviour. 'We have often fallen,' he says, 'we deserve punishments, we are unworthy of the blessings of God.' He speaks of the weakness 'that attaches both to our mind and our body', the fact that we are guilty, ungrateful, and he speaks also of 'the stupidity of the human mind as it flees from God' (by which he refers to doubts that besiege our thinking).<sup>38</sup> The world, too, is full of difficulty, impinging upon us as 'miseries and troubles of this life'.<sup>39</sup>

The church itself is presently subject to sin and to physical miseries, 'to public and personal calamities'. Indeed, Melanchthon reminds his read-

ers of the principle that 'the church must be subject to the cross',<sup>40</sup> in which image he seems to include 'physical torments' and the present wrath of God (noticeably, he specifies the occurrences of the plague).<sup>41</sup>

Behind much of this lies the work and deception of Satan, himself, of course. The reformer speaks of 'the tyranny of the devil',<sup>42</sup> warning believers that Satan seeks to trap them in ways that cannot be described in words. Using a pertinent Old Testament narrative, Melanchthon likens the church to Daniel and his friends surrounded by lions; the church always lives in the centre of trouble, in the face of Satan's attacks.<sup>43</sup>

Of course, this last image implicitly speaks of escape through the sovereign help of God. As Daniel received divine assistance in that hour, so does the church. There is in this a recognition of the wider context of prayer and this introduces, on the one hand, Melanchthon's emphases on the nature of the giving God, the importance of the gospel, of Christ, of the divine promises and on providence; and, on the other hand, his stress on the believer's faith, confession, gratitude and hope. We cannot deliver ourselves. Yet, he assures us that deliverance is not an accident, it comes from our Father in response to our requests and pleading.<sup>44</sup>

35 *Loci Communes*, 202a, emphasis added.

36 *Loci Communes*, 203a.

37 *Loci Communes*, 209b.

38 See, *Loci Communes*, 197a, 201b, 208a–b, 198a. Also, 197b, 209b.

39 *Loci Communes*, 207a.

40 *Loci Communes*, 199a. See also, 203a.

41 See, for example, *Loci Communes*, 198b, 200a–b, 202b, 207a.

42 *Loci Communes*, 207a.

43 *Loci Communes*, 202a.

44 *Loci Communes*, 200a, 203b. See also, 201a.

## II John Calvin on prayer

### 1 Intimate conversation

Calvin's ideas on prayer were already formed in 1536, though there are one or two minor revisions in later editions of the *Institutes*. According to the reformer there are six purposes of prayer:

- to fly to God with every need,
- to set all our petitions before God,
- to prepare us to receive God's benefits with humble gratitude,
- to meditate upon God's kindness,
- to instil the proper spirit of delight for God's answers in prayer,
- to confirm his providence.<sup>45</sup>

Despite the fact that elsewhere he writes concerning prayer, 'I lay down laws for no-one',<sup>46</sup> it is, of course, well known that Calvin posits four rules for governing true prayer:

- a heartfelt sense of reverence,
- a sense of need and repentance,
- a surrender of all confidence in self and a humble plea for pardon,

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<sup>45</sup> *Inst* III.xx.3. These are listed here in the words of J.R. Beeke, 'Calvin on Piety' in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, edited by D. K. McKim (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), 139.

<sup>46</sup> Calvin to the French church in London, Geneva 27 September, 1552, in *Letters*, 2.362. The complete quotation runs into what appears to be a general rule: 'I lay down laws for no-one, but it were much to be desired that the sobriety of our prayers should show the reverence we feel for the name of God.' (*Letters of John Calvin*, 4 volumes, edited by J. Bonnet. Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board, 1858)

- a confident hope.<sup>47</sup>

According to Calvin the chief part of worship 'lies in the office of prayer'. The closest that he gets to defining prayer is perhaps where he claims that it is 'properly an emotion of the heart within, which is poured out and laid open before God, the searcher of hearts'.<sup>48</sup> He teaches that God desires that we 'descend into our heart with our whole thought' and to 'enter deeply within'.<sup>49</sup>

That is, prayer for Calvin is something that causes us to focus within, into the heart, because it is there that the Lord looks for 'a sincere and true affection', one that dwells in the 'secret place of the heart'. His reasoning appears to be straightforward enough, 'For since we ourselves are God's temple,' he says, 'if we would call upon God in his holy temple, we must pray within ourselves.'<sup>50</sup>

Nevertheless, we will note below de Kroon's words that for Calvin prayer is

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<sup>47</sup> See *Inst* III.xx.4, III.xx.6, III.xx.8, III.xx.11, respectively. Again, summarised by Beeke, 'Calvin on Piety', 140.

<sup>48</sup> *Inst* III.xx.29. See also, *Inst* III.xx.5, III.xx.31, *Comm. Acts* 10:2, *CNTC*, 6.284-5. G.J. Spykman, (*Reformational Theology, A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992, 505), speaks of the heart, in this context, as 'the religious unifying center of our entire personhood', and prayer as 'the disturbing of the heart before God'.

<sup>49</sup> *Inst* III.xx.29.

<sup>50</sup> *Inst* III.xx.30. The comment made by Chul-Ha, 'A comparison', 68, that Calvin defines prayer as petition 'in a literal sense, viz. "to obtain something" from God' appears too simple to convey the reformer's complex understanding, (H. Chul-Ha, 'A Comparison between Calvin and Karl Barth on Prayer'. *ATA* 1 (1993), 65-76.)

‘a back-and-forward movement’, and so it does not simply stop at focusing inwardly to draw out that affection and true piety of the heart, as important as that is. Prayer is ultimately to be described as the heart (or mind) ‘lifted and carried beyond itself’. Significantly, Calvin adds ‘in so far as this is possible’.<sup>51</sup>

In this immediate context the reformer employs a telling image, which he picks up several times in his exposition of prayer. Indeed, his first rule (in his own words) is that ‘we should be disposed in mind and heart as befits *those who enter conversation with God*’. Later he speaks of God’s generosity in admitting us into what he calls ‘intimate conversation’ with him.<sup>52</sup> Later still, he has this to say by way of pastoral advice:

I have said that, although prayer is an intimate conversation of the pious with God, yet reverence and moderation must be kept, lest we give loose rein to miscellaneous requests, and lest we crave more than God allows; further, that we should lift up our minds to a pure and chaste veneration of him, lest God’s majesty become worthless for us.<sup>53</sup>

The metaphor of conversation with God is useful, but the reformer does not want those who read his work to get the wrong idea. God is God, after all. To him belongs glory and honour, and it is proper that we enter into conversation

with him humbly and with considerable thought and care. (See his four rules.) But, then again, as John Kelsay writes, the image does suggest ‘a relation in which the thoughts of at least two parties are shared’,<sup>54</sup> and that is an important factor in Calvin’s thinking.

## 2 The person and disposition of a beggar

Two further images that Calvin employs indicate that relationship of shared thought—both convey, in different ways, a sense of weakness and vulnerability in the supplicant and a sense of strength and capability in the God to whom they turn. The first is the image of a beggar approaching someone who is immersed in riches; the other is of a child drawing near to their father. The former he uses sparingly, the latter forms a large part of what he has to say about prayer.

The image of a beggar appears explicitly only once, but is surely implicit in the following representative statements: ‘It is... by the benefit of prayer that we reach those riches which are laid up for us’; ‘So true is it that we dig up by prayer the treasures that were pointed out by the Lord’s gospel’, and, ‘[S]o He will cause us to possess abundance in poverty.’<sup>55</sup> Explicitly it appears in the following.

[I]t follows that only sincere worshippers of God pray aright and are heard. Let each one, therefore, as

<sup>51</sup> *Inst* III.xx.4.

<sup>52</sup> *Inst* III.xx.4—emphasis added, *Inst* III.xx.5, respectively.

<sup>53</sup> *Inst* III.xx.16.

<sup>54</sup> J. Kelsay, ‘Prayer and Ethics: Reflections on Calvin and Barth’, *HTR* 82 (1989), 173.

<sup>55</sup> *Inst* III.xx.2, III.xx.52, respectively. He speaks of ‘the weight of our poverty’, (*Inst* III.xx.28). See also, *Inst* III.xx.44.



he prepares to pray be displeased with his own evil deeds, and (something that cannot happen without repentance) let him take the person and disposition of a beggar.<sup>56</sup>

The image is a conventional one, of course—Calvin uses it elsewhere,<sup>57</sup> as does Zwingli, for example.<sup>58</sup> But it is noticeable here that the reformer speaks of what appears to be a self-conscious decision, the believer has to ‘take the person and disposition of a beggar’ before God. This is the position of faith. It is an acknowledgement of one’s own poverty, together with recognition of divine riches which are found only in Christ.

Wherein lies the poverty? Calvin seems to distinguish three areas of weakness or poverty. First, external to the believer, are the circumstances in which they find themselves. He speaks of ‘the weight of our present ills’, the ‘troubles, discomforts, fears and trials’, the ‘dangers [that] at every moment threaten’.<sup>59</sup> He mentions the resultant misery<sup>60</sup> and, particularly, the anxiety<sup>61</sup> associated with these tribulations<sup>62</sup>—these indicate the

fallen-ness of the world in which we dwell, they impinge upon the believer’s wellbeing and certainly ought to drive them to prayer. He speaks, too, of Satan in all of this.<sup>63</sup>

Second, the reformer speaks of our nature—he understands weakness to be inherent in fallen humanity. Throughout his lengthy exposition on prayer Calvin characteristically accumulates a list of the faults: we are feeble, blind, stupid, inert and dull, insufficient, lazy, hypocritical, proud, unclean, guilty, ignorant, doubting, ungrateful, unworthy, presumptuous, impudent, and so on. His conclusion appears to be that we are ‘destitute and devoid of all good things’, for only what is corrupt comes forth from us.<sup>64</sup> So, naturally, we approach God in ‘great shame’.<sup>65</sup>

Third, he is conscious that believers are still sinners—he knows the poverty of our behaviour and depicts us as ‘miserably burdened with sins’<sup>66</sup> and ‘oppressed by [our] evil deeds’.<sup>67</sup> But in warm pastoral application Calvin urges his readers to be assured that ‘prayers poured out by the godly do not depend upon their worthiness’.<sup>68</sup> What are believers to depend on?

56 *Inst* III.xx.7.

57 See, for instance, Calvin’s sermon on Galatians 1:6–8 where he says that ‘We should approach God as miserable beggars, if we would be justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ’, (*Sermons*, 37).

58 Zwingli, *True and False Religion*, 3.281, ‘Our praying to God is nothing else than a begging for aid.’

59 See *Inst* III.xx.11, III.xx.7, respectively.

60 See *Inst* III.xx.3, III.xx.12, III.xx.15, III.xx.47.

61 See *Inst* III.xx.4, II.xx.5, III.xx.11, III.xx.34.

62 See *Inst* III.xx.11, III.xx.28. He recog-

nises in these some who are ‘unjustly afflicted’ and others ‘wrongly oppressed’, (*Inst* III.xx.15).

63 *Inst* III.xx.46.

64 *Inst* III.xx.1.

65 *Inst* III.xx.41.

66 *Inst* III.xx.2. See also, *Inst* III.xx.7, III.xx.37.

67 *Inst* III.xx.11.

68 *Inst* III.xx.7. K.W. Stevenson, *Lord’s Prayer: A Text in Tradition* (London: SCM, 2004), 165, speaks of Calvin’s writing on prayer lacking Luther’s pastoral zeal. That is certainly not evident in this chapter.

### 3 'If he seeks resources ... he must go outside himself'<sup>69</sup>

As we have already seen, other reformers affirm that prayer is a means of acknowledging our dependence upon God. Melancthon particularly stresses our weakness and the weakness of our situation as context for faithful prayer. However, it seems to me that Calvin, while clearly continuing the tradition, brings this relationship together in a more theologically explicit manner at the opening of his lengthy chapter on prayer in the *Institutes*. Affirming how destitute man [sic] is, he comments, 'Therefore, if he seeks resources to succor him in his need, *he must go outside himself* and get them elsewhere.' He continues,

For in Christ [the Lord] offers all happiness in place of our misery, all wealth in place of our neediness; in him he opens to us the heavenly treasures... [W]hatever we need and whatever we lack is in God, and in our Lord Jesus Christ... [I]t remains for us to seek in him, and in *prayers to ask him*, what we have learned to be in him.<sup>70</sup>

These comments imply several things. They are reflective of the fact that Calvin's theological thought and his teaching on prayer, in particular, is essentially grounded in the complex matrix of the divine-human relationship.<sup>71</sup> In Marijn de Kroon's words,

[P]recisely in this connection [of prayer] the bipolarity of God and man will assume a vivid form. Prayer is the mutual orientation of God and man in practical experience. Existential communion between God and man finds its expression in prayer.... It is a back-and-forth movement ... of the mutuality of God and man.<sup>72</sup>

They also imply the radical difference that the Reformer posits between God and humanity, together with the relationship that exists, formed by the gracious initiative of God. Men and women have nothing *in and of themselves* to sustain life and faith—we are utterly devoid of such things, but God is not.

It is Calvin's understanding, anthropologically, that human beings by nature are *dependent beings*.<sup>73</sup> That is so simply because we are contingent creatures; but this fact itself has been underlined by the presence of sin since

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<sup>72</sup> M. De Kroon, *The Honour of God and Human Salvation. Calvin's Theology According to his Institutes* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2001), 122, 123. Later, he defines prayer as 'dialogue with God, the space in which the bipolarity of God and man is experienced,' 125. Similarly, P.A. Moeller, *Calvin's Doxology* (Allison Park: Pickwick, 1997), 130, 132, speaks of prayer as 'the fundamental dialogical relationship between us and God.' 'Prayer,' she says, 'functions as a microcosm of the dialogue of relationship.'

<sup>73</sup> W.J. Bouwsma, speaks of 'total dependence' (W.J. Bouwsma, 'The Spirituality of John Calvin' in *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, edited by J. Raitt (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 322-3. Stevenson, *The Lord's Prayer*, 165, speaks of 'an Augustinian sense of dependence on God.'

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<sup>69</sup> *Inst* III.xx.1.

<sup>70</sup> *Inst* III.xx.1, emphasis added.

