
The TRUETT JOURNAL OF CHURCH AND MISSION
facilitates critical and creative engagement
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ISSN 1543-3552

The *Truett Journal of Church and Mission* is published twice annually at the conclusion of the Spring and Fall semesters by the George W. Truett Theological Seminary of Baylor University (Waco, Texas). The views finally expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the University, the Seminary, or the *Journal's* Editorial Board. All contents of this *Journal* are fully protected under copyright laws. Permission is granted to reproduce articles for church or classroom use, provided both that clear attribution is given to the author and the *Truett Journal of Church and Mission* and that the reproductions are not sold for commercial purposes. For other uses, please contact the Editorial Board of the *Journal*.

Cover Design: Randy Fiedler

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Truett Journal of Church and Mission

Vol. 2, No. 2 Fall 2004

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A Letter from the Editorial Board

In Memory of Dr. ‘Chip’ Conyers

THIS ISSUE OF THE TRUETT JOURNAL OF CHURCH AND MISSION brings together a broad sample of the work being done at Truett over the last year. We have included a sermon, an exegesis, theological and historical reflections, poetry, and a collection of essays expressing our corporate grief over the loss of Chip Conyers.

Dr. Conyers professor, writer, and friend passed away this summer. His death did not come as some great surprise; rather, he finally succumbed in a long battle with leukemia. Dr. Conyers was a founding member of the Truett faculty and helped give form to the curriculum that we use now. His battle with this disease began the same year that Truett Seminary was born.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer prior to his execution at the hands of the Nazi regime is recorded to have said, “This is the end, for me the beginning of life.” C.S. Lewis concludes his great epic *The Chronicles of Narnia* with the same sentiment, the last page of the last book in that series—*The Last Battle* reads:

“Then Aslan turned to them and said: “You do not look as happy as I mean you to be.”

Lucy said, “We’re so afraid of being sent away, Aslan. And you have sent us back into our own world so often.”

“No fear of that,” said Aslan. “Have you not guessed?” Their hearts leapt, and a wild hope rose within them.

“There was a real railway accident,” said Aslan softly. “Your father and mother and all of you are—as you call it in the Shadowlands—dead. The term is over; the holidays have begun. The dream is ended; this is the morning.”

And as he spoke, he no longer looked like a lion to them; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And so for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and

all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page; now at last we are beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read, which goes on for ever, in which every chapter is better than the one before.”

The *Truett Journal of Church and Mission* has decided to dedicate this issue to the memory of our beloved professor. Dr. Conyers has departed us; he has awoken from this dream that we call life at the feet of the Lord, fully enlightened and fully restored to worship the Lord in resurrected perfection. May the rest of us embrace his example of kingdom living for the sake of Christ.

-The Editorial Board

An Anchor for Troubled Times

Finding Freedom

A . J . C O N Y E R S

The same week that Dr. Conyers began as a founding faculty member of Truett seminary, he was diagnosed with leukemia. His decade as a professor at Truett occasionally saw chemotherapy visits, but was more distinguished by exciting engagement with his students. Here Dr. Conyers reflects on Providence in his last months.

OCCASIONALLY SOMEONE WILL ASK ME HOW I have been able to continue any kind of normal life and work during a time in which it was disclosed first that I had leukemia, and then later that this immune compromising disease had given opportunity to an aggressive skin cancer followed by a lung tumor for which there is no satisfactory cure.

Their remarks, intended by them and taken by me, as a kindness and a consolation that attributes too much to my own strength of character, unfortunately also have the effect of tempting me to really want to believe that at least part of what they say is actually true. How I would like to be in fact as brave and as cheerful as they sometimes say! How I would like to be the victorious Christian who faces multiple trials with a certain light-heartedness, and who is not overcome with self-pity or preoccupied with my own rescue.

But the pain returns. In quiet moments the shadow of doubt makes itself known even on the sunniest of days and among the liveliest of companions. The interaction of these moods, as I suppose you would call them, is fortunate. They cause me to reflect upon reality rather than on some fantastic image of myself, a sun touched by the

human struggle. They cause me to reflect upon my own real reactions, not only as a human being who loves life passionately, and resists the very thought of this earthly existence coming to an end, but as a believer who has learned slowly and still inadequately to trust a kind and merciful God. Because of these well-meaning and even very generous inquiries, I feel that I owe my friends, my students, and others a more adequate response than I am usually able to muster in a half-way conversation. I owe them that because we all will face these trials at one time or another in life, and because I have represented myself to them as one who wants to help others (however inadequate I may often feel myself to be) to understand the ways of God. I am a minister and a theology professor; surely someone who speaks so glibly and confidently about the ultimate things of life can share what it means to face the Ultimate himself.

The first thing I am reminded of in these circumstances is a poem written by Dietrich Bonhoeffer during his imprisonment, and his facing charges by the Hitler regime that would finally cost his life. He knew that the way he is perceived by others is not always the way he understands himself. They saw him as confident and cheerful.

Who am I? They often tell me
I would talk to my warders
freely and friendly and clearly,
as though it were mine to command.

Who am I? They also tell me
I would bear the days of misfortune
equably, smilingly, proudly,
like one accustomed to win.

He wonders whether these images,
or the image he has of himself is
nearer to the truth. "Am I only what I know of myself":

Restless and longing and sick, like a bird in a cage,
struggling for breath, as though hands were compressing my
throat,

Am I one person today, and tomorrow another?,
Am I both at once? A hypocrite before others,
And before myself a contemptibly woebegone weakling?
Or is something within me still like a beaten army,
Fleeing in disorder from victory already achieved?

Who am I? They mock me. These lonely questions of mine.
Whoever I am, thou knowest, O God, I am thine.