<sup>71</sup> For an extended treatment of this subject, see M. Parsons, *Calvin's Preaching on the Prophet Micah: The 1550-51 Sermons in Geneva* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2006), 27-94.

the fall. Yet, says Calvin, God has given us all we need in his Son, Jesus Christ. Therefore, we need to *go outside ourselves*; not in any secondary, random direction, for creatures cannot supply our needs, but solely in the direction of the God who *offers* 'all happiness in place of our misery', and *offers* 'all wealth in place of our neediness'.<sup>74</sup> That is, for Calvin, the strength of our weak praying is not so much God strengthening us; but the strength we look for is in God himself, or (more exactly) God in Jesus Christ.

The reformer does not posit a simple linear model: we are weak; we need God to strengthen us. For the reformer it is somehow more complex than that: it is inherent in a faithful relationship with the Lord that we acknowledge *our* weakness and find *his* strength in Christ. Notice, in this context, the following words from Calvin's conclusion on prayer.

By this ['for thy name's sake'] the saints not only express the end of their prayers but confess themselves unworthy to obtain it unless God seeks the reason *from himself*, and that their confidence of being heard stems *solely from God's nature*.<sup>75</sup>

We might say that prayer 'works' because God is God, because the dynamic and logic of prayer is somehow inherent in the nature of the triune

God, not in the first instance in the human-divine relationship itself. It is, therefore, the picture not so much of a father holding the child's hand as hesitatingly he learns to walk, but of the father lifting and carrying the child off the ground. The former would imply some ability in us; the latter indicates where Calvin believes strength really to be.

Having put it in this way, however, we need to be cautious. Calvin does not entirely deny the believer's own effort which springs from faith and hope. Indeed, he insists that in prayer 'all the devotion of the heart should be completely engaged'.<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, even a cursory reading of Calvin suggests that it is the Holy Spirit who prompts this effort or engagement.

#### 4 'To embrace God's generosity'<sup>77</sup>

Ultimately, of course, Calvin's theology is theocentric,<sup>78</sup> but he paints God as a Father who interacts with and accommodates to his children because his desire is to bless them from his inexhaustible riches. Jon Balsarak rightly insists that Calvin affirms 'God's willingness to lower himself to the simplicity of his children' and speaks of his 'lavish love' and even his indulgence.<sup>79</sup> As we have already

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<sup>76</sup> *Inst* III.xx.50.

<sup>77</sup> *Inst* III.xx.14—'*Dei liberalitatem*'.

<sup>78</sup> See P. Bolonesi, 'L'Héritage Théologique du Calvinisme et les Protestants d'Europe', *EJT* 4 (1995) 121–29 particularly 125.

<sup>79</sup> J. Balsarak, 'The God of Love and Weakness: Calvin's Understanding of God's Accommodating Relationship with his People', *WTJ* 62 (2000), 185, 186, 194 respectively.

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<sup>74</sup> Later, Calvin speaks of God giving hope to 'the utterly miserable', *Inst* III.xx.14, and says that 'he will cause us to possess abundance in poverty, and comfort in affliction', *Inst* III.xx.52.

<sup>75</sup> *Inst* III.xx.47, emphasis added.

noted, whatever in our poverty we lack is to be found 'in God, and in our Lord Jesus Christ'.<sup>80</sup> Elsewhere, for instance, the reformer links prayer and the divine fatherhood in the following manner, 'We should have no doubt but that God has a mind to welcome us kindly, is prepared to hear our prayers, and is readily inclined to help us.'<sup>81</sup>

It is Calvin's teaching that the divine riches are 'laid up for us with the Heavenly Father'<sup>82</sup> and by this he is able to personalise the riches (they are put aside *for us*), to recognise them as gift and to associate them fully with our adoption by God. Indeed, that the Lord speaks of himself as Father and allows us to address him as such is indicative of tremendous love, 'since no greater feeling of love can be found elsewhere than in the Father'.<sup>83</sup>

Though we are unworthy of such a father,<sup>84</sup> he shows his kindness, grace, mercy and abundant goodness to us in the context of prayer. He promises to help his children and urges them to call, anticipating their coming.<sup>85</sup> More than that, though, he works in them by the Holy Spirit stirring them up to pray, by attracting them,<sup>86</sup> by prompting, empowering and even by composing prayer.<sup>87</sup>

But there is yet more to it, and it is here that we come to the crux of Calvin's understanding of prayer.

Notice how the following centralises Christ himself in the midst of our poverty and need.

Since no man is worthy to present himself to God and come into his sight, the Heavenly Father himself, to free us at once from shame and fear... has given us his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, to be our advocate... [W]e can confidently come to him, and with such an intercessor, trusting nothing we ask in his name will be denied us, as nothing can be denied to him by the Father.<sup>88</sup>

Later, he speaks of Christ, 'by whose intercession the Father is for us rendered gracious and easily entreated'.<sup>89</sup> No wonder that he affirms the divine compassion to be 'incomparable'.<sup>90</sup> Not only are the riches that we plead and experience to be found *in* Christ, but also they will not be denied to us because, as Calvin remarks, the Father *cannot* deny the Son.<sup>91</sup>

According to Calvin, it is solely because of Christ that God looks favourably upon us as his children. Indeed, it is because of his relationship with his own Son that he 'tolerates even our stammering and pardons our ignorance... as indeed without this mercy there would be no freedom to pray'.<sup>92</sup> He is generous to us, even indulgent.

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80 *Inst* III.xx.1.

81 *Comm. Mt.* 6:9, *CNTC* 1.206.

82 *Inst* III.xx.2.

83 *Inst* III.xx.36.

84 *Inst* III.xx.37.

85 *Inst* III.xx.13.

86 *Inst* III.xx.14.

87 *Inst* III.xx.5.

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88 *Inst* III.xx.17.

89 *Inst* III.xx.19.

90 *Inst* III.xx.12.

91 This assertion stems from what the reformer calls 'the presumption of faith,' *Inst* III.xx.12. See also, *Inst* III.xx.9, III.xx.11.

92 *Inst* III.xx.16.

For he warns and urges us to seek him in *our every need*, as children are wont to take refuge in the protection of the parents whenever they are *troubled* with any *anxiety*. Besides this, since he saw that we did not even sufficiently perceive how straitened our *poverty* was, what it was fair to request, and what was profitable for us, he also provided for this *ignorance* of ours; and what we had been *lacking* to our capacity he himself supplied and made sufficient from his own.<sup>93</sup>

Notice here the italicised words, indicating our poverty and need, and the image emphasising the Lord's sovereign ability and willingness to help us in our difficulties.

### III Reflections

There is a great deal more to say on Calvin's understanding of prayer, of course—his chapter on the subject covers seventy pages of the Battles' English translation. Yet enough has been said to indicate the following brief reflections in line with the intention of this present volume.

First, it is clear that, together with the other leading reformers, Calvin sees humanity in desperate need. Whether we agree in detail with his somewhat negative thesis or not is not really the point. But it is worth reflecting on the fact that men and women

demonstrate dependence and a lack in the face of personal and universal problems that face them. Though this makes us vulnerable, we recognise and acknowledge our weakness and poverty.

Second, Calvin is very clear that only by prayer to a God who has already proven himself in Christ to be faithful and capable can we truly seek to have any strength and influence. However, he is also insistent that we draw near to a Father who longs to give, from his riches in Jesus Christ.

According to Calvin, then, our task is to recognise the truth that it is *only* in Christ that we find our strength—and *never* in ourselves. We are poor, yet he is rich. We are bankrupt, though his treasures are abundant. The reformer says, '[I]t remains for us to seek in him, and *in prayers to ask him*, what we have learned to be in him.'<sup>94</sup> That last phrase is so significant. Calvin insists that we have already learned through experience that this is the nature of the relationship we have with our generous God. Calvin's pastoral encouragement concludes with this thought,

And so [God] will cause us to possess abundance in poverty, and comfort in affliction. For though all things fail us, yet God will never forsake us, who cannot disappoint the expectation and patience of his people.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> *Inst* III.xx.34, emphasis added. See also, *Inst* III.xx.36.

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<sup>94</sup> *Inst* III.xx.1, emphasis added.

<sup>95</sup> *Inst* III.xx.52, emphasis added.

# Answering Contemporary Western Islamic Polemics

Anthony McRoy

**KEYWORDS:** *Canonicity, Ebionites, Constantine, Nicaea, Jesus Seminar, Bart Ehrman, Toland.*

A major consequence of the immigration of Muslims to western countries since the 1960s is the emergence of Islamic missionary propagation, with a decidedly polemical character. In Islam, mission—*da'wah*—is a *Shari'ah* obligation, especially if Muslims wish to remain in a non-Muslim state. Since most western countries have a traditional Christian cultural allegiance to one degree or another, Islamic polemics in the West have centred on demolishing Christian distinctive, such as the Trinity, which are at odds with Islamic beliefs.

Increasingly, in countries like Britain, there is intensifying Christian-Muslim polemical competition, especially in places such as universities (between Christian Unions and Islamic Societies) and at public fora, such as the famous Hyde Park Speakers' Corner. In recent years, Islamic polemicists have refined their attacks, utilis-

ing liberal biblical studies, to undermine the credibility of the biblical text and canon. This usage has its origins in the claim of the Qur'an that the *Tawrah* (Torah) and *Injil* (Gospel) predict the coming of Muhammad. It is clear that no such prophecy exists in the Bible. The logical consequence for Muslims is that the Bible has been changed!

Muslims are somewhat hazy about the *when*, *where* and *who* of this 'conspiracy', but usually the Apostle Paul is blamed as the man who compromised the pure teaching of Jesus by infecting it with pagan beliefs. Usually, it is claimed that Constantine finalised this process at the Council of Nicaea, where it is asserted that the canon of the New Testament was also decided. Often obscure figures are quoted in support of such theses, which inevitably leaves Christians puzzled. A recent phenomenon in Islamic propaganda is to claim that the original Christians were the Ebionites, a second-century Jewish-Christian sect who rejected Paul—again, an issue about which few Christians know anything.

Obviously, the average Christian is

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not academically equipped to deal with such issues, and so is sometimes at a loss in how he should respond to such attacks. What material exists is spread over a large number of volumes, and is not immediately accessible. Furthermore, it is often unsuitable to give to Muslims because it is not phrased in a way that would be intelligible to a Muslim—naturally, because it has been produced by scholars in the fields of Biblical Studies or Church History, rather than Islamic Studies. In an echo of this, such material that answers Muslims to some degree is usually produced by missionaries or counter-polemists who are not *au fait* with academic Biblical Studies, and are unfamiliar with the detailed albeit often obscure issues in modern Islamic polemics. It is for this reason I have written a book answering most of the major arguments in contemporary western Islamic propaganda against Christianity, in order to equip Christians with the answers to such attacks.

## I Modern Islamic Polemics against the Bible

Almost the first claim that a Christian will hear when meeting a Muslim is that the Bible has been changed. For the most part, the assertion is the product of a logical consequence of Islamic theology. Surah *As-Saff* 61:6 of the Qur'an claims that the *Tawrah* (Torah) and *Injil* (Gospel) predict the coming of Ahmad, i.e. Muhammad, yet it is clear that such is not the case. Also, Surah Baqarah 2:135 claims that all prophets, including Jesus and Muhammad, taught the same message, yet it is clear that along a whole panorama of

doctrines, not least Jesus' claim to divinity (John 8:58), this is also invalid. So, to the Muslim mind, if the Bible contradicts the Qur'an, it follows that Christians must have tampered with their Scriptures!

Increasingly Muslim propagandists are using various sceptical writers in their polemics. Sometimes, it seems as if deliberately obscure figures are quoted to baffle even Christian academics. A typical example is this quote from *The Dead Sea Scrolls, The Gospel of Barnabas and the New Testament* by Islamic polemicist, M. A. Yusseff:

...Victor Tununensis, a sixth century African Bishop, who related in his Chronicle (AD 566) that when Messala was consul at Constantinople (AD 506), he *censored and corrected* the Gentile Gospels written by persons considered illiterate by the Emperor Anastasius. The implication was that they were altered to conform to sixth century Christianity, which differed from the Christianity of previous centuries.<sup>1</sup>

This reference to Victor Tununensis is found in a number of modern Islamic publications and websites. How many Christians have even heard of Victor Tununensis? He is probably an obscure figure even to Christian *academics*. This very fact aids anti-Christian polemics; it makes Christians look ignorant, and also suggests that Christian leaders have something to hide—implying that

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<sup>1</sup> M. A. Yusseff, *The Dead Sea Scrolls, The Gospel of Barnabas and the New Testament* (Indianapolis: American trust Publications, 1993), 81.

it might be true that the Christian have indeed altered their sacred texts. The average Christian interacting with Muslims would be stumped.

The facts concern the Monophysite Byzantine Emperor Anastasius I, who deposed Macedonius II, Patriarch of Constantinople, replacing him with a Monophysite. This action provoked riots and a revolt in Thrace in 512. Anastasius was determined to undermine Chalcedonian orthodoxy, and its adherents:

The heterodox emperor Anastasius employed all means to oblige Macedonius to declare against the council of Chalcedon, but flattery and threats were alike unavailing... One of his instruments was Xenaias, an Eutychian bishop... Xenaias... procured two infamous wretches, who... charged him with Nestorianism, and with having falsified a passage in an epistle of St. Paul, in support of that sect.<sup>2</sup>

Macedonius was replaced by an ardent Monophysite, Timothy, who proceeded to harass pro-Chalcedonians. Timothy convened the illegitimate Synod of Sidon in 512, of which Victor comments in his *Chronicon*:

Anastasius imperator haereticorum synodum faciens Henoticum Zenonis confirmat, et Euphemium episcopum Constantinopolitanum Chalcedonensis synodi defensorem

deponit; quem Euchaida in exsilium mittens, pro eo Macedonium facit.<sup>3</sup>

The Emperor Anastasius, making a Council of heretics, confirmed the Henoticon of Zeno, and deposed Euphemius, bishop of Constantinople, a defender of the Council of Chalcedon; sending him into exile in Euchaida, he appointed Macedonius in his place.<sup>4</sup>

Immediately it is clear that Victor was hostile to Anastasius and his actions, calling the Sidon synod convened by the Emperor's protégé Timothy, 'a Council of heretics'. This must be underlined, because Yusseff wholly misconstrues what Victor was saying about Anastasius. Yusseff presents the quote as an 'admission by Bishop Tununensis', whereas in fact it is a condemnation!<sup>5</sup> Here is what Victor actually says in his *Chronicon*:

Constantinopoli, jubente Anastasio imperatore, sancta Evangelia tanquam ab idiotis evangelistis composita, reprehenduntur et emendantur.<sup>6</sup>

At Constantinople, by the command of the Emperor Anastasius, the holy Gospels, as if compositions from unlearned Evangelists, were censured and emended.<sup>7</sup>

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3 Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, (first published 1844-1865), 'Victoris Chronicon', *Patrologia Latina Database*, <http://pld.chadwyck.com/>

4 I am indebted to the Rev. Eryl Rowlands for this translation.

5 Yusseff, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 81.

6 Migne, 'Victoris Chronicon', *Patrologia Latina Database*, <http://pld.chadwyck.com/>

7 Again my thanks to Eryl Rowlands.

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2 Henry Wace, & William C. Pierce, *A Dictionary of Early Christian Biography and Literature to the End of the Sixth Century A.D., with an Account of the Principal Sects and Heresies* (London: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1911), CCEL.



It appears from the context that Messalla, the consul, rather than being responsible for this action, is simply the reference for the quote. Nor is there any reference to 'Gentile' gospels. The great nineteenth century textual critic S. P. Tregelles actually refers to this event, but does so by first quoting the sixth century Chalcedonian writer Liberatus of Carthage (who was therefore roughly contemporaneous with Victor, and also in North Africa):

In addition to the evidence of the MSS., versions, and early citations, there is a narrative which relates to this passage. According to this narrative, Macedonius, Patriarch of Constantinople, was deprived by the Emperor Anastasius, anno 506, for having corrupted the Scriptures (called in the account "evangelia," as a general term), especially in this passage, by changing one letter so as to make OC into ΘC.<sup>8</sup>

This is what Liberatus writes in his *A Short Account of the Affair of the Nestorians and Eutychians (Breviarium causae Nestorianorum et Eutychianorum)*:

Hoc tempore Macedonius Constantinopolitanus episcopus, ab imperatore Anastasio dicitur expulsus, tanquam Evangelia falsasset, et maxime illud Apostoli dictum: *Quia apparuit in carne, justificatum est in spiritu*. Hunc enim immu-

tasse, ubi habet, ὄς id est, *qui monosyllabum Graecum, littera mutata o in ω vertisse, et fecisse, ὠς, id est, ut esset Deus, apparuit per carnem. Tanquam Nestorianus ergo culpatus expellitur per Severum monachum.*<sup>9</sup>

In this time, Macedonius, bishop of Constantinople, was expelled by the Emperor Anastasius (it was said), as he had falsified the Gospels and above all that word of the Apostle, "Who appeared in the flesh, was justified in the Spirit". For he had altered this, where it has ΟΣ, that is, WHO, a Greek monosyllable, he had changed Ο into Θ, and made ΘΣ, that is, in order that it might be, "GOD appeared in the flesh..." He was expelled, therefore, as a convicted Nestorian by the monk Severus.<sup>10</sup>

A footnote in Tregelles' book states: 'The same transaction regarding Macedonius and the corruption of Scripture is referred to in the *Chronicon* of Victor.'<sup>11</sup> Hence, it would seem that when we link his statement with the chronicle of Liberatus, Victor is actually referring to the fact that Anastasius made the false accusation that

<sup>8</sup> Samuel Prieaux Tregelles, *An Account of the Printed Text of the Greek New Testament; with Remarks on its Revision upon Critical Principles, together with a collation of the critical texts of Griesbach, Scholz, Lachmann, and Tischendorf, with that in common use*, (London: Samuel Bagster and sons, 1854), 229.

<sup>9</sup> Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, 'Breviarium Causae Nestorianorum et Eutychianorum, collectum a Liberato archidiacono Ecclesiae Carthaginensis regionis sextae', [http://pld.chadwyck.com/all/fulltext?ALL=Y&ACTION=byid&warn=N&div=3&id=Z300033301&FILE=../session/1156435298\\_24652&CURDB=pld](http://pld.chadwyck.com/all/fulltext?ALL=Y&ACTION=byid&warn=N&div=3&id=Z300033301&FILE=../session/1156435298_24652&CURDB=pld)

<sup>10</sup> Again my thanks to Eryl Rowlands.

<sup>11</sup> Tregelles, *An Account of the Printed Text of the Greek New Testament*, 229.

Macedonius had ‘tampered’ with the Biblical text—a trumped-up charge to remove him.

In the case of the text in question, 1 Timothy 3:16, there are two main variant readings, going back to at least the fourth century—some time before Macedonius. *Theos*, ΘΕΟΣ, the Greek word for ‘God’, was often abbreviated as ΘΣ, and it would be easy for a tired copyist to mistake this for the more probable reading—ΟΣ, ‘Who’. Yet none of this ever appears in Islamic propaganda surrounding the issue—but how many Christians would be able to present the facts to Muslim propagandists?

Another popular Islamic polemical work is that of Misha’al Kadhi, *What Did Jesus Really Say?*, where we read this:

It is impossible to deny that the Benedictine Monks of St. Maur, as far as Latin and Greek language went, were very learned and talented, as well as numerous body of men. In Cleland’s ‘Life of Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury’, is the following passage: ‘Lanfranc, a Benedictine Monk, Archbishop of Canterbury, having found the Scriptures much corrupted by copyists, applied himself to correct them, as also the writings of the fathers, agreeably to the orthodox faith, secundum fidem orthodoxam.

History of Christianity in the light of Modern knowledge, Higgins p. 318

In other words, the Christian scriptures were re-written in order to conform to the doctrines of the eleventh and twelfth centuries and

even the writings of the early church fathers were ‘corrected’ so that the changes would not be discovered. Sir Higgins goes on to say:

The same Protestant divine has this remarkable passage: ‘Impartiality exacts from me the confession, that the orthodox have in some places altered the Gospels’.

The author then goes on to demonstrate how a massive effort was undertaken in Constantinople, Rome, Canterbury, and the Christian world in general in order to ‘correct’ the Gospels and destroy all manuscripts before this period.<sup>12</sup>

One can almost hear the cry, ‘Who is this Higgins fellow?’. Sir Godfrey Higgins (1773-1833), a Yorkshire squire and Freemason, was a political and religious radical, whose theological radicalism took the form of esoteric religious writings. Amongst his ‘esoteric’ notions was the idea that: ‘...Ireland was colonised by a tribe from the East, and particularly from Phœnicia’.<sup>13</sup> Higgins had an innovative suggestion regarding the origin of the Jews; rather than being descended from a ‘wandering Aramaean’ from Mesopotamia (Deuteronomy 26:5), they actually came from India (!):

...if the history of Abraham can be believed, the Jews, properly so

<sup>12</sup> Misha’al Abdullah al Kadhi, *What Did Jesus Really Say?*, <http://media.isnet.org/off/Islam/JesusSay/ch2.1.html>

<sup>13</sup> Godfrey Higgins, *Anacalypsis: An Attempt to Draw Aside the Veil of the Saitic Isis: Or an Inquiry into the Origin of Languages, Nations and Religions*, Part 1, (USA: Kessinger Publishing, 2002, originally published in 1833), 443.

called, were all descendants of that Chaldaean Brahmin, and of the 318 persons said to be bred in his own house, who probably constituted the whole of the tribe, or of the high caste of the tribe, who had come with him from India.<sup>14</sup>

Comment is superfluous. The point to make is: where is the primary evidence for Higgins' assertion about the Bible? What specific manuscripts are the Roman See, Lanfranc and the Monks of St. Maur said to have corrupted? Who is the anonymous 'Protestant divine'?

In regard to the specific quote in *What Did Jesus Really Say?*, readers who knew nothing of Lanfranc and the Monks of St. Maur might assume that they were contemporaries, even that Lanfranc was their leader. In fact, the French congregation of the Benedictine monks of St. Maur began only in 1618-21.<sup>15</sup> Hence, they could not have done anything to the manuscripts of the Bible and the Early Church Fathers in 'the eleventh and twelfth centuries'! The Maurist monks were renowned for their patristic and biblical scholarship, and there seems to have been no accusations of manuscript tampering against them except in the fantasies of Higgins. As for Lanfranc, he lived c. 1005-1089. His career largely concerned both ecclesiastical and political statesmanship.

## II Islamic Utilisation of the Jesus Seminar and Bart Ehrman

We have spent some time on the preceding two figures, Victor Tununensis and Higgins because they are so frequently quoted by various Islamic polemicists today and because they are so obscure. Readers will be more aware of *The Jesus Seminar* and Bart Ehrman.

*Before Nicea*, a work by two western converts to Islam, devotes considerable space to the Seminar, alleging that it consists of none but famous academics in field of biblical scholarship: '*The Five Gospels* written by the '*Jesus Seminar*,' a group of *seventy four renowned Christian scholars from biblical studies institutes and universities all over the world*, was the result of six years of dedicated study.'<sup>16</sup> No evidence is offered to support this daring claim that all these 'seventy four' are 'renowned' and from 'all over the world'. Many scholars, such as Richard Hays, Luke Timothy Johnson, Ben Witherington III and N. T. Wright, have examined—and debunked—the claims of the Seminar, and there is no need to reproduce their work here.

The authors of *Before Nicea* recognise to some extent the subjective character of the Seminar in their comment that 'the main body' of the Seminar's work 'is concerned with demythologizing the gospels' and using a 'consensus' of 'opinion' aimed

<sup>14</sup> Godfrey Higgins, *Anacalypsis*, 310.

<sup>15</sup> Leslie A. St. L. Toke, 'The Maurists', *Catholic Encyclopedia*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10069b.htm>

<sup>16</sup> AbdulHaq Al-Ashanti, and Abdur-Rahman Bowes, *Before Nicea: The Early Followers of Prophet Jesus*, (UK: JamiahMedia, 2005), 35ff (emphasis original).

at determining ‘the authenticity of the sayings of Jesus, which may be unacceptable’, but nonetheless they quote ‘from their book that which is attested to by historical evidence’.<sup>17</sup> Significantly, *Before Nicea* ignores the fact that the Seminar’s founder, Robert Funk, once wrote: ‘I am mortified by either the ignorance or the dissembling of TV evangelists and others who endorse fundamentalism and literalisms in the name of Christianity. I am worried by the failure of the scholarship of Islam to enter the modern age.’<sup>18</sup>

The fact is that Funk was basically attacking *Muslims* for failing to apply the techniques of the historical-critical method to their sacred texts; indeed, we may go further—Funk was critiquing Muslims for failing to ‘demythologise’ the Qur’an and Hadith, in the same way that he attempted to do with the Bible. Essentially, the template that the Seminar uses for debunking the Bible would have the same effect on the Qur’an!

For example, Surah Al-i-Imran 3:45ff affirms the virgin birth of Jesus.<sup>19</sup> This is what Funk wrote about the virgin birth: ‘The virgin birth of Jesus is an

insult to modern intelligence and should be abandoned. In addition, it is a pernicious doctrine that denigrates women.’<sup>20</sup> Nothing suggests that Funk would have found the Qur’anic account any more acceptable than the Gospel narrative, and in the light of his demand for Islamic scholarship to ‘enter the modern age’—i.e. to embrace the historical-critical method as he practised it—we can safely assume that Funk would have rejected the Islamic account as vehemently as the biblical one. This should be brought to the attention of Islamic polemicists who utilise the Seminar’s writings.

The many popular works of the agnostic scholar Bart Ehrman are frequently quoted by Muslims, and his books are regularly on sale in Islamic bookstores. Often Muslims will refer to him as a *Christian* scholar, unaware of his agnosticism. *Before Nicea* quotes Ehrman’s book, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture* on the issue of manuscript variants and the fact that we do not possess the autographs:

Ehrman mentions: ‘In any event, none of the original manuscripts of the books of the Bible now survive. What do survive are copies made over the course of centuries, or more accurately, copies of the copies of the copies, some 5366 of them in the Greek language alone, that date from the second century down to the sixteenth. Strikingly, with the exception of the smallest fragments, no two of these copies are exact. No one knows how many

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17 *Before Nicea*, 8.

18 Robert W. Funk, ‘A Few Good People’, *The Fourth R*, Volume 15, 3, May/June 2002, [http://www.westarinstitute.org/Periodicals/4R\\_Articles/Editorial15-3/editorial15-3.html](http://www.westarinstitute.org/Periodicals/4R_Articles/Editorial15-3/editorial15-3.html)

19 Surah Al-i-Imran 3:45: ‘45 (And remember) when the angels said: O Mary! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a word from Him, whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary...47 She said: My Lord! How can I have a child when no mortal hath touched me? He said: ... Allah createth what He will... He saith unto it only: Be! and it is.’

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20 Funk, ‘The Coming Radical Reformation’, [http://www.westarinstitute.org/Periodicals/4R\\_Articles/Funk\\_Theses/funk\\_theses.html](http://www.westarinstitute.org/Periodicals/4R_Articles/Funk_Theses/funk_theses.html)

different, or variant readings, occur among the surviving witnesses, but they must number in the hundreds of thousands.<sup>21</sup>

The authors are not quoting Ehrman correctly: what he actually says is as follows: ‘In any event, none of them [*i.e. the autographs*] now survive... no two of these copies are exactly alike in all their particulars. No one knows how many differences or variant readings occur among the surviving witnesses...’<sup>22</sup> It needs to be emphasised that Christians believe in the inspiration of the *text* of the Bible, not the ink or parchments! Thus, in this respect, it is largely irrelevant that we no longer have the autographs.