I know myself to be caught up in this same double bind of a frail human being who believes and yet fears, who prays continually “Lord, help thou mine unbelief,” somehow expecting also an answer to this prayer. I know that some of us, if not all of us, are skilled at the art of denial. When we face circumstances that overwhelm us, we ignore the reality of what we face, anesthetizing ourselves to the pain of opening our eyes fully to the future that will soon overtake us. In his book *Cancer Ward*, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn marks out the distinction between those who face the truth of their disease and take active measures to save themselves, and those who hide from the truth and thus court their own doom all the sooner. By this distinction he also measures the Soviet society that, on the one hand, participates in the lies of communism even when no one really doubts that they are lies, thus making their own chains of enslavement that much more secure, and those, on the other hand, who immediately refuse to participate in the great public lie, who would rather die knowing the truth than never fully live in a half-life of self-deception.

This self-deception I wish to avoid, not only because it is by far the safest policy for a cancer patient, but because it paralyzes us and prevents us from living fully alert to, and fully engaged with, the reality of each day. It is the product of fear, which is in fact the opposite of faith.

Yet I know also that this determined resolution not to deceive myself would not be enough to sustain me. My determination only keeps me in the midst of a struggle which vacillates to and fro, affected by my emotional strength on any particular day or hour, affected by the circumstances I might face today, or the company I keep and their disposition, or affected even by the weather.

Troubled times have this virtue: they drive us deeper than we would otherwise go, some would say “into ourselves,” but I would say “outside of ourselves.” I began to ask very basic questions, and when I was not fully blinded by fear, I began to get what I have taken to be some answers. I was driven, both against my will and without my con-

Self-deception . . . is the product of fear, which is in fact the opposite of faith.

scious choice, ever deeper in what can only be described as a desperate search for a place to stand. The “answers,” if they can be described in that way at all, were not at all a reasoned approach to my situation, or an answer to my troubles. It is more a sentiment that grew stronger and stronger with time; and it will always do so, I believe, if there is even the “mustard seed” of it before. It had almost nothing to do with my moving toward God, so much as God’s moving toward us; not our resolution but God’s making his own presence known to us. It is on this note that Bonhoeffer ended his poem: “Thou knowest, O Lord, I am thine.”

In theology, we call this reality, a reality that works within us a disposition to believe, by the term Providence. It means simply that whatever we face is from first to last in God’s hands. It means that when we are taken by surprise, God is not. He works through and in each circumstance to perform his good work, even in that which is painful and evil.

Providence is different from Fate, which the ancients understood to be the iron law that impersonally guides each destiny. Providence does not rule out human effort and effectual prayer. It means instead that while we “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling,” we are also to remember that “it is God that works in us both to will and to do his good pleasure” (Phil 2:12, 13). Providence takes account of our efforts, our prayers, our plans, and our thoughts, and it weaves them together with an account of things that is both deeper and richer than anything we can yet fathom. Yet because it includes that which is our own, it is neither impersonal nor without purpose for the individual. Providence means that everything that happens to us has meaning, that the world itself is purposeful and not random, and furthermore that meaning and purpose is altogether good: it is the goodness of a God who is fully disclosed in the life of one who gave himself up for others, and gave everything for the sake of others, out of confidence in a good and merciful Father.

This self-giving out of a profound confidence in the goodness of Reality, this love (in other words) lived out in faith (a full confidence) and bearing fruit in hope, is at the center of the gospel. It is not something that we work our way into, but something that works its way into us. And it is in this growing disposition toward God, his good creation, and his mighty redemption that we are for the first time able to live as free men and women.

I cannot quite say what Solzhenitsyn said of his prison experience, not quite yet: “Bless you prison!” But I am beginning to see what he saw in relation to my own illness: I sought to be free of it, not realizing that through pain and fear God was giving me the means

to finally live free. Once I was more afraid of cancer than of almost anything else in the world. No longer. And if being thrown back on Providence means also learning to trust in God for even our greatest fears, then it is that very Providence that (far from being the enforcer of an iron fate) frees us to live in areas that once circumscribed us with the bonds of fear and blinded us with dread and panic. Neither the shadow nor the reality of what we fear determines how we shall live. Instead, it is a different order of thinking that rules our lives and gives us the strength to live freely.

A. J. 'CHIP' CONYERS

was a founding faculty member of Truett. Dr. Conyers wrote and taught extensively in the area of theology. Some of his works include: *A Basic Christian Theology*, *The Long Truce*, and *How to Read the Bible*. His final work, *Last Things: The Heart of New Testament Eschatology*, is due out soon.

A.J. ‘Chip’ Conyers

A Colleague Remembers

R U T H A N N F O S T E R

A fellow professor reflects on the life of her colleague and friend, and the impact he had on those around him.

ON JULY 1, 1994, FOUR PEOPLE CAME TOGETHER in an incredible endeavor to help “birth” a new seminary. Three of us were already acquainted (Robert Sloan, Brad Creed and myself) and were either native Texans or transplants. During the first few days much reminiscence of former times, much catching up on our lives and families, and much laughing occurred. Chip Conyers (not a Texan) felt a bit nonplussed, I think. While still house-hunting, Chip was staying with new friends in Waco, awaiting the arrival of his wife Debbie and his children, Emily and AJ. Chip had lived in Georgia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Missouri, and South Carolina, and thus had a different network of colleagues. To further complicate the situation, our faculty retreat director, Fred Miller from Austin, led the four of us in several relational and community building exercises which, for Chip, proved to be somewhat too “touchy-feely.” All of these things combined left him, I later learned, with a small doubt that he had made a mistake in coming here. Then, during that first week, Chip learned he had leukemia and was given five to seven years to live, ten at the most.

The next several weeks and months accorded us a glimpse into the strength and character of the man whose professionalism and attention to even the smallest detail of planning necessary before the students arrived were consistent. Throughout his ten year tenure here and especially as his health failed, he never complained, never gave up, never stopped writing, teaching, mentoring, caring for students, and never gave up hope. Even in the face of the inevitable, Chip continued to strive; he planned to teach in the fall semester and to participate in a symposium next March at the Vatican, at their invitation. During times of debilitating treatments in Houston, he drove back and forth to Waco to meet his classes. When hearing of his death, most of his colleagues immediately commented about what a warrior he was, not

merely with regard to his illness but to the way he lived his life, standing firm in matters of integrity and justice.