Moreover, it should be noted that the authors of *Before Nicea* recognise that essentially the same factors are true of the Qur’an—that Muslims do not possess anything other than ‘copies’ of the original: ‘Most of the early original Qur’aan manuscripts with us now date from after the 2nd century.’<sup>23</sup> The autographs of the Qur’an no longer exist because the third Caliph, ‘Uthman, responding to a crisis, ‘after consultation with other companions, united the Muslims under one reading which was the Quraysh that the Prophet himself had used... all other dialects of reading and writing were ordered to be destroyed’.<sup>24</sup>

Since *Before Nicea* does not consider it to be problematic that all extant manuscripts of the Qur’an are ‘copies’ why, in the eyes of the book’s authors, is it such a problem for the Bible? *Before Nicea* ignores Ehrman’s subsequent comment about what he calls ‘textual variants’: ‘By far the vast majority are purely “accidental,” readily explained as resulting from scribal ineptitude, carelessness, or fatigue.’<sup>25</sup> This must be emphasised to Muslims.

### III The Identity of the Earliest Christians

The Qur’an presents Jesus as a Prophet of Islam, and his earliest followers—what the Qur’an calls his ‘helpers’—as Muslims.<sup>26</sup> The problem for Islam is, history does not agree! Recently, works such as *Before Nicea* have identified the Ebionites, a sect which denied the deity of Christ and repudiated Paul as an apostle, as the earliest Christians: ‘The Unitarian concept of God and the prophetic human nature of Jesus, was held by many early communities, basing their way of life on the teachings of Jesus, such as the *Ebionites*...’<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Before Nicea*, 37; Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>22</sup> Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 27.

<sup>23</sup> *Before Nicea*, 58.

<sup>24</sup> *Before Nicea*, 56-57.

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<sup>25</sup> Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, 27.

<sup>26</sup> Surah 61: 14. O ye who believe! Be ye helpers of Allah: As said Jesus the son of Mary to the Disciples, “Who will be my helpers to (the work of) Allah?” Said the disciples, “We are Allah’s helpers!” then a portion of the Children of Israel believed, and a portion disbelieved: But We gave power to those who believed, against their enemies, and they became the ones that prevailed.

<sup>27</sup> *Before Nicea*, 18.

The evidence for this assertion? John Toland (1670-1722), a sceptical Ulster writer who was even in his own age regarded as a maverick rather than a true scholar. Metzger notes the reaction to Toland's dubious fantasies about the New Testament canon:

Toland's arguments and innuendoes at once drew forth replies from defenders of the faith, including Samuel Clarke, rector of St James, Westminster, Stephen Nye, rector of Little Hornead, Herts., and John Richardson, formerly Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. The argument of Richardson was based on the reasonable premiss that 'what the Apostles Wrote, and what they Authoriz'd, can be known in no other way than by the Testimonies of those who liv'd at the same with them, and the Tradition of those who succeeded them'. It should not, therefore, be thought surprising, Richardson continued, 'if some Books were sooner and some later receiv'd as Canonical, by the Universal Body of Christians in all Places, because either the Books themselves, or the Testimonials to prove them Apostolical, might, nay Naturally would, be transmitted to some Churches later than others, as they were Situated nearer to, or remov'd farther from, those Cities or Countrys where they were first Publish'd, or enjoy'd a greater or less intercourse with them'.<sup>28</sup>

None of this, of course, receives any attention from Muslim propagandists. In a modern Islamic propagandistic work by Muhammad 'Ata ur-Rahim, *Jesus Prophet of Islam*, we find Toland's work *Nazarenes* quoted on the Ebionites:

Since the Nazarenes, or Ebionites, are by all the Church historians unanimously acknowledged to have been the first Christians, or those who believed in Christ among the Jews... considering this, I say how was it possible for them to be the first of all others (for they were made to be the first heretics), who should form wrong conceptions of the doctrines and designs of Jesus? And how came the Gentiles who believed in him after his death from the preaching of persons that never knew him to have truer notions these things, or whence could they have their information but from the believing Jews?<sup>29</sup>

Immediately we can see several problems in Toland's claims which are presented here as authoritative evidence. Firstly, he too easily equates the Nazarenes with the Ebionites, whereas the learned Jean Daniélou emphasised that the Ebionites should not be confused with the Nazarenes.<sup>30</sup> Secondly, Toland equates the Ebionites with the earliest Christian Jews,

<sup>28</sup> Bruce Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origins, Development and Significance*, (Oxford: OUP, 1987, 1997), 12-13.

<sup>29</sup> Muhammad 'Ata ur-Rahim, *Jesus Prophet of Islam*, (Elmhurst, New York: Tahrike Tar-sile Qur'an Inc., First U.S. Edition 1991), 76.

<sup>30</sup> Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, (London & Philadelphia: Darton, Longman & Todd/The Westminster Press, 1964, trans. Baker, James A.), 56.

which again is simply not valid. Obviously, the earliest Christians were Jews, but it simply does not follow that they held the same views as the Ebionites, and Toland never demonstrates that this was the case.

Thirdly, without providing any supporting evidence, he asserts that all church historians ‘unanimously’ acknowledge the Ebionites to have been the first Christians. Moreover, the ‘father’ of Church History was Eusebius, who had a very dismissive attitude to the Ebionites, and certainly did not equate them with the earliest Christians: ‘The ancients quite properly called these men Ebionites, because they held poor and mean opinions concerning Christ.’<sup>31</sup> One fails to see how Toland could have missed this, and the only conclusion that one can reach is that he deliberately ignored this evidence because it contradicted his assertions. There exists no definite information regarding the Ebionites *before* 180 A.D.—so how could they be the earliest Christians?

Finally, Toland asserts that the ‘wrong’ views about Christ, by which he presumably means belief in his deity, were the result of later Gentile influence, for which again Toland provides no supporting evidence. It also ignores the New Testament record, such as the references in the Gospel of John, who we should remember was both one of the earliest Christians and also a Jew rather than Gentile, who affirmed the deity of Christ (e.g. John 1:1; 8:58).

#### IV The Apostle Paul—the *bête noir* of Islamic polemics

If Jesus was a Muslim, who taught Islam, then why does the New Testament *not* teach this? Obviously, according to Islamic logic, someone changed the message. The question is ‘who?’ Islamic soteriology holds to salvation through belief and works, as displayed by the great Scale that will be used to weigh deeds on the Day of Judgment, Surah As-Shura 42:17 (‘Allah it is Who hath revealed the Scripture with truth, and the Balance’), as recorded in the Hadith:

Narrated by AbudDarda’  
Mishkat Al-Masabih 0626(R)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Nothing is weightier in the scales of a believer on the Day of Judgment than his good behaviour...

*Transmitted by Tirmidhi.*

Since the apostle Paul taught justification by faith apart from works of the law, he has become the person Muslim polemicists blame for changing the *kerygma* of Jesus. Kadhi quotes Arnold Meyer’s 1909 book, *Jesus or Paul*:<sup>32</sup>

Dr. Arnold Meyer says: “*If by Christianity we understand faith in Christ as the heavenly Son of God, who did not belong to earthly humanity, but who lived in the divine likeness and glory, who came down from heaven to earth, who entered humanity and took upon himself a human form through a virgin, that he might*

<sup>31</sup> Eusebius, *Church History*, Book III, Chapter XXVII.

<sup>32</sup> Arnold Meyer, *Jesus or Paul*, (London & New York: Harper & Brothers, 1909, trans. J. R. Wilkinson), 122-123.

*make propitiation for men's sins by his own blood upon the cross, who was then awakened from death and raised to the right hand of God, as the Lord of his own people, who believe in him, who hears their prayers, guards and leads them, who will come again with the clouds of heaven to judge the world, who will cast down all the foes of God, and will bring his own people with him unto the home of heavenly light so that they may become like His glorified body—if this is Christianity, then such Christianity was founded by St. Paul and not by our Lord"*

Dr. Arnold Meyer, Professor of Theology, Zurich University, *Jesus or Paul*, p. 122.<sup>33</sup>

What Kadhi did not quote was what Meyer immediately added:

Yet whatever view we take, whether we regard this form of Christianity as of the real essence of Christianity or not, in any case we are far from being justified in speaking, without qualification, of St. Paul as the founder of Christianity. For in the first place the conceptions here employed were neither all created by St. Paul, nor was he the first to apply all of them to Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>34</sup>

It becomes very clear from Meyer's book that he proceeds on the basis of outdated German nineteenth/early twentieth century liberalism, which is not representative of contemporary scholarship:

Adopting this order of investigation we also make it clear from the very beginning that in the Christ of the first three gospels we are dealing not with the historical Jesus, but with the conception formed of Him by the faith and in the tradition of the Primitive Community, a conception which must have been influenced by St. Paul, seeing that it was created after his times.<sup>35</sup>

In fact, in the light of early Christian tradition Paul's Christology was influenced 'by the faith and in the tradition of the Primitive Community', rather than *vice versa*!

This is the vital area neglected by Islamic polemicists—the issue of *Pre-Pauline Tradition*. If Paul were the innovator of canonical Christianity, diverting it from what Jesus and his immediate disciples actually taught, we should *not* find him utilising *early*—and thus *prior*—Christian tradition in his writings, since this would undermine his supposed goal. Yet the fact is that he does indeed cite such earlier Christian tradition! N.T. Wright observes that in regard to 1 Corinthians 15:1-3, the references to what Paul 'received' definitely indicate a prior tradition: '*paredoka* and *parelabon* (v.3, the latter echoing *parelabete* in v.1) are technical for the receiving and handing on of tradition.'<sup>36</sup>

This applies to the death and resurrection of Christ in 1 Corinthians 15:1-5. It also applies to the divine sonship of Jesus, which Islam specifically

33 Kadhi, *What Did Jesus Really Say?*, <http://media.isnet.org/off/Islam/JesusSay/ch1.2.7.html>

34 Meyer, *Jesus or Paul*, 123.

35 Meyer, *Jesus or Paul*, 12.

36 N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, (London: SPCK, 2003), 319n.



denies. Kramer observes that 'A pre-Pauline formula which represents an early setting of the title *Son* is found at Rom. 1.3b-4'.<sup>37</sup> When we consider the pre-Pauline use of 'Lord' we also see that Paul did not innovate the understanding of this title held by the earliest Christians, as demonstrated by the pre-Pauline formulae in Romans 10:9—'that if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord...'<sup>38</sup> Bruce comments that Paul learned the outline of his message 'in one of the churches with which he had fellowship in his earlier Christian days, such as Damascus or Antioch'.<sup>39</sup> Thus, Paul did not *manufacture* a new faith: he *received* the essential beliefs from the earliest Christian believers, which undermines any idea of his being the real founder of Christianity.

Had Paul been distorting the gospel message, the earliest disciples of Jesus—specifically the apostles—would have confronted him and opposed his message, yet we read in Galatians 2:8-9 that the other apostles, including John, *recognised* the apostleship of Paul. It should be remembered that these 'pillars' were still alive at the time that Paul penned this epistle, so if he had been uttering a falsehood, they would have repudiated his claims to recognition of his apostleship, but there are no such statements in any first century writing ascribed to James, Peter or John.

The message of *Acts*, especially chapters 9-13, and 2 Peter 3:15-16 also demonstrate acceptance of Paul's apostolate by the original apostles. In 1 Corinthians 15, the earlier Christian material that Paul utilises also refers to the risen Jesus appearing to Peter and the Twelve, and then to more than 'five hundred' people. Again, if Paul's message was so contrary to that of the earliest disciples of Jesus, why should he make references to these people, most of whom were still alive (v6), who could easily have refuted his message, if it indeed contradicted the original *kerygma*?

There is further indication that Paul's message was in keeping with the original gospel. It should be observed that Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans around 57 A.D. We must note that Paul is writing to a congregation that he did *not* found, and that he refers to the Jewish-Christian apostles 'Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, *who also were in Christ before me*', Romans 16:7. Since it is likely that Paul was converted within a year or so of the crucifixion-resurrection event, the two individuals must have been among the earliest converts to Christianity. This is an important point to raise with Muslim propagandists.

Given that the church at Rome was not of Pauline foundation, its theological beliefs did not originate with the apostle Paul. Had Paul's gospel been contrary to the original gospel of Jesus, earlier Christian believers such as Andronicus and Junias—described as 'apostles' no less—would have contested it. Yet it is clear from the Epistle of Clement, which was actually an epis-

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37 Werner Kramer, *Christ, Lord, Son of God*, (London: SCM, 1966), 108.

38 Kramer, *Christ, Lord, Son of God*, 65.

39 F. F. Bruce, *Paul & Jesus*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), 45.

tle written by the church at Rome to the Corinthians, c. 95, that Paul was highly esteemed in the Empire's capital:

Even the greatest and most virtuous pillars of our Church were assailed by envy and jealousy, and had to keep up the struggle till death ended their days. Look at the holy Apostles... And Paul, because of jealousy and contention, has become the very type of endurance rewarded. He was in bonds seven times, he was exiled, and he was stoned. He preached in the East and in the West, winning a noble reputation for his faith. He taught righteousness to all the world; and after reaching the furthest limits of the West, and bearing his testimony before kings and rulers, he passed out of this world and was received into the holy places. In him we have one of the greatest of all examples of endurance.<sup>40</sup>

In chapter 47, the epistle obviously refers to Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, and designates Paul as 'the blessed Apostle Paul'.<sup>41</sup> Hence, it must be the case that Paul's gospel, as outlined in the Epistle, concerning the divinity of Jesus, his redemptive death and his resurrection, and also the means of salvation (by grace through faith alone on the basis of Jesus' crucified self-sacrifice) was in fact the *same*

message preached from the start by the other disciples. The reality of Paul's references to early Christian tradition and the apostolic recognition of Paul's calling, as also testified by the Epistle of Clement, totally undermines Islamic polemics on this issue.

## V Constantine and the Council of Nicaea

Islamic polemics have another *bête noir*—the Emperor Constantine. This is because Muslim propagandists need to be able to identify someone who had the political clout to enforce uniformity in the church, and to exclude, even persecute those who rejected the Trinity, and other such matters. Obviously, it is under Constantine that Christians first enjoyed political power. Moreover, it is often the case that Muslims assume that the features of their history are replicated in those who came before them, especially given their belief in the collegiality of the Prophets. So, if something happened in Islamic history, the likelihood is that it also occurred in Christian history.

This is especially true of sacred texts. The history of the Qur'anic text shows that it was recognised through a kind of committee under Zaid ibn Thabit, under the orders of Caliph 'Uthman, who then secured uniformity by calling in, and then burning all existing texts, as recorded in the Hadith:

Sahih Al-Bukhari Hadith 6.510  
Narrated by Anas bin Malik

... 'Uthman then ordered Zaid bin Thabit... to rewrite the manuscripts in perfect copies...' Uthman sent to every Muslim province one copy of what they had copied, and

<sup>40</sup> Clement of Rome, 'First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians', Chapter 5, Maxwell Staniforth (trans.), *Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 25-26.

<sup>41</sup> Clement of Rome, 'First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians', 48.

ordered that all the other Qur'anic materials, whether written in fragmentary manuscripts or whole copies, be burnt...

This becomes relevant when we look at what *Jesus Prophet of Islam* claims happened at the Council of Nicaea at the orders of Constantine:

...it was decided to resort to a miracle of God to affirm and support the decision of the Council: the pile of the Gospels... still lay in the middle of the hall where they had been placed at the beginning of the Council. According to one source, there were at least 270 versions of the Gospel at this time, while another states there were as many as 4,000 different Gospels...

It was decided that all the different Gospels should be placed under a table in the Council Hall. Everyone then left the room and the door was locked. The bishops were asked to pray... that the correct version of the Gospel might come onto the top of the table. In the morning the Gospels acceptable to Athanasius... were found neatly placed on top of the table. It was decided that all the Gospels remaining under the table should be burned... It became a capital offence to possess an unauthorised Gospel.<sup>42</sup>

Readers will recognise that *The Da Vinci Code* made similar allegations. All of this is pure fantasy, and it is significant that *Jesus Prophet of Islam* gives no citation for its assertions, and

even more significant that it never names the two sources it 'quotes' about the number of the 'gospels' supposedly on offer at the Council. In terms of what happened at Nicaea, the only contemporary sources we possess are those of Athanasius and Eusebius, who both attended the Council, and that of Eustathius, another attendee who was hostile to Eusebius and whose work is found in Theodoret's *Church History*. None of the claims made by Islamic polemics is supported in their accounts. Yet this is a common feature of Muslim propaganda. The danger is that few ordinary Christians know much about either the Council or about the Canonical process, and so are easy meat for such propaganda.

#### Arius and canonical criteria in relation to Islam and Christianity

The Arian controversy did not concern canonical issues; Arius himself had the same canon of Scripture as his adversaries: 'Arius was by profession an interpreter of the Scriptures'.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, 'Arius and his supporters were interested in a large number of texts, from Old and New Testaments alike'.<sup>44</sup> These included Romans 11:36.<sup>45</sup> The last-mentioned is important because *Jesus Prophet of Islam* makes some ridiculous and false assertions about Arius: 'He followed the teaching of Jesus implicitly, and refused to accept

<sup>42</sup> ur-Rahim, *Jesus Prophet of Islam.*, 103-104.

<sup>43</sup> Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, (London: SCM Press, 2001 second edition), 107.

<sup>44</sup> Williams, *Arius*, 108.

<sup>45</sup> Williams, *Arius*, 271.

the innovations introduced by Paul.<sup>46</sup> The problem is that Muslim propagandists are arguing that the New Testament canon was arbitrarily chosen, rejecting works such as the *Gospel of Thomas* and other documents. The average Christian has little knowledge of canonical issues, and so is unable to respond.

The main criterion was *Apostolicity*—the apostles were commissioned by Jesus, and what they and close associates wrote became recognised—not chosen as Scripture. In his *Dialogue with Trypho* 103.8, Justin Martyr (c. 150) refers to ‘the memoirs composed by the apostles and those who followed them’, and in *1 Apology* 66, he identifies those memoirs with the Gospels: ‘For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels...’

Linked to this was another feature—that any such writings had to emerge in the apostolic era, i.e. the first century. So works such as *Pseudo-Thomas*, etc., were rejected. Another factor was the criterion of *Antiquity*—a text had to go back to the Apostolic Age, which is why Irenaeus (c. 180) rejected the Valentinian Gnostic work, *The Gospel of Truth*, because it was ‘recent’.<sup>47</sup>

Islam authenticates its Hadith corpus through the process of *Isnad*, the chain of narration. Similarly, the early church insisted upon *Traditional Usage* going back to apostolic days as a criterion; for example, Jerome (*Letter*

*CXXIX to Dardanus*) observed that the *Epistle to the Hebrews* ‘receives recognition day by day in the churches’ public reading’. Another Islamic criterion is *ijma*, consensus. Eusebius shows that the early church had a similar concept—*Catholicity*—in recognising genuine Scriptures: ‘The so-called Acts of Peter, however, and the Gospel which bears his name, and the Preaching and the Apocalypse, as they are called, we know have not been universally accepted...’<sup>48</sup> Note the reference here to ‘universal acceptance’. There were also the criteria of *Orthodoxy* and *Inspiration*, but the analogies of the preceding criteria with Islamic concepts provide a means to answer Muslim propagandists on the Canon.

## VI Constantine a Pagan

Like *The Da Vinci Code*, Islamic polemical literature claims that Constantine was a life-long pagan, and so his alleged conversion was actually a politically-motivated conspiracy aimed at the paganising of Christianity. *Before Nicea* proposes a similar idea:

Remember, these same Romans would later preside over the *Council of Nicea*, headed by the Pagan Roman Emperor, Constantine, who was himself considered to be an incarnation and embodiment of the sun god!! *The Council of Nicea* and other ‘councils’ lead to the ‘official’ and ‘orthodox’ doctrines of which books should be placed into the Bible, the trinity and Jesus’ date of

46 ur-Rahim, *Jesus Prophet of Islam*, 81.

47 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book III, Chapter XI.

48 Eusebius, *Church History*, Book III, Chapter III.

birth being fixed to the 25th of December.<sup>49</sup>

In fact, there was no political mileage in conversion to Christianity. 'At the time of Constantine's conversion (312) Christians made up a small minority of the empire's population, say 10 per cent, although that is only a guess.<sup>50</sup> Constantine's genuine conversion is confirmed by Christian writers who knew him, such as Lactantius and Eusebius.<sup>51</sup> It is corroborated by hostile pagan writers such as Zosimus, and by Constantine's relative, Julian the Apostate, in his work *The Caesars*.<sup>52</sup>

Constantine's correspondence, policies and funerary arrangements testify that he thought of himself as a Christian. For example, in a letter to the Eastern provinces, he refers to the Great Persecution under Diocletian and Maximian being the result of the oracle of Apollo declaring that 'the righteous men on earth were a bar to his speaking the truth', the 'righteous' being identified with the Christians, hence their persecution. Constantine goes on to refer to this 'impious deliverance of the Pythian oracle' which 'exercised a delusive power' over the persecuting Emperors.<sup>53</sup> His policy in founding Con-

stantinople as a Christian city free from paganism was lauded by the church historian Sozomen:

As this city became the capital of the empire during the period of religious prosperity, it was not polluted by altars, Grecian temples, nor sacrifices... Constantine further honored this newly compacted city of Christ, named after himself, by adorning it with numerous and magnificent houses of prayer.<sup>54</sup>

It follows that Constantine was not a pagan, and so was not involved in 'paganising' Christianity.

## VIII Response of Christians

### 1. Learn about Islam

It is essential that Christians learn about Islam. The apostle Paul evidently possessed knowledge of Hellenistic religion and philosophy, as his debates with Epicureans and Stoics on the Areopagus reveal, Acts 17. Hence, he was able to present the gospel in terms that his hearers could understand. It follows that in order to adequately answer Muslim polemicists, we must know something about Islam. Usually, Christian experts are available to provide such education.

### 2. Learn about Islamic Polemics

In order to answer Islamic polemics, we must be aware of the main or favourite *issues* raised by anti-Christian Muslim propaganda. So often, it is

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49 *Before Nicea*, 47.

50 Cyril Mango, 'New Religion, Old Culture', *The Oxford History of Byzantium*, Ed. Cyril Mango, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 96.

51 Lactantius, *Of the Manner in Which the Persecutors Died*, Chapter XLIV, ANF 07; Eusebius, *The Life of the Blessed Emperor Constantine*, Chapter XXVII, NPNF 201.

52 Zosimus, *The History of Count Zosimus*, (London: Green and Chaplin, 1814). Book II.

53 Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, Chapters XLVIII-LXI.

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54 Sozomen, *Church History*, Book II, Chapter III, NPNF 202.

because Christians are not prepared that they are stumped when encountering such arguments for the first time. Training sessions should be held on these issues, inviting people experienced in answering such propaganda.

### 3. Learn about Christian history and doctrine

If congregations are not given adequate training in the foundations of the Faith, they become like the 'unoccupied' abode of Matthew 12:44 to which a demon may return—that is, people who are not prepared are open season for hostile polemicists. Most congregational activities involve devotional or ethical issues, and unfortunately, anything involving intellectual matters is seen as daunting or boring.

Yet it is impossible to answer Islamic polemics without some sustained training programme addressing matters such as biblical canonicity, the Trinity, the person of Christ, the Council of Nicaea, Paul in relation to Jesus, and other such matters—all issues which are raised by Muslims. Pastors need to give congregations a sense of urgency about these matters, pointing

out that they—and certainly their children—will encounter Islamic polemics, especially in colleges and universities, as well as—increasingly—in Muslim street outreaches, a common sight in places like London. If Christians want to safeguard their children's spiritual future, some intellectual effort is necessary—even about obscure figures such as Victor Tununensis!

There is historical precedent. The great Puritan, Richard Baxter was famous for catechising his parishioners. Instructed in the intellectual defence of the gospel, many ordinary believers were very able to defend the Faith to 'everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you' (1 Peter 3:15). Indeed, if we go back much further in church history, the second and third centuries saw the emergence of able Christian 'Apolo-gists' such as Justin Martyr and Tertullian who defended the Faith against attacks by non-Christians. The rise of Islamic polemics in the West demands that congregations as a whole need to learn about the main issues in Muslim propaganda, and crucially, how to answer them.

# The Bible: Is It a Fax from Heaven?

Vishal Mangalwadi

**KEYWORDS:** *Revelation, dictation, Word of God, human rights, martyr, canon, Jewish scriptures, apostles*

In his novel *The Da Vinci Code*, Dan Brown wrote that since 'the Bible did not arrive by fax from heaven', it cannot be the Word of God.<sup>1</sup> Can the president of the United States of America use a speechwriter to craft his State of the Union address? Can he have dozens of associates amend, rewrite, revise, and edit that speech? If, in an emergency, the president asked someone else to deliver his speech to the Congress, would it still be the president's word?

*The Da Vinci Code* assumes that the Creator cannot do what a president can do. Worse, it assumes that since the Creator cannot communicate, the

human mind cannot know the truth. It creates a myth to revive Gnostic/Tantric teaching that we can experience enlightenment by silencing our minds through mystical sex. Dan Brown implements Joseph Campbell's recommendation that having lost its hope of finding truth, the West ought to invent stories to imagine the meaning of existence.

If it is true that we cannot know what is true, then what happens to America's 1776 Declaration of Independence? The Founders said, 'We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.' Are these truths self-evident to the human mind? A postmodernist would be absolutely right in insisting that the Declaration of Independence was wrong. These 'truths' are not 'self-evident'.

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1 Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (NY: Doubleday, 2003), 231.

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Human equality is not self-evident anywhere in the world—not even in America. Women and blacks were not treated as equal in America. Equality was never self-evident to Hindu sages. For them, inequality was self-evident. Their question was, why are human beings born unequal? Hinduism taught that the Creator made people different. The higher castes were made from his head, shoulders, and belly, and the lower castes were made from his feet. The law of karma accentuated these basic differences. The Buddha did not believe in the Creator, but he accepted the doctrine of karma as the metaphysical cause for the inequality of human beings. Nor were unalienable rights self-evident to Rome.

During Jesus' trial, Pilate, Rome's governor and chief justice over Israel, declared: 'I find no basis for a charge against this man.'<sup>2</sup> Pilate then said to Jesus, 'You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?'<sup>3</sup> Wait a minute! Do you have the power to crucify someone whom you declare to be innocent? Isn't it self-evident to you that he has an unalienable right to life?

Or take the case of the apostle Paul. A number of Roman commanders, judges, governors, and kings tried him. Everyone agreed that he was innocent. Did anyone set him free? No, they kept him imprisoned for years to please his accusers and try to extract bribes from him.<sup>4</sup> It was not self-evident to any of

them that Paul had an unalienable right to liberty.

Equality and human rights are not self-evident truths. In his original draft, Thomas Jefferson penned, 'We hold these truths to be *sacred and undeniable*.' That was the truth. That's why the Declaration grounded the 'unalienable' rights in the Creator rather than in the state. The most honest declaration would have been, 'We hold these truths to be divinely revealed.' Revelation is the reason why America believed what some Deists ascribed to 'common sense'.

To be precise, these truths appeared common sense to the American Founders because their sense was shaped by the common impact of the Bible—even if a few of them doubted that the Bible was divinely revealed.

### I Does all of this matter?

Yes, it is a matter of life and death. Jesus and Paul were highly respected public servants. Yet even their lives were not safe in a culture that had lost the very notion of truth. Jesus told Pilate that he had come to reveal truth.<sup>5</sup> What an opportunity! Pilate could have said to his accusers: 'I have never met anyone who knew truth. Now that you have brought him to me, I will keep him at least for a while to learn all about truth.' But Pilate had no patience for 'nonsense'. How could this carpenter know truth when the greatest Greek philosophers and Latin poets were clueless?

By Pilate's time, Europe had lost

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<sup>2</sup> Lu. 23:4 NIV

<sup>3</sup> Jn. 19:10.

<sup>4</sup> Acts 24:26–27.

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<sup>5</sup> Jn. 18:37.



hope of knowing truth and even interest in seeking it. Like the postmodern West today, Pilate believed that no one knows truth—not in any rational sense that could be explained in words. The Gnostics who talked about ‘experiencing’ mystical truth used the same type of mythical verbiage as Dan Brown. And this is far from a theoretical discussion.

What happens to a culture that is clueless about what is true, good, and just? Pilate answered that question when he declared: ‘I have the power to crucify you or set you free.’ When we believe truth is unknowable, we rob it of any authority. What is left is brute power wielding arbitrary force. Whether a person or an ethnic minority is guilty or innocent becomes irrelevant. His or her right to life depends exclusively on the whims of whoever has power. Any nation that refuses to live under truth condemns itself to live under sinful man.