Rarely a week passed during these past few years in which someone would make mention of the personal lessons they learned while observing Chip's living in the midst of dying. Courage, humor, concern for others, dependability, and integrity are merely a few of the virtues he consistently displayed whether in health or in sickness.

Chip Conyers was a resolute man who, according to his brother Jim, an Episcopal priest, always had a strong drive which likely was intensified by his illness. Earlier this summer Chip and his wife Debbie drove to Louisiana so that he could deliver two lectures. And about three weeks before he left us, he completed a manuscript written when he was the most depleted, because he thought he had something important to say. The book is entitled *The Listening Heart: Vocation and the Crisis of Modern Culture*, to be published in November.

A kind, honorable, and gracious friend, Chip was supportive of colleagues but never lacking in the courage to take a stand for his beliefs. One of his better traits (and one he tried to convey to students) was his ability to differ greatly with a colleague but still pray sincerely with them and hold them in high regard. He truly sought to see the best in people even when, to me, it was a bit of a stretch. In that regard he was truly a good man who sought to live out his Christianity honestly and humbly. His son spoke eloquently at his father's funeral, saying he wanted to

thank God publicly that Chip Conyers had been his father. His daughter wrote an essay for him on Father's Day in which she mentioned that as a child she had never been awakened from sleep with violence, but only by the soft blue eyes of her father. Debbie, Chip's wife and partner, told me that he was her hero. All appropriate praise from

a man beloved by students, colleagues and friends, and especially by family. A primary reason beyond all the accolades already mentioned was that when one was in conversation with Dr. Conyers he was always fully present, concerned, thoughtful and focused. He would

Courage, humor, concern for others, dependability, and integrity are merely a few of the virtues he consistently displayed whether in health or in sickness.

always follow up the conversation later with questions or more dialogue.

Vitality may seem an odd word to describe someone with a terminal disease, but that is the word that depicts a man who loved life, loved God, loved people, and loved theology.

Students responded well to Dr. Conyers—because of his brilliant mind, thoughtful ways of pursuing answers, and because he took them seriously and valued them. Chip's greatest gift to the seminary may well have been his influence on the curriculum and pedagogy employed at Truett. His own commitment to quality work demanded the same from his students who grew in their academic performance in his presence. The first year a Truett graduating class gave the award, "Professor of Choice" Chip received it, as he did again this past May.

Through an e-mail group several Truett alumni voiced their love and respect for Dr. Conyers. Because of his love and commitment to students, I thought it might be appropriate to list a few quotes. Andy Black, reflecting on Dr. Conyers' essay "An Anchor for Troubled Times," said, "Dr. Conyers' powerful essay reflecting on the experience of trusting in a loving God in the midst of much pain and uncertainty was so typical of this wonderful servant of our Lord. Never one to minimize the importance of theology in favor of personal experience and preference, Dr. Conyers was also never one to give anyone cause to consider theology an abstract, detached 'mind-game' with little relevance for the real issues of our lives. Dr. Conyers—both in and out of the classroom—was living proof that careful yet joyful study of God and God's ways is vital to living life realistically and courageously—and abundantly." I think Chip would be pleased by Andy's words, if not also embarrassed.

Another student, Coleman Fannin, spoke of Dr. Conyers' involvement inside and out of the classroom: "As I read the many tributes to his life, I think back to seeing him at rallies against the invasion of Iraq and hearing him speak on issues of social justice. Yet he never fell into the trap of uncritical support of left or right-leaning positions; instead he sought the difficult way enlightened by Jesus Christ. I also think back to his attending our Capstone class this past spring, seemingly

by effort of will alone, and of the honor of being part of his last seminar. Fittingly, the topic was ‘Christianity’s Response to Violence.’”

I was somewhat chastened by the words of Truett alumnus Matt Schobert. When seeing Chip push himself almost beyond belief, I tended to want to make him slow down and rest, thinking that would be best for him. Matt however saw it differently: “I came to see his ardent commitment to teaching, not as a further drain on his health, but as a wellspring of strength for him. Teaching and investing his life in the lives of students wasn’t taxing him, it was sustaining him.”

In my eyes Chip embodied many of the fine qualities of a good faculty member—being involved constantly in research, writing, teaching, mentoring, and serving the seminary, university, community and church. I often found out from others how Chip was involved in Mission Waco, visited people in prison, took part in the lives of his students and friends. Vitality may seem an odd word to describe someone with a terminal disease, but that is the word that depicts a man who loved life, loved God, loved people, and loved theology. Chip’s life, teachings and writings are living praise to Jesus Christ surpassed only perhaps in the adoration of Christ in his dying. Chip has always emphasized the New Testament teaching that the true hope of Christianity is the power of the resurrection. He lived in that hope and now has been embraced by that hope.

I am thankful to the Lord for the privilege of working alongside such a caring and gracious person. I am grateful that my dear friend is now in the presence of the One whose dying brought life to us all.

RUTH ANN FOSTER

is Associate Professor of Christian Scriptures at Truett, where she is a founding member of the faculty. Prior to this appointment, she taught at both Texas Christian University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, where she earned her doctorate. Ruth Ann has served on several church staffs, and continues serving churches through pulpit supply and Bible studies. She can be reached at Ruth_Ann_Foster@Baylor.edu.

Death, Self-Deception, and Life Together

In Remembrance of Chip Conyers

J E S S Y J O R D A N

A student remembers and reflects on his relationship with Dr. Conyers.

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. - Hebrews 2:14-15

THE PARTICULAR LOT OF EACH AND EVERY PERSON existing as a self-conscious creature is the awareness of one's own finality, one's own death. This mode of existing in the world provokes the deepest of fears; and therefore, not surprisingly, provides the greatest potential for self-deception in a variety of illusory consolations. The fearful aspect of being human is that death is present—as anticipation of our own end—at every point along our journey. This anticipation of death as our own end characterizes every moment of authentic awareness in the midst of life. The tragic possibility to live in a self-deceptive and inauthentic denial of our own end is always open for each of us.