Dan Brown is quite right that the Bible was not faxed from heaven. It is very different from other books like the Qur’an that claim to be inspired. It usually does not use the phrase ‘the Word of God’ as other ancient and contemporary ‘revelations’ do. For example, unlike the Prophet Muhammad, none of the writers of the four Gospels claims to have received their information in a prophetic trance by revelation from God or from an angel. Nor do the Gospel writers claim that a spirit entity used them as channels for ‘automatic writing’.

Private revelations cannot generally be confirmed as divinely inspired. They may be supernaturally inspired, but how would we know if they are from God or from the devil, angels, or

demons?<sup>6</sup> Most books of the Bible are not revelations received in a subjective, trancelike experience.<sup>7</sup> The Gospels, for example, claim to be objective public truth. They bear courageous witness to the public events of Jesus’ teaching, miracles, prophecies, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension—witnessed by five hundred people.

The Gospel writers—the evangelists—challenged the interpretations of Jewish scholarship and a brutal Roman state. They opened themselves to cross-examination. Matthew, Mark, and John gave eyewitness accounts as evidence for their truth. Luke described how he systematically researched the facts, carefully checking them out with eyewitnesses. This is a very human, scholarly way of writing indeed!

Can men record the Word of God? The apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: ‘When you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you

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<sup>6</sup> In Acts 10:9–19, Peter received a revelation in a trancelike vision. Subsequent events in chapters 9 and 10 confirmed that the vision was from God.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel, who did receive private visions, did not try to get his contemporaries to believe his prophecies. ‘I, Daniel, was deeply troubled by my thoughts, and my face turned pale, but I kept the matter to myself’ (Daniel 7:28). ‘Here is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my colour changed, but I kept the matter in my heart.’ Later generations, including Jesus Christ, believed him because his prophecies turned out to be so true that many modern scholars thought his book must have been written centuries after Daniel’s time.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Thess. 2:13, emphasis added.

accepted it not as the word of men but as *what it really is, the word of God*.<sup>18</sup> Documented fulfilment of earlier prophecies provides strong evidence of writers communicating 'the word of God'. J. Barton Payne, for example, details 1,817 Bible predictions involving 8,352 predictive verses (27 per cent of the Bible).<sup>9</sup> Systematic fulfilment of short- and midterm prophecies have given strong encouragement that the canon reflects the word of God as spoken by prophets.

## II Can the Words of Men be the Word of God?

Ill-informed critics assume that Christians believe the Bible because the Roman Catholic Church councils declared it was God's Word. The reality is that the church believes the Bible because Jesus lived and died 'in accordance with the scriptures'.<sup>10</sup>

The Gospels make it clear that Jesus did not have a martyr complex: he did not want to die.<sup>11</sup> He could have escaped arrest in the garden of Gethsemane. In fact, at the moment of his arrest, Peter gave Jesus an excellent opportunity to escape into the dark, but Jesus rebuked him.<sup>12</sup> Jesus could also have saved his life during his trial, for his judges found him innocent. Instead of trying to save his life, Jesus laid it down. And he did it for one reason alone: so that the Scriptures may

be fulfilled.<sup>13</sup> Why did Jesus take the Jewish Scriptures so seriously that he chose to die to fulfil them?

Scientists have just begun to discover awe-inspiring communication that happens in communities of the single cell creatures we call amoeba.<sup>14</sup> We are far from figuring out why life is so inseparably related to information and its transmission. From the very beginning, the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament) reveal a God who speaks: 'And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.'<sup>15</sup> Thus the Jewish worldview sees language as foundational to reality. We human beings speak because we are made in the image of a Spirit who said, 'Let us make man in our image'.<sup>16</sup> Man became a 'living soul' when God breathed his spirit ('breath') into a body of clay.<sup>17</sup> Thus, human language has both spiritual and physical aspects.

The Bible teaches that God is love. Love includes communication. Both Old and New Testaments teach that God speaks to us because he loves us. He gave us the gift of language so we may know and love him and one another as his children. Love, Jesus taught, was the whole point of divine revelation, that is, communication.<sup>18</sup> In the Judeo-Christian understanding, love and language are aspects not of

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<sup>9</sup> Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (NY: Harper & Row, 1973).

<sup>10</sup> 1 Cor. 15:2-3; Lk. 24:44-48.

<sup>11</sup> Lk. 22:41-42.

<sup>12</sup> Lk. 22:49-51.

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<sup>13</sup> Mt. 26:54; Mk. 14:49.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.cosmicfingerprints.com/blog/intelligent-bacteria/>; John Tyler Bonner, *The Social Amoeba: The Biology of Slime Molds* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2008).

<sup>15</sup> Gen. 1:3.

<sup>16</sup> Gen. 1:26.

<sup>17</sup> Gen. 2:7.

<sup>18</sup> Mt. 22:37.

chemistry but of our *psyche* or soul. Our chemistry is designed to facilitate love, knowledge, communication, and worship.

### III Jesus, Daniel, and the Jewish Scriptures

Jesus treated the Hebrew Scriptures in the same way as did the Hebrew prophet, Daniel, an administrator in Babylon. Daniel was a young contemporary of the prophet Jeremiah in whose day, many prophets claimed to receive revelations from God. The prophets who predicted peace and prosperity for Jerusalem enjoyed religious and political patronage. Yet their prophecies turned out to be false. Jeremiah, on the other hand, called his nation to repentance. Otherwise, he said, God would bring doom and destruction through the Babylonians. Jeremiah was condemned for treason and almost killed, but subsequent events proved him right. Daniel, therefore, took Jeremiah's prophecies seriously.

Decades after Jeremiah was gone, Daniel kept reading Jeremiah's scrolls, even though Jeremiah's work was not yet in the Jewish canon. The more Daniel read, the more convinced he became that since Jeremiah's predictions had come true, he was a prophet from God.<sup>19</sup> Finally Daniel became so convinced that Jeremiah's words were God's words that he was willing to be thrown into a den of lions.<sup>20</sup>

Here is what happened: Jeremiah prophesied that Jerusalem would be rebuilt seventy years after its destruction.<sup>21</sup> That was about the time when the Medo-Persian coalition defeated Babylon. Jeremiah's prophecy, in conjunction with dreams of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel himself, helped Daniel understand the significance of that momentous event. He believed 'the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet'<sup>22</sup> and began to pray for the rebuilding of Jerusalem.<sup>23</sup> Then the king was duped into issuing a devastating edict: No one was to pray to any god except to the king for thirty days. The penalty for violation was the lions' den!

Daniel, by then administrator-in-chief for the empire, knew that his rivals had engineered that edict specifically to destroy him. He had to choose. Would he stop praying for the dead city of Jerusalem to save his life, or would he trust Jeremiah's words at the risk of his life? The deeper question was, who was sovereign—God or the king?

Daniel had no other basis for disobeying the king and risking his life except his confidence that Jeremiah's words were God's words. God was sovereign over history. God had used Babylon to destroy wicked Jerusalem to fulfil the words spoken by numerous prophets, beginning with Moses. Now God was going to use the Persian emperor to rebuild his temple, notwithstanding the schemes of Daniel's rivals.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Deut. 18:21, 22.

<sup>20</sup> Deut. 4:7, 29; 9:26; Jer. 29:7, 12–13; 31:4–14, 23–28; 50:4; Lam. 2:18, 19.

<sup>21</sup> Jer. 25:11–12.

<sup>22</sup> Jer. 1:1–3; 25:3; 2 Chr. 36:21; Ezra 1:1; Dan. 9:2.

<sup>23</sup> Dan. 9:2.

<sup>24</sup> 2 Chr. 36:21–23; Isa. 44:24–28; 45:1, 13.

Daniel believed Jeremiah's prophecy. Therefore he kept his practice of opening his windows to Jerusalem and praying three times a day. Daniel was arrested, tried, and thrown into the lions' den. After a sleepless night, the king was astonished to discover that something—or rather, someone—had kept the lions from harming Daniel. His miraculous escape so moved the king that he issued an edict encouraging Jews to return to build a temple for the living God in Jerusalem and pray for the king!<sup>25</sup>

As Daniel did, Jesus treated the words of the Hebrew Scriptures as God's Word. He lived by the Scriptures,<sup>26</sup> died, and was buried according to the Scriptures, and on the third day he rose again 'according to the Scriptures'<sup>27</sup> and his own prophecies.<sup>28</sup> Jesus' apostles, including Peter and Paul, followed Jesus in teaching that the Hebrew Scriptures were written by men but inspired by God.<sup>29</sup>

Did Jesus lay down his life to fulfill the Scriptures because he was but a first-century Jew conditioned by his culture's mistaken view of the Scriptures? Or was the Old Testament his

own Word? In that case, Jesus would be teaching the lesson that John Locke drew from it, that is, to use our gift of language responsibly, to say what we mean and mean what we say, and to keep our word, as God does, whatever the cost.<sup>30</sup>

Even a superficial reading of the Gospels is sufficient to show a sceptic that Jesus' culture rejected him because he overturned their understanding of the Scriptures.<sup>31</sup> He was anything but a product of his culture. He spoke not as an exegete, but as someone with a unique authority to expound God's original intention behind the words of Scripture.<sup>32</sup> The Jews persecuted Jesus because he claimed to have greater authority than Moses,<sup>33</sup> who had received the '*very words of God*'.<sup>34</sup>

#### IV Is the New Testament the Word of God?

The epistle to the Hebrews exhorts the Jewish followers of the Messiah to 'remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you'.<sup>35</sup> How could the apostles' words be regarded as '*the words of God*'?

The apostles already believed that God's word created the universe.<sup>36</sup> They had seen Jesus' words still the storms, heal the sick, and raise the

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**25** See passages such as Daniel ch 9 and 6, Ezra 1:1: 'In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that *the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled*, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing (emphasis added).'

**26** Mt. 4:1–10.

**27** 1 Cor. 15:2–3.

**28** Mk. 8:31–33; 9:30–32; 10:32–34.

**29** 2 Pet. 1:19–21; 2 Tim. 3:15–16.

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**30** Mt. 5:37.

**31** Mt. 22:29.

**32** Mt. 7:28–30.

**33** Mt. 19:1–11.

**34** Rom. 3:2; Heb. 3:1–6.

**35** Heb. 13:7 NIV (emphasis added).

**36** Gen. 1; John 1:1–3.

dead. Jesus assured them: 'The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.'<sup>37</sup> He promised that if they would abide in his word, they would know the truth, the truth would set them free,<sup>38</sup> and that their prayers would be answered if they remained in his word.<sup>39</sup> Having seen Jesus' words raise several people from death, what were the apostles to do with his claim that the day was coming when the dead would hear his voice, and those who hear would rise again and live eternally?<sup>40</sup>

To make matters worse, the apostles thought the Messiah would conquer Rome, but Jesus predicted he would be crucified and three days later be raised again. The apostles witnessed Jesus' words come true. Their first hand experiences of Christ's death and resurrection compelled them to conclude that Jesus' words were God's words. Jesus was the eternal, creative Word of God (*logos*) become flesh.<sup>41</sup> Jesus himself used the testimony of the Scriptures—more than his incredible miracles—as the proof of his divinity.<sup>42</sup>

In his prayer to his Father, Jesus said, 'For I have given them [the disciples] the words that you gave me.'<sup>43</sup> He breathed his Spirit upon the apostles,<sup>44</sup> assuring them that the Holy Spirit

would remind them of what he had taught them<sup>45</sup> and would guide them into all truth.<sup>46</sup> Jesus did not send them merely to teach and preach what they had heard and seen. He also gave them authority to heal the sick and cast out demons with their words.<sup>47</sup> The apostles became the servants or 'ministers of the word'.<sup>48</sup> They devoted themselves to 'the ministry [service] of the word'.<sup>49</sup> God's Spirit confirmed the apostles' words by supernatural signs and wonders.<sup>50</sup> What would you have thought if you saw Peter's words heal a man born lame?<sup>51</sup> Even unbelievers treated the words of the apostles as the words of God.<sup>52</sup> The apostles' contemporaries interpreted the growth of the church as the growth of the word of God: 'And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of disciples multiplied.'<sup>53</sup> Following Jesus' example, the apostles sealed their words with their blood. They did not struggle for personal survival, because Christ's word assured them of their eternal survival.

Contrary to Bible critics, such as Dan Brown, the church did not invent the Word of God: the church was 'built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets', that is, on the New and the Old Testaments.<sup>54</sup> Ill-informed

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37 Jn. 14:10.

38 Jn. 8:32.

39 Jn. 15:7.

40 Jn. 5:24–25.

41 Jn. 1:1, 14.

42 Jn. 5:39.

43 Jn. 17:8.

44 Jn. 20:22.

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45 Jn. 14:26.

46 Jn. 16:13.

47 Mt. 10:1–8.

48 Lk. 1:2.

49 Acts 6:4.

50 Acts 2:42–44; 5:12; 14:3.

51 Acts 3:1–10.

52 Acts 13:7.

53 Acts 6:7.

54 Eph. 2:20.

sceptics assume that the Bible—especially the New Testament—was deemed to be the Word of God in AD 325 by the Church Council of Nicaea, which collated the canon of Scripture. The following verses show that Jesus believed that his message was God’s word. His apostles believed that what they were preaching was God’s word. Long before any church council met Christ’s original companions and followers in Jerusalem accepted the apostles’ words as the Word of God, just as the Thessalonian believers accepted Paul’s words as the Word of God.

How could the apostle John say to his readers that they already knew the truth and did not need anyone (not even a church council) to determine for them the Word of God?<sup>55</sup> The first and second century church already knew which books had genuine apostolic authority behind them. They did not require canonization of the apostles’ writings by a church council to begin laying down their lives for the Word of God. They had been affirming their faith in these writings, by choosing martyrdom, for more than two hundred years before Constantine.<sup>56</sup>

The Old Testament canon existed before Jesus’ time. Canonization of the New Testament became necessary only because spurious books began to appear, claiming to have been written by the original apostles. Canonization did not turn Paul’s epistles into God’s word. The purpose of canonization was to refute the spurious works as inauthentic, such as the alleged ‘Gospel of

Thomas’ and the ‘Gospel of Barnabas’.

It is important to note that only one book in the New Testament, the Revelation (to John), claims to have been received supernaturally in visions, and this book met with the toughest scrutiny before being included in the canon. A book with a similar title, *The Revelation of Peter*, was rejected. Why? Because Christianity is about public truth, not about private, subjective, unverifiable, secret, inner, ‘religious’ experience. Private intuition may indeed be from God, but it has to be publicly authenticated before the public can follow it. The Revelation of John was included in the canon precisely because it is not a ‘fax from heaven’. John ‘saw,’ ‘looked,’ and ‘heard’ certain things and then wrote down his eyewitness account—exactly as he did in the gospel of John.<sup>57</sup> The church canonized books with known apostolic authority to undercut the deception of power-hungry ‘religious’ prophets, apostles, and mystics.

The authorship of Revelation has been disputed, but it is clear that if someone other than John the apostle forged the book in John’s name, then

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**57** In Revelation 1:11 John is told: ‘*Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches.*’ Although John was ‘in the spirit’ when he saw his visions, it is very clear from the book that John’s rational functions were never arrested. His book is not ‘automatic’ spirit writing. This is eyewitness testimony. Revelation 1:2 states that John ‘*bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.*’ In John’s writings, *marturew*—‘bear witness’ means ‘eyewitness’. See John 1:32: And John (the Baptist) bore witness: ‘*I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him.*’

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**55** 1 Jn. 2:19–21.

**56** Rev. 20:4.

the forger would have made an effort to establish his credentials as an apostle. The author of the book of Revelation simply states that his name was John, and he expects the intended readers to recognize his apostolic authority.

The point is this: the church does not believe the Scriptures because the Council of Nicaea canonized some books. Roman Catholics acknowledge that Church councils have sometimes been wrong. The Council of Nicaea did not create the Bible. The process of canonization of the New Testament began with a heretic, Marcion (AD 90–160), who identified a widely accepted canon in order to challenge it. In response to such attempts, the church affirmed the New Testament canon in order to repudiate heresies.

Inclusion in the canon was not dependent on unverifiable 'divine inspiration' but on verifiable matters. The first was apostolic authority, including implied apostolic authority as in the case of the books of Mark, Luke, Acts, and the epistle to Hebrews. Equally important was theological harmony with the Old Testament canon that Jesus confirmed as the Word of God. The Gnostic forgeries did claim apostolic authorship, but they did not and could not claim harmony with the Old Testament. For example, John's Revelation is a very deliberate unpacking of the book of Daniel. In Revelation 5, for example, the Lamb of God receives the title deed of the earth that had been promised to the Messiah in Psalm 2 and Psalm 110. The chapters that follow become the key to explaining how Jesus was the Messiah prophesied by the Old Testament.

## V Can the Natural also be Supernatural?

The church fathers knew that fallible men had authored the books of the New Testament. The Council of Nicaea wrestled with a worldview issue raised by Gnosticism: Could the natural (material/physical) be simultaneously spiritual, nonmaterial, supernatural, and good?

The Gnostics presupposed that the natural realm was evil. Therefore, they concluded that human words cannot be God's word; the Christ Spirit could not become incarnate; Christ could not have died on the cross; it was the evil, material body of a man—Jesus—that was crucified; the Christ Spirit was laughing at the folly of his enemies as they were crucifying Jesus, thinking that they were killing the Christ. The Council of Nicaea rejected this Gnostic worldview in favour of the Old Testament teaching that the material world—the tangible, physical expression of God's words—was good. Man (male and female) really was made in God's image; the human body was good.

God could become man, and our physical bodies can be, and ought to become, the temple of the Holy God.<sup>58</sup> Just as Satan could enter Judas to do evil,<sup>59</sup> God's Spirit can and does use human beings to speak his words<sup>60</sup> and do his will. The work and words of men and women can be human, satanic, or divine. Just as Jesus could be fully man and fully God, so man's words could be

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58 1 Cor. 6:19.

59 Jn. 13:27.

60 Isa. 59:21; 1 Cor. 2:13.

God's words. If a president can take a speechwriter's words and make them his own, why couldn't Paul communicate God's words? He can, just as an ambassador can speak the king's words.<sup>61</sup> It is absurd to claim that Jesus was the greatest prophet, as Dan Brown implies, and to simultaneously claim that the Scripture Jesus believed in, to the extent of laying down his life, was merely a human hoax.

The church fathers did not understand the mystery of human language any more than we do. Nor did they conclude that the New Testament was God's Word based on abstract philosophical arguments. They relied on eyewitnesses who saw the words of Jesus and his apostles make the lame to walk and the blind to see, drive out demons, and raise the dead back to life. The Holy Spirit confirmed Jesus' and the apostles' words with signs and wonders, just as God's supernatural acts had confirmed Moses' words.<sup>62</sup>

Future generations may understand language better than we do. Contem-

porary medicine has just begun to study the healing power of human words. However, at present, even our science fiction is clueless about how words could possibly bring a dead person back to life or, as Einstein marvelled, how our minds and words could comprehend the physical universe. In his essay 'Physics and Reality,' (in *Journal of the Franklin Institute* (vol. 221, issue 3, March 1936, 349–382) Einstein wrote that the fact that the laws or truths that govern this universe can be put into words 'leaves us in awe, but which we shall never understand.... For the eternal mystery of the world is comprehensibility.... The fact that it is comprehensible is a miracle.'

Rome's collapse meant that Europe lost its soul—the source of its civilizational authority—and descended into the 'Dark Ages'. The Bible was the power that revived Europe. Europeans became so enthralled with God's Word that they rejected their sacred myths to hear God's Word, study it, internalize it, speak it, and promote it to build the modern world. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the West is again losing its soul. Will it relapse into a new dark age or humble itself before the Word of the Almighty God?

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61 2 Cor. 5:20.

62 Ex. 7:2–4; Dt. 6:22; Acts 2:22, 43; 14:3.



## Books Reviewed

Reviewed by Daniel Mount  
Vishal Mangalwadi  
*The Book that Made Your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilization*

Reviewed by David Parker  
*BibleWorks 9 Software for Biblical Exegesis and Research*

Reviewed by Jim Harries  
Alan R. Johnson  
*Leadership in a Slum; a Bangkok case study*

Reviewed by Thomas Schirrmacher  
Stephan Finlan and Vladimir Kharlamov (eds.)  
*Deification in Christian Theology*

Reviewed by David Parker  
John H Armstrong  
*Your church is too small: Why unity in Christ's mission is vital to the future of the church*

## Book Reviews

ERT (2011) 36:1, 88-89

**The Book that Made Your World:  
How the Bible Created the Soul  
of Western Civilization**

Vishal Mangalwadi

Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2011

ISBN 978-1-59555-322-5

Hb pp 464 Index

*Reviewed by Daniel Mount*

Vishal Mangalwadi is a lifelong author, philosopher, and activist from India. He grew up steeped in Eastern Religions, but became a Christian and has been one for over three decades. *The Book That Made Your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilization* makes the case that the Bible provides the foundation upon which Indian democracy, modern Eastern civilization, and historic Western Civilization rests.

In college, Mangalwadi's childhood faith

in Christianity was challenged. He decided to examine different religions to see if their claims were true. Christianity's claim that all the nations of the world would be blessed through Abraham particularly intrigued him. This book examines the impact of the Bible on Indian civilization, western/European civilization, and other world civilizations, in a comprehensive array of disciplines: humanity, rationality, technology, heroism, revolution, languages, literature, education, science, morality, family, compassion, true wealth, and liberty. In each area, he shows how other religions, such as Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism did not and could not provide the foundation of all that is good about modern civilization.

The book's perspective is unique, melding eastern and western perspectives. For example, when making the case for the necessity of divine revelation, revelation of more than we can discover on our own, Mangalwadi takes the classic Eastern

parable of the five blind men and the elephant. But then he takes it a step further, telling the story of a sixth man who is not blind, who explains how the different parts of the elephant fit together. With the sixth man's guidance, the five can piece the puzzle together and understand how the elephant's different pieces make a whole. When that sixth man tells the five blind men that the tusk is white, this would be much like divine revelation; they will never be able to know this for themselves, but since the sixth man's description of the whole has been accurate in every other area, they have solid grounds for taking the colour description on faith.

Mangalwadi proceeds, era by era, through the thought of the early Greek and Roman philosophers, the Middle-Ages Arabic thinkers, and the rationalists of the enlightenment to demonstrate that only Christianity can explain the dignity and relevance of man in the universe. Yet he tells the story of a child where he lived whose parents would not permit medical treatment, preferring instead to let her die in misery, concluding with this powerful indictment: '[T]hree thousand years of Hinduism, twenty-six hundred years of Buddhism, a thousand years of Islam, and a century of secularism had collectively failed to give them a convincing basis for recognizing and affirming the value of a human being.' There are points where Mangalwadi's descriptions of the depravity of post-biblical western civilization are too graphic for children.

Mangalwadi's scholarship is surprisingly biblically and historically sound in a broad range of subjects. There are, however, several areas where it comes short. Mangalwadi shows and cites the beneficial influence of Rodney Stark in a number of instances. But Mangalwadi's discussion of the crusades accepts

Enlightenment-era historical revisionism, and would have been improved if he had consulted *God's Battalions*. His assertions about the impact of Sunday Schools would have been better balanced had he consulted Scott Brown's *A Weed in the Church*. Finally, his stated preference for women to take speaking roles in church services ought to have been tempered by I Corinthians 14 and related passages.

While it falls short in those three areas, the book is otherwise brilliantly conceived and executed. It is Mangalwadi's *magnum opus*—a masterpiece that deserves a prominent role in shaping the next generation of Christian apologists, sociologists, historians, ethicists, and theologians. Though its shortcomings keep it from a perfect score, it is completely deserving of a four-star rating on the Biblical Bookshelf.

This review was originally published on [www.thebiblicalbookshelf.com](http://www.thebiblicalbookshelf.com). Reprinted by permission."

ERT (2011) 36:1, 89-91

## BibleWorks 9 Software for Biblical Exegesis and Research

BibleWorks: Norfolk, VA  
[www.bibleworks.com](http://www.bibleworks.com)

*Reviewed by David Parker, Executive  
Editor, Evangelical Review of Theology*

The BibleWorks software program, now in its 9th version, aims to be 'a complete package containing the tools most essential for the task of interpreting the Scriptures in the original Greek and Hebrew, ... at a price that poor pastors and students can afford'. First produced in 1992, BibleWorks now contains a huge array of Bibles, original texts, and reference works, and many powerful yet easy

to use features to make its resources readily available.

Several additional English, European and Asian language versions (including some revised versions and updates) take the total to over 200 translations in 40 languages. There are also some new reference works, including systematic theologies. However, the most important of the new resources is in the area of original manuscripts and textual criticism. This includes transcriptions and complete image sets of Sinaiticus, Vaticanus and five other key manuscripts which are morphologically tagged and searchable like the rest of the Bibles (this project is on-going). In addition, the CNTTS New Testament critical apparatus is included, and there are also several new Greek texts (or updated versions) meaning that users have access to a huge range of basic materials for their work in textual criticism, and all of it in a flexible and integrated electronic form.

Although so well resourced, BibleWorks is relatively easy to use, but to obtain full advantage, time needs to be taken to learn the system; extensive help menus, a quick-start guide and 'how-to' videos assist this process. The main screen consists of three logical and intuitive sections (best used on a wide-screen monitor). The first is the 'Search Window' for the initial process of locating the text or references, then the 'Browse Window' where the text can be displayed either in context, single verse or parallel forms in multiple versions and languages.

The 'Analysis Window', the most powerful and informative of all, is where the details relating to the display text appear, divided into 13 different panels or 'tabs' showing everything from bibliographic data to cross references, word frequency, lexical and grammatical data and manuscript evidence. There is so much infor-

mation available in the 'Analysis Window' that Version 9 now allows for it to be cloned thereby providing double the space in what is referred to as the 'Fourth Column.'

The windows are dynamically linked so that hovering over or clicking words and text will present related information from the various resources in the databases, often in new pop-up windows. In this version, new features include statistical information, highlighting of differences between translations, references to systematic theologies and mapping. Searching is powerful in both simple and complex modes, supporting words, phrases grammatical constructions in any of a large number of versions and in multiple languages. Diagramming of Greek sentence structure is another feature that has been upgraded in Version 9.

Data can be exported easily to other documents such as sermons or term papers, while notes and annotations can be made in the process of a project to conserve information. All necessary fonts are provided and the keyboard follows the language in use. The software supports multiple projects so the user can work on a side issue and then later return to the original work. It is also customisable to suit the needs of the user. Installation is simple, using three DVDs, and can be either full or adjusted to the user's interests. BibleWorks is fast and only needs a computer of average specification; it is designed for Windows but may also run under Mac and Linux.

The aims of the producers to offer 'as much content as possible in the main package' are fulfilled in the main except for some resources which need to be unlocked after paying an extra fee, due mainly to licensing restrictions. One of the extras that is available is the ESV study Bible notes which is available at a

modest cost, while some grammatical texts, lexicons and theologies are not too expensive in comparison with hard copy versions and taking into account the convenience of including them in this package. However some major important books such as the standard academic Hebrew and Greek lexicons are more costly. Care is needed with some of the included dictionaries as these are still the old copyright free versions which are hopelessly out of date. While a lot of the information and functionality provided by BibleWorks is readily available on line, there is a great advantage in having it all together in one package on the desktop. BibleWorks 9 is invaluable for scholars who can use its specialised resources and texts, and exploit its customisation for complex projects. Beginners who only want to work with a few vernacular versions and the standard biblical texts and resources, with the ability to easily transfer data to other documents and to use the flash cards and other educational features to help them with their biblical languages will find that it will soon repay the outlay. It will also be increasingly useful as they progress in their studies. The website ([www.bibleworks.com](http://www.bibleworks.com)) offers full current details and information about how the product can be incorporated into a seminary curriculum, together with links to information about seminars and other assistance.

Overall, BibleWorks 9 lives up to expectations as a highly useful tool for serious biblical exegetes. It is not an e-book reader for a theological library although the addition of some resources in this version may tend in that direction. However it does provide a devotional feature—Daily Light which can be read in any of the Bible versions on disk, including Hebrew and Greek!