When Chip Conyers—one of the men I admired most in the world—died this summer, I was thrown once again against my own fears of that limit beyond which I cannot see. Conyers' death coupled with his funeral on July 21—the day of my birth—snapped me out of the everydayness of my existence and forced me to encounter once again questions of life and death.

Anyone who knew Conyers was fully aware that the question of life was, for him, always a question of *life together*. Living together in community with one another in a way that moved beyond selfish envy, manipulative pride, and a self-imposed isolation was one of his central preoccupations. Conyers' humbleness kept him from admitting that

the way in which he took the anticipation of his own death upon himself became the wellspring out of which his insight into our *life together* flowed. Conyers was model and testimony to Jesus's words to us in Matt 10: "He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it." As a model of Jesus' words, Conyers, in an indirect way, has found life for us who would also follow his example in taking up death in each particular moment of life.

In the spirit of Conyers approach to philosophy (if we may put behind us for one moment the anti-Hellenic sentiments of those who, like Tertullian, have a deep suspicion of *those damn Greeks*) the Socrates of Plato's *Phaedo* may just have some insight into death and dying. In this dialogue, we find Socrates speaking with his close friends about the immortality of the soul. This dialogue does not take place in some abstract detachment from the concrete experience of life. Socrates has this discussion with his friends on the day when he drinks the cup of hemlock to its dregs. Socrates realizes the tendency toward deception is present because of the context in which he is trying to persuade himself and his followers of the immortality of the soul. In fact, he warns his disciples that he is in danger of losing a philosophical attitude because he may be more tempted to convince himself of the argument than to assess the truth of the argument. Socrates warns his disciples saying,

If you will take my advice, you will give but little thought to Socrates but much more to the truth. If you think that what I say is true, agree with me; if not, oppose it with every argument and take care that in my eagerness I do not deceive myself and you and, like a bee, leave my sting in you when I go.¹

Socrates recognizes that the tendency toward self-deception in relation to his own death is palpable. In a similar, although not entirely identical context, Conyers wrote the words, "When we face circumstances that overwhelm us, we ignore the reality of what we face, anesthetizing ourselves to the pain of opening our eyes fully to the future that will soon overtake us."² Cancer is overwhelming. Death is overwhelming. Anxiety, dread, and the cold touch of panic are at our backs threatening to paralyze us.

So the question confronts us again, "How do I face death authentically and take it up as my ownmost possibility of non-being?"³ The fear of death leads most of us to grasp for surrogate immortalities. The grasping of surrogate immortalities manifests itself in a number of ways and at root is a flight from death. These immortalities cover over and veil our fears; however, our fears are then never authentically

addressed. Whether it be fame, power, money, honor, world historical significance, or any one of the manifold ways we try and grasp immortality in our trepidation, these acts cover over the fundamental fear with their anesthetizing charm.

We must push deeper! Potentially, the most deceptive way of avoiding the reality of one's own death is hope in eternal life. It re-

remains a distinct possibility to grasp for eternal life in a way that does not allow us to take up death in an authentic way. This *inauthentic* hope in eternal life is the will to deny that anxiety which is provoked by our own end. In his harsh attack on Chris-

Conyers' death snapped me out of the everydayness of my existence and forced me to encounter once again questions of life and death.

tianity in the *Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche paints a picture of Christianity as a religion of resignation that trades the beauty of life for a nihilistic hope in a Beyond. He diagnoses this desire fundamentally as *the will to deny*. Put differently, Christianity is the will to lie to oneself. At one point Nietzsche says, "the Beyond [is] the will to deny reality of every kind."⁴ As a Christian, my first impulse is to raise my apologetic gloves in self-defense and then give Nietzsche a jab in that smug overgrown mustache. However, at my more reflective moments, I ask, "Could he not be right about some of what has passed under the label *Christian*?" More importantly, "Could he not be right about *my Christianity*?" Do we have the courage to dwell with Nietzsche's challenge and feel the full extent and bite of his critique?

An authentic movement of Christian faith does not get caught up in a *self-certain self-reliant* grasping of eternal life—a certainty and reliance that inevitably erupts in violence because it is covering a deeper anxiety. An authentic movement embraces anxiety as an opening up to God and the World. Along not too dissimilar lines Conyers writes,

I sought to be free of it, not realizing that through pain and fear God was giving me the means to finally live free. Once I was more afraid of cancer than of almost anything else in the world. No longer. And if being thrown back on Providence means also learning to trust in God for even our greatest fears, then it is that very Providence that (far from being the enforcer of an iron fate) frees us to live in areas that once cir-

cumscribed us with the bonds of fear and blinded us with dread and panic.⁵

In this paragraph, we witness a conversion. It is a conversion that remains an open question and invitation at each and every point in our lives. These words force us to interrogate ourselves, asking: “Is our salvation a *grasping* of some surrogate immortality that veils our anxiety? Or is it a trustful *rest* in a loving Providence that unveils our anxiety and places it in its proper context?”

An *inauthentic* and an *authentic* hope may appear out of one’s hoping in a transcendent Providence. The distinction between these two ways of existing is so slight, and yet, world defining. Discernment of these alternate ways of existing within our own souls is difficult. This discernment is so problematic because as Iris Murdoch contends, “Almost anything that consoles us is a fake.”⁶ A transcendent Providence can easily become an inauthentic consolation that veils the truth. Murdoch conceives the true vocation of the theologian to be a correction of this tendency. She says, “In the case of the idea of a transcendent personal God, the degeneration of the idea seems scarcely avoidable: theologians are busy at their desks at this very moment trying to undo the results of this degeneration.”⁷ The degeneration Murdoch is writing about is the tendency toward pseudo-consolations and certainties in our notions of who God is. Murdoch underscores what John Calvin meant by his famous comment: “The human heart is an idol factory.”

Any attempt to remove the cross as God’s way of redeeming the world is an exercise in idol worship. In the Christian life, we cannot side-step the reality of the cross. The cross—death—is the rite of passage in the Christian community. It is that upon which the Christian community is founded and in which it has life. We cannot skip Good Friday for Easter. We must first make the movement of faith through the cross, which is never a movement beyond the cross, but a continual taking up of the cross. We must take up death in a way that the hope of eternal life is not merely another guise hiding our insecurities. This movement is crucial, not only for the sake of our own health, but for the sake of our *life together*.

If our *life together* in community gathers around an inauthentic hope in eternal life—which is in reality a covering of our own insecurities—then our community will be riddled with suspicion. The veil used to anesthetize our anxieties, which lurk beneath the surface, places us in a position of suspicion. In an inauthentic community we become violent when we are threatened and we become suspicious in order to keep our pseudo-consolations in place. At this point, the relation between community and anxiety, between *life together* and taking

up one's own death, Conyers embodied a profound insight into how we are to live among one another.

Conyers was told eleven years ago that he had ten years to live. It was his gradual and ever deepening ability to take up the anxiety of his own death for the sake of Christ that opened up the possibility for him to live with an openness of the soul. Conyers saw God as a transcendent mystery in which to rest in an open *attention*,⁸ not an immanitized certainty which must be grasped otherwise than in hope. We get a fuller depiction of this Conyeresque disposition toward open attention from one of his heroes, Eric Voegelin. In his chapter "Gnosticism: The Nature of Modernity" (a topic Conyers never tired of exploring) Voegelin writes,

Uncertainty is the very essence of Christianity... The life of the soul in openness toward God, the waiting, the periods of aridity and dullness, guilt and despondency, contrition and repentance, forsakenness and hope against hope, the silent stirrings of love and grace, trembling on the verge of a certainty which if gained is loss—the very lightness of this fabric may prove too heavy a burden for men who lust for massively possessive experience . . . The more people are drawn or pressured into the Christian orbit, the greater will be the number among them who do not have the spiritual stamina for the heroic adventure of the soul that is Christianity.⁹

Conyers' heroic soul—being brought to a point where hope in transcendence was not merely an inauthentic veil—was able to arrive at a place where he could admit that "our knowledge is partial, it is imperfect and plagued by our imperfections."¹⁰ When we realize that we only know in part and that we find ourselves *in the midst* of life trying to make sense of it, the question forces itself upon us, "How do we wait in openness to a transcendent reality?" We wait in openness by giving up on the vicious certainties that erupt in violence because they are in reality anesthetizing a hidden fear. When we admit that we are unfinished beings, we are near the heart of Conyers' reflections on the *practice* of tolerance, which stands in openness to the other. A deep insight emerges here into our communal *life together*. Authentic community gathers around a common vision of the Good. We pursue the vision together; however, we pursue it as people who have to struggle to see and never quite see it perfectly. Commenting on the ends (i.e. the Good) we seek together, Conyers notes, "*These ends are both necessary for living and incapable of any final resolution.*"¹¹ It is essential, in our *life together*, that we maintain a vision for a transcendent *telos* that calls us to

a common purpose, while at the same time admitting the non-finality of our judgments and the indefinability of the Good.¹² A waiting attendance upon God is dependent upon continual openness to a new *resolution*. Once there are final resolutions, we are no longer in a posture of waiting to hear the voice of God here and now in this particular place and at this particular time. The question we must take seriously is how we remain open to hearing the voice of God. In his *Ethics* Bonhoeffer declares, "What can and must be said is not what is good once and for all, but the way in which Christ takes form among us here and now."¹³

We have arrived at the point where two modes of inauthentic existence and one mode of authentic existence can be seen clearly. The first mode of inauthentic existence is any surrogate immortality that veils the anxiety of death. This mode includes the inauthentic hope in an eternal life. Let us call this mode *absolutist*. We have spent the majority of our reflection on this first mode. The second mode of inauthentic existence can be seen if we focus on the insight Conyers had into *life together*; namely, ends are necessary for living but they are incapable of final resolution. On the one hand, the error entailed in not recognizing the non-finality of our ends is the violent certainty of the *absolutist*. On the other hand, not recognizing that ends are necessary for living is the opposite mistake that is equally inimical to *life together*. Rejecting any notion of finality merely because the end is incapable of final resolution opens us up to the caprice of the individual ego. This reasoning runs as follows: if there is no final end or Good,

Any attempt to remove the cross as God's way of redeeming the world is an exercise in idol worship. In the Christian life, we cannot side-step the reality of the cross.

then we are simply locked in a battle of the preferences of our individual egos. In other words, life is conceived purely in terms of the *will to power*. We must insist, with Conyers and against all those who would reduce life to the will to power, that the non-finality of the Good is not the same thing as saying that there is no Good. Thus we have the two inauthentic modes of existence, the *absolutist* and the *will to power*, each committing the mistake of splitting apart the dual insight Conyers has

into the nature of our communal life. Both of these inauthenticities close us off from one another in their own characteristic way.

Finally, we have the authentic mode of existing in our *life together*

that keeps the dual insight of Conyers forever together. Let us call this mode of existence the *way of faith*. By the *way of faith*, I mean the way of the soul that exists in openness and waiting for a reality that transcends our selfish preoccupations with the ego. The way of faith is difficult and it takes a stamina of the soul, as the writer to

We must insist, with Conyers and against all those who would reduce life to the will to power, that the non-finality of the Good is not the same thing as saying that there is no Good.

the Hebrews tells us, that is “sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”¹⁴ Or again as Voegelin says, the Christian soul is “trembling on the verge of a certainty which if gained is loss.” Voegelin hints at echoes that are deeply Pauline. In his letter to the Romans, Paul tells us, “For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.”¹⁵

Conyers exemplified what it means to take death upon oneself in an authentic manner. This fact manifested itself in his openness to others. He was open in a way that fostered and perpetuated true *life together*. Conyers’s insight into the nature of communal life flowed out of his own struggle with the fear of cancer. He was able to trust the Providence of God amidst one of his deepest fears. This fear was the gateway to his freedom. It seems all too appropriate that his insights into the way we can be freed from our selfish isolations to participate in *life together*, were won in this fashion.

Notes

1.

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Phaedo, 79.