ERT (2011) 36:1, 91-92

## Leadership in a Slum; a Bangkok case study

Alan R. Johnson

Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2009.

ISBN 978-1-870345-71-2

Pb. Pp 238, Bibliog, Index, Illus

*Reviewed by Jim Harries, Kima International School of Theology, Kenya*

Johnson's account comes to the conclusion that (leadership) theory needs embodiment in a 'culture'. All too often 'culture is either ignored or treated as a black box and giv[en] unwarranted explanatory power' says Johnson (p. 19). He reaches this conclusion after almost twenty years of living in Thailand, and engaging in intensive research in one particular Bangkok slum called the Lang Wat Pathum Wanaram (LWPW) slum, home to about 2,500 people.

Johnson's research methodology shifts and adjusts in an interesting and educative fashion as the book proceeds. Comments later in the book reflect critically on the level of his ignorance at the start. Early efforts at quantifying his research (especially chapter 4) are superseded by reliance on impression (p. 138), 'indirect speech' (p. 155) and his own 'mulling' over what he has seen and experienced. His preference in research style shifts increasingly as the book progresses towards qualitative anthropological methodologies.

Johnson draws on Weber and political science for some of his 'leadership' theory. His default definition of leadership seems to be: the ability to acquire the voluntary cooperation of others. He criticises those who consider all leadership to operate through patron-client relationships,

including the dictatorial leadership of *nakleng*. He comes out in favour of government appointed slum leaders. Ironically, a major pre-occupation of the government appointed leaders is protecting the people from the threat of eviction by the same government.

Johnson discovered that while candidates for leadership positions may be praised for being trustworthy, such praise seems to cease and widespread criticism of leaders is normal once they are in office. He considers this an almost inevitable ontological change occurring when someone becomes a leader. One reason that Johnson discovers for this change is that the slum community is organised in groups. While these groups are relatively cohesive internally, inter-group relations are defined more by criticism and tension than by unity.

Johnson asks why indigenous views of 'development' in Thailand (and elsewhere) tend to be seen as 'infrastructure development' and to miss out on the reformative content usually written into development programmes. In the case of the LWPW slum, he concludes that ignoring all but the material content of development programmes is a means by which the poor passively resist implicit elitist assumptions about their inferiority. Interestingly, in its implicit critique of secularism Johnson mentions that the impositions on their lives that the poor do not resist in this way are those of religion and of the monarchy.

Johnson is right to focus heavily on particular Thai discourse, and so elaborates on the meanings and uses of many Thai terms. This practice no doubt adds to the local credibility and pertinence of his account. At the same time this practice, combined with his attention to the need to locate leadership training in a specific cultural context, means that, apart from

its value as a case study in research methodology, the book will be most appreciated by people who are deeply familiar with Thailand and its ways. At the same time, one wonders if there might not have been value in elaborating more of Thai culture on its own terms, instead of only as it impacts Johnson's investigations on leadership? One cannot help but think that the narrowness of Johnson's leadership-focus may be occluding a lot of interesting and very relevant scenery from view?

This text makes no mention of Christian mission and very little of any religious theme at all. One wonders why it is sponsored by the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, or why it should be of particular interest to the ERT? It does make a rather obscure link between the importance of people's beliefs and religion as a part of effective slum leadership.

In conclusion, Johnson's book is a fascinating recounting of a programme of detailed qualitative research carried out by a long-term worker in Thailand. The reader is carried with Johnson as he follows up blind alleys, and as a result, becomes more and more aware of the importance of taking a 'thick' anthropological approach to social research. Those already familiar with Thailand and its people will find the account especially instructive. Others will find pointers in the research approach used enlightening in their examination of parallel contexts in other parts of the world, where for example the reductionism of 'development' into 'receipt of infrastructure development' is also a puzzle.

ERT (2011) 36:1, 93-95

**Deification in Christian Theology**  
 Edited by Stephan Finlan and  
 Vladimir Kharlamov

Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2010  
 ISBN: 9780227173299  
 Pb 194 pp. bibliographies

*Reviewed by Thomas Schirrmacher,*  
*General Editor of Evangelical Review of*  
*Theology*

Deification is the transformation of believers into the likeness of God. While Christian monotheism does not support the notion of anyone literally becoming 'god', the New Testament speaks of a transformation of mind, character, vision and mission so that they become like those of Jesus, and an imitation of God. None of those passages spells out the concept in detail. The idea was often mentioned in the early church, but it took a long time before the term 'deification' (*theosis*) was coined by Gregory of Nazianzus in the fourth century and became the label for the concept. Even though the term has taken many meanings in church history, it is used nowadays to designate all instances where any idea of taking on God's character or being made divine occurs.

In the Orthodox Churches, the Old Oriental Churches, and the Oriental Churches in Union with the Roman-Catholic Church, the term plays a central role to describe salvation from an unholy life to partaking in the holy life of God himself. For the Orthodox, *theosis* is the process of a believer becoming free of sin (in the general meaning), being united with God, beginning in this life and later consummated in bodily resurrection. Humans were made to share in the life of the holy Trinity. This transformation is part of salvation and ends in everlasting life (*zōē*).

The Oriental concept of deification has often fallen prey to conflicts arising from different doctrinal beliefs and perspectives, especially between western and eastern theology. It is often taken to mean that humans could become God. As the editors see it, the debate went forth and back between deification as a heathen idea (as proposed, for example, by Adolf Harnack) and an essential and non-debatable Orthodox doctrine (p. 9). They want to get beyond this static warfare—and one has to agree with this endeavour! *Theosis* was never meant to mean becoming God, or becoming like God in every aspect, or giving up the distinction between creator and creation and man as a created being (see the leading Romanian theologian Dumitru Staniloae, who emphasises that *theosis* may not be taken literally, p. 161).

Two Orthodox scholars edit this volume which examines the history of the concept, with contributions by authors from other confessions. Stephen Finlan is a research assistant on the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture project at Drew University and Adjunct Professor at Seton Hall University. Vladimir Kharlamov teaches at Fairleigh Dickinson University and works as a research assistant on the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture at Drew.

Besides the introduction by the editors, there are chapters on Judaism and the Old Testament (Gregory Glazov), on 2 Peter 1:4 (Stephen Finlan), on the Apostolic Fathers, on the Apologists of the Second Century (both Vladimir Kharlamov), on Irenaeus, on Athanasius (both Jeffrey Finch), on Augustine (Robert Puchniak), on Maximus the Confessor (Elena Vishnevskaya), on Soloviev (Stephen Finlan) and 'Reforming Theosis', a chapter by a Reformed scholar

evaluating the concept of deification (Myk Habets).

It is not always clear whether this is a book on historical research or an Orthodox defence of the concept. One wished that there would have been an essay on the history of the criticism of the concept and a clearer presentation of the possible differences between the classic presentation of soteriology in Reformation times in regard to *theosis* as part of the process of salvation. To be clear, I do think that it is important to study the subject, and that Protestants and Evangelicals need to take into account the related Bible topics. But getting closer to each other is possible only by starting by stating clearly the possible obstacles, and then working through the biblical material and its interpretation in the early church and in all of church history.

For evangelicals, exegesis will play a major role in evaluating the concept and this volume is a good starting point for this process. Clearly there are enough New Testament texts to be explained that one cannot avoid the topic. The question cannot be whether to deny the concept of becoming 'participants of the divine nature'; rather the question is how to interpret this concept in the light of all of Scripture.

Some of the important texts that need to be discussed include the following: Taking on God's nature (2 Pet. 1:4, Ps. 82:6, John 10:34); imitation of God (Mt. 5:48, John 14:12, Eph. 5:1); indwelling by God (Job 32:8, John 14:17, Rom. 8:16); being re-formed by God (John 3:6; Rom. 12:2, Eph. 4:24); being conformed to Christ (Phil. 3:21, Rom. 8:29, 2 Cor. 3:18, 1John 3:2), and the final divinization of the cosmos (Hab. 2:14, Isa 32:17, 1 Cor. 15:28).

The OT also has to be included. Gregory

Glazov examines Old Testament covenant theology, divine adoption, and on bearing the fruit of knowledge or attaining the stature of a tree of righteousness in Proverbs, Isaiah, and Sirach, as foundations of the NT teaching on *theosis*.

As all the articles are well researched and shed new light on the whole debate, I want to confine myself to two remarks and then concentrate on the article of Habets. Otherwise I agree with Evangelical theologian Thomas C. Oden, connected to the editors as General Editor of the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, who describes this book as an 'extraordinary collaboration of scholars examining the neglected theme of deification in the classic Christian tradition from its biblical roots through Irenaeus, Augustine, and Maximus, to contemporary reconstructions of Torrance and Soloviev'.

Firstly, I do not really understand why the article on Vladimir Soloviev was included—the Bible and Early Church is a given, but a modern poet of comedy? At least it should have been relegated to an appendix.

Then Finlan takes it for granted that 2 Peter was written around 100 AD (p. 32) and interprets the book with this background. This surely is not in line with the thinking of the Church Fathers or traditional theology, on which so much emphasis is laid in this volume. It is an import from liberal Protestantism, which is criticised by a growing community of NT scholars. There are good arguments that the letter was written prior to the destruction of the temple in 70 AD. The idea from the 19th century, that the letter does not reflect the thought of Peter but comes from a pupil of Paul (p. 43-45) and therefore has to be late, should not be binding on us in light of the fact, that the evidence is still missing. It is a pity when

Orthodox theologians just copy liberal theology even when it is contrary to their essential beliefs. Following the line of more conservative views on 2 Peter would have enabled a much more satisfactory understanding and application of 2 Peter 1:4.

Turning now to Myk Habets, a Reformed theologian, who is an exception among the authors, both as a Protestant and because his topic is to compare an Orthodox teaching with Reformed theology. He compares *theosis* to the 'heart of Reformed theology', union with Christ, which is 'compatible with a doctrine of theosis' (p. 147). In Habets' view, Calvin's comment on 2 Peter 1:4 could have been written by an Orthodox theologian (p. 148). Calvin's emphasis on 'union with Christ' (pp. 148-150) is very similar to the Orthodox position, and was taken up by theologians in his line like Jonathan Edwards or even Karl Barth. He describes in great detail the positive appraisal of *theosis* by the Scottish Reformed theologian Thomas Forsyth Torrance (pp. 142-166).

For Habets (and Torrance), the second biblical and Reformed concept in line with *theosis* is '*imago dei*'. Humans are created in the image of God, but this image has been destroyed by sin. Through salvation, this image is restored and believers will be transformed into the real image of God, who is Jesus, the Son of God (pp. 153-158).

In reflecting on this, two perspectives present themselves. First, there are many concepts in the Bible, especially the New Testament, that make a doctrine of deification possible, as long as the concept is not taken to mean that we become God. We are created in God's image and will be transformed into the image of God *per se*, Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:21, Rom. 8:29). We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and

Jesus is in us (and we in him). 'What is born of the spirit is spirit' (John 3:6)—even, 'You... may become participants of the divine nature' (2 Pet. 1:4). All this leads to the concept of becoming holy, a concept central not only to all holiness movements, but to all Protestant revivals and Evangelical movements, even where soteriology was strictly separated from the ethics. Thus it can only ever be a question of interpretation of the concept of *theosis*, not of pure denial of it.

Once this point is accepted, for Protestants the same questions concerning the relationship between salvation and *theosis* arise as between salvation and sanctification. It should have been here that the real discussion began! So it is disappointing that it is only a discussion of Reformed theology and *theosis* that is included in this volume. (As a Reformed theologian I like the essay of Habets). Lutheran theologians (who are mainly critical of 'deification') or Methodist theologians (who are mostly in favour of it, starting with John Wesley) or Pentecostal theologians (who have a different view on the relation of salvation and holiness) should have been discussed as well. To include these perspectives would have made the book much more satisfactory and it is hoped that they can be the subject of further publications in the future.



ERT (2011) 36:1, 96

**Your church is too small: Why  
unity in Christ's mission is vital  
to the future of the church**

**John H Armstrong**

Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010

ISBN 978-0-310-32224-9

Hb pp220 Glossary

*Reviewed by David Parker, Executive  
Editor, Evangelical Review of Theology*

The extended subtitle states the main aim and message of this book. It is an impassioned plea by the author who shares his own journey from a narrow, rigid and divisive expression of evangelicalism to a view of the wider unity that enables Christians to work together in harmony as they take their place in the mission of God.

The book is pitched at a popular level and contains discussion questions at the end of each of its nineteen chapters. Perhaps it is best described as a tract in which the message is forcefully presented in a variety of ways and reiterated for impact. It moves in three parts from the past setting out the biblical basis for Christian unity, through the present which focuses on restoring unity which has been lost in a variety of ways, to the future with a vision of a 'missional-ecumenical' movement. This neologism is defined as embracing first the idea that God is a sending God and second that it is 'God's revealed desire... that we would be (relationally) one with him in this sending and sent (mission) process.'

After a long period of pastoral ministry which focused strongly on expositional

preaching, the author relates how he was convicted on the question of Christian unity as expressed in our Lord's prayer in John chapter 17. This led to the desire to know more of the rest of the church beyond his own previously restricted context and the consequent exploration of the traditions of others; more importantly, it meant meeting personally with people from other traditions. It was for him 'a journey to others'. It led to a fresh understanding the theological basis of unity in the person of the triune God and an appreciation of traditional orthodox catholicity as reflected in the great creeds of the church. In the process he came to awareness of the seriousness of sectarianism and the urgent need for the church to express the truth about God and his kingdom.

The author's presentation draws upon a wide array of sources, contemporary and otherwise, and is welded together in a heartfelt plea for a dynamic and purposeful Christianity unity centred in sharing in the mission of God. It ends with practical suggestions and examples of how the concept works out in real life. Resources to help readers implement the ideas are collected on the website of the organisation which the author now heads, ACT3. (The book is also available as ebook and audiobook.) While not unique, as James I Packer points out in the Foreword, the author's view of 'loving cooperation in life and mission' is one that deserves to be heard, even though it might be misunderstood and resisted, for 'aspects... of the honor and glory of Christ in this century... may well depend on whether or not it' is heeded.

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