2. Chip Conyers, "An Anchor for Troubled Times," *Truett Journal of Church and Mission* 2.2 (Spring 2003): 9.
3. In his book *Being and Time* (SUNY: New York; 1996), Martin Heidegger has a penetrating analysis of the art of self-deception in relation to death. See in particular his chapter "The Possible Being-a-Whole of Da-sein and Being-toward-Death."
4. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols / The Anti-Christ* (Penguin Classics: England; 1990), 199. The translation of the title from German as "The Anti-Christ" is somewhat misleading. The title in German is better rendered "The Anti-Christian". This title picks up on the much more nuanced view Nietzsche has of Christ himself. Nietzsche attacks Christianity mercilessly, but he has respect and admiration for Christ.
5. Conyers, "An Anchor for Troubled Times," 10, 11.
6. Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (Routledge: London; 2001), 58.
7. *Ibid*, 58.
8. Conyers would often refer to Simone Weil's concept of *attention* in order to illustrate a particular kind of openness of the soul. In particular see Weil's essay "Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God" in *Waiting for God* (Perennial Classics: New York; 2001). Weil also expresses this attitude of the soul in her thoughts about her own vocation in one of her letters. See "Her Intellectual Vocation" which is also in *Waiting for God*.
9. Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*, (University of Chicago Press: Chicago; 1987), 122
10. A.J. Conyers. *The Long Truce: How Toleration Made the World Safe for Power and Profit*. (Spence: Dallas; 2001), 242.
11. *Ibid*, 231.
12. Iris Murdoch has a penetrating treatment of the indefinability of good in her book *The Sovereignty of Good* (Routledge: London; 2002). See especially pages 41 and 92.
13. Dietrich Bonhoeffer. *Ethics* (Touchstone: New York; 1995), 87.
14. Hebrews 11:1.
15. Romans 8:24-25.

The Raging Waters

A Sermon on the Death of my Son

TRISHA HAILES

Death is certainly not something which just affects the person dying; it often has a more profound result in the lives of those close to the deceased. In this sermon, Trisha shares from her own experience.

IT'S THE SIMPLE QUESTIONS THAT HURT THE MOST those first few weeks. How are you, asked by family and friends. Or, from those you just meet, how many children do you have? Those questions that are asked so routinely that you only use one ear to listen to the answer, those are the ones that bring the tears to the surface.

It's a reality shift. That which was your reality in the space of one short phone call is completely skewed. Now, you have one son. Now you have an only child, which was never your intent. The son that you raised for twenty-six years no longer exists on this earth.

My son, Josh Fagan, died in an automobile accident as he drove home from a friend's party at three o'clock in the morning. It was raining. He took a curve and one wheel slid onto the grass. The car hit the ditch, flipped, and sailed into two trees.

There are questions that remain unanswered. Did he fall asleep? Was there something in the road? A deer perhaps? Did he misjudge the turn because he'd been drinking earlier at the party? Did he really die instantly or was he alive before the police arrived on the scene? Did he call out for mom and mom wasn't there? And of course, the biggest question of all: Why Lord? Why?

There are other mothers who have been through this tragedy. We can think of the brave soldiers in Iraq who have died—soldiers on both sides of the war—each one whose mother received that phone call, letter, or visit bearing the news that would change her world forever. I had a good friend who was bringing her eight-year-old daughter home from piano lessons and was hit by a truck. Her daughter was

killed instantly. Just the other day, I heard of a woman whose teenage daughter who had been on anti-depressants, went to a party, got drunk, came home, went to bed, and never woke up.

I know, I know. Aren't we grateful, ladies, for waterproof mascara? Kleenex, also? I know I was really wishing I had stock in Kleenex. I stopped buying those little pocket size packages you carry around in your purse and went to the economy size—ten boxes for \$5. No more wearing clothes without pockets either. In the morning you are stuffing every pocket full of Kleenex so you can last out the day. People are very sweet and kind, but when they offer you a wadded up, wrinkled tissue that's been buried in their purse or their pocket, you just gotta wonder where that tissue has been before it ended up in your hand.

This sorrow, of course, is not restricted to our day. We can look to Mary in the Bible. She was there that day at the crucifixion, as close to her son as she was allowed to be. She heard what they yelled out at her son. She watched her son in pain—sweating, thirsty, bleeding, struggling for breath—and then she watched him take his last breath and die on a cross.

Fathers, of course, suffer as the mothers do. One must wonder how God felt when Jesus stepped up to the plate and said, "I'll do it Abba." "I'll suffer in their place." But since I am a mother, I speak from that which I know.

What do we do with such anguish? Where do we turn when, as Simeon predicted to Mary, a sword pierces through to our very soul?

God is the answer! Don't you know that Mary cried out to God from the depths of her very being? Can't you hear her screaming to God, (at least on the inside)? "Do something! Save my son!"

I'd like to speak of how the Lord deals with us through grief and loss. Of course, this loss or grief doesn't have to be a loved one; it can be a job, a relationship, an awareness that you don't really have a talent that you truly wanted, or the countless other ways that we experience loss. What I've seen is that God prepares us, sustains us, and asks us to carry on, for there is more work to be done.

Now, that is not, of course, to say that we knew we were being prepared for our loss. Yet when we have the gift of hindsight before us, if we look for it, we will find his hand upon our life preparing us for this moment.

The Lord prepared me in several ways. As I mentioned before, I had a friend Linda, who lost her 8-year-old daughter in an accident. I'm ashamed to say that I didn't go visit Linda in the hospital when she was suffering injuries from that same accident. As I'm sure happens with many of us when the depths of pain are just too overwhelming,

we shy away from contact. I couldn't imagine what words I could possibly say. I didn't realize that just my quiet presence, a hug, a touch of a hand, or crying with her would have been enough.

It wasn't until she came back to work and several months had passed that I got up the courage to ask her how she dealt with the grief. Did the pain lessen? When I lost my child over fifteen years later, I still heard her answer in my head: "Trisha, when the grief comes it is always as intense as it was in those first few days, but the period between those episodes gets longer as time goes on." So, I could say to myself, "It will get better." "It'll get better." Hence, I received a little piece of my preparation fifteen years in advance.

My father died three years before my son. At his funeral, the Lord gave me the scripture of Psalm 139:16. "All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came into being." This scripture was written across my brain during those first few days after my son's death. This was no accident. There was purpose. My son's life had not been cut short. Evil had not prevented my son from having children and grandchildren. Sin had not wreaked havoc in a world where Satan ruled and God had no say. There was purpose and meaning in my son's life, and there was purpose and meaning in my son's death. I might not understand it. In fact, I don't understand it. But I can trust; I can believe that there will come a day when I can truly rejoice that Josh played a part in God's plan for humankind.

The preparation continued as I went to visit my mother *three months* before my son's death. Somehow, Mama believed that she and I could fix her air cooler. She had diagnosed the problem as a rubber tube that needed to be replaced. So, off we went to the very small town, you know the kind where there is only one main drag and the courthouse stands in the very center of the road. In the hardware store, Mother and the owner discussed the size and diameter of the tube, while I busied myself gazing at the array of goods for sale.

Above the cash register, I found 8x10 pictures strung together for about four feet. When I asked Buddy, the owner, if that was his family, he said yes and then his voice sort of broke as he told me this was his son, Davy, who had recently died. He looked to be about twenty years old. As I hesitantly asked about the nature of the death, Buddy told me the most bizarre farm accident I had ever heard. I very innocently, and perhaps unthinkingly, responded, "Well, when something like that happens you just know it was meant to be."

Buddy got very red in the face and his voice filled with hurt and anger and he replied, "You'll never make me believe that was supposed to happen. My son was a good boy and he deserved to live. You think

I'm bitter. You better believe it. I haven't stepped foot in a church since! God could have saved my boy but he didn't!"

My heart went out to Buddy. For to me, he had lost not only his son but also his God. I began to pray to myself from that moment all the way back to Mama's farm. Then, when the tube didn't fit and we had to return to the hardware store, I felt this was my cue that the Lord wanted me to speak to him. I wrote out on a piece of paper the words of Psalm 139:16: "All the days ordained for me, were written in your book before one of them came into being."

After the hose was cut to the appropriate length, I asked if I could talk to Buddy for a few minutes. I told him the story of how the death of Linda's eight-year-old daughter Ashley had been a comfort to me in my time of need. My son, Chris, and Ashley were the same age. About seven years after her death, my son overdosed and was subsequently hospitalized in Duke Hospital. When the insurance ran out, the doctors called to say my son was to be put into a mental institute. This place was used as the butt of all the psychiatric hospital jokes, and I was horrified.

At the time, I worked in an operating room, and they called me while I was working to let me know of the transfer. I went to the locker room and was in near hysteria, pacing back and forth, wailing because I couldn't see a way out of this dilemma. So, who did God send to comfort me—Linda. I just saw her and the thoughts began to come. Chris is still alive. Ashley died, and Linda has made it through. It's not so bad. And I began to calm down. From the loss of Ashley had come good.

That's what I said to Buddy. As I gave him the scripture I had written out, I told him the Bible doesn't say that we'll all live to an old age. He agreed with me that he used to believe that before his son died. I told him that he would see good come out of his son death. Then he let me pray with him and cry with him.

Three months later, at the death of my son, I heard my words that I had said to Buddy at the hardware store flash through my mind. If I believed what I said about his son, if I believed that God was in that conversation, then I must believe the same for my son. The plan was

I'd like to speak of how the Lord deals with us through grief and loss. Of course, this loss or grief doesn't have to be a loved one.

never for Josh to live to old age, and there would be good that came from his death.

Mary was prepared in that she saw good come out of a situation that must have been difficult for her as a young, unwed mother carrying her son, Jesus. Simeon's prediction of a sword piercing her soul came when Jesus was only eight days old (Luke 2:34-35). Mostly, Jesus himself prepared her, as he warned her of that which was to come, just as he did the disciples.

The Lord sustains us. He carries us through when we hurt so bad that when we take a breath it feels like we're trying to lift a battleship out of the water.

My son lived in North Carolina and I in Texas, so there was a need for two funerals. In North Carolina, I stayed with a dear friend, Teresa. Josh died on the weekend, and there was basically nothing that could be done that first day I arrived. So soon after our arrival, I went to bed exhausted.

I awoke near daylight and, confused about my surroundings, I ended up falling out of bed, but not all the way out of bed. I was scrunched up against the wall, my head and back on the wall, my bottom sagging to the floor, and my legs still on the bed. I was stuck. I had to do a lot of wriggling and waking up to get out of that ridiculous position. It did, however, fit my state of mind. I was confused and disoriented.

The first one up in the household, I stole outside and took a walk around a nearby elementary school. As I walked, I kept saying, "OK, Lord, how in the world am I suppose to make it through this? How Lord? How do I make it?"

Even before this had occurred I was already stressed to the max, or at least so I thought. The three preceding weekends, I had moved, gone to Houston for my younger son's wedding, and then on the third weekend packed up and moved again. Now, on this fourth weekend was my oldest son's death.

That morning as I basically walked in circles around the elementary school, the Lord brought to my mind the scripture in Ezekiel 47:3-5. Now, in studying this passage for this sermon, I found that the story is talking about a rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple. The Israelites have been driven from their homeland and are now held captive in Babylon. Ezekiel is writing a picture of a hope and a future, which includes their return home and the rebuilding of their temple.

From the throne of God pours forth the waters of life, and the different levels of the water speak to the magnitude of the blessing, the healing, that will spread across the land and is, therefore, a promise of hope for a better time to come. Yet, when I read this before Josh's

death, I didn't really catch on to what it was talking about, but the levels of the water stuck in my mind. For me the waters were not a good sign, not a sign of blessing, but a sense of impending doom as if a flood were coming. So in my time of crisis, when the Holy Spirit brought this to my mind, he used the scripture at the level I understood it, for the Lord always meets us where we are. And though he used the surface reading of the scripture that I had, the intent remained the same for the Israelites and for me: to bring hope and encouragement.

The man led me through the water and it was ankle-deep. He led me through the water and it was knee-deep. Again he led me through the water, and it was up to the waist; then it was a river that I could not cross. Now I didn't know it at the time, but I mixed two passages of scripture together. The next words that came to my mind were from Isaiah 43: "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you...For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior..."

TRISHA HAILES

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“Raging Waters” ... **So What?**

Questions for Consideration:

1. There are different views about God’s providence in the face of tragedy. How does the view in this sermon compare with your own? How does it compare with that shown in the article by Dr. Conyers?
2. What are the stages of grief that you have experienced, and how do they compare to those seen in this story?
3. Hailes shows her personal theology through the way she narrates her experience, as well as how her theology has developed as a result of her experience. How does your faith affect the way you interpret reality? How has your understanding of God changed through your experiences?

Prepared by Rachel Vaughan and Holly Sprink

Poetry
The Step Forward
T E R R Y Y O R K

All that lies ahead,
all that surrounds
and watches,
bows at the step
forward;
the step, hushed and reverent,
the step, holy and costly.

All that died
back there,
all that still lives
back there,
all,
bows at the step
forward.

Here is holy obedience.
The step echoes
in the great cathedral;
all who see and hear
bow.

All is silent,
save the dropping
of tears.

Dr. Terry W. York
Associate Professor of Christian Ministry and Church Music

A Whole Ecclesiology

Moving Toward Full Participation in the Body of Christ

J A Y S O N B E R R Y H I L L

**A consideration of the implications
of a distinction between clergy
and laity and how this influences
the church's participation in the
mission of God.**

IN LOOKING AT THE CHURCH AS WE FIND IT TODAY, it becomes painfully obvious that there exists a necessity for the development of a theology of the laity.¹ Primarily, this is due to the fact that it is generally accepted by both the church and the world that two classes of Christians exist within the church: the clergy (or professional ministers and missionaries) and the laity (or ordinary Christians). The clergy is a special minority of Christians within the church that is typically paid and understood as having the authority and the task to carry out the ecclesiastical obligation of mission and ministry. It is assumed that this class of Christians has primary importance and authority in the church over and against the laity. The laity, by way of contrast, represent the majority of Christians in the church who are likewise understood as having the task to carry out mission and ministry, but are only expected to deliberately seek to perform this task on a limited or part time basis. Furthermore, they are assumed to have the authority of the church, only as it is handed down to them by the clergy.

When we look at these basic distinctions within the church, we can easily see how they cripple her in carrying out her mission. To put the inherent problem of these distinctions into a military illustration, it would be like sending the officers out to the battlefield to fight while allowing the infantry to be content with staying at home and wearing the uniform.²

In *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, Roland Allen writes about this problem in the context of missionary sending, yet his principles are applicable to the whole spectrum of the church's mission activity. He contends, "It is almost universally taken for granted that mission-

ary work is the work of a paid professional class,” and “we created this paid professional missionary class not to support spontaneous missionary zeal... but to take the place of it.”³ From this profoundly accurate statement, the following assertions can be made: 1) the very existence of a professional class of ministers and missionaries serves to perpetuate the problem of the lack of missionary zeal on the part of the laity; and 2) this problem is further perpetuated by contentment with the situation on the part of both the laity and the clergy. Furthermore, the negative result of this problem is compounded by the fact that the laity represents the most strategic thrust for mission, because it is in the life of the so-called “ordinary Christian” that the church and the world meet. Stephen Neill takes this thought further when he says:

A great deal of attention has been paid to the ordained ministry of the Church, its nature, its authority, and its functions. The laity tend, by way of contrast, to be taken very much for granted, as though in their case no special problems arise. But such an attitude can hardly be justified. It is mainly through its laity that the Church enters into contact with the world which, though redeemed by Christ, stands to him in a relation different from that of the Church. It is at this meeting-point of the Christian and the non-Christian, the sacred and the profane, the religious and the secular, that the layman stands, and here that he encounters his problems.⁴

For these and many other reasons, the church must develop a theology of the laity. At the same time, to even speak of a theology of the laity is in some sense problematic because in doing so we separate the laity from the whole of the church. This reveals the inadequacy of our current operational definition of the laity. Neil gives this problem a context by stressing:

Strictly speaking neither a history of the laity nor a theology of the laity can be written. The whole Church is the *laos*, the people of God. If its history is correctly written, the life of the Church will be displayed in all its manifold variety and in all the complexity of its relationships with the world outside itself. The whole body of the Church is priestly. A true theology of the Church will set forth in its priestly relationship to its members, to society, and to the whole universe on the godward side of which it stands; each separate office or ministry will be seen, and its significance considered, only in relation to the priestly character of the whole.⁵

Father Yves M. J. Congar states this in a more succinct way when he says, "Fundamentally, there is but one valid theology of the laity; that is to say, a whole ecclesiology."⁶

Thus, it is the intention of this paper to move toward a whole ecclesiology. This means setting forth a short statement about the relation of the whole church and mission, and discussing how this whole ecclesiology can be achieved. The idea that the church needs to develop a whole ecclesiology is based on the assumption that the church cannot currently express a whole ecclesiology because the whole of her membership would not be included.

Toward a Mission Identity

"The Church is Mission." This statement made by Hendrick Kraemer in his book *A Theology of the Laity* suggests that the church does not merely have missions as one of a multitude of activities, but rather, by remaining true to her nature, she is all the time and everywhere engaging the world to which she is called.⁷ This means that mission cannot be seen simply as a mandate given to the church; rather, mission is the reason for her very existence. Without mission there would be no church, because it is for the mission of God that this community is bound together. The church is a sent community: "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." (John 20:21)⁸ As Christ was sent, so now the church, as the people of God, is sent for the same purpose. Therefore it can be said that the church "primarily exists on behalf of the world and not of itself."⁹

This statement by no means represents the entirety of Kraemer's thesis, nor is it a complete statement about the relationship between church and mission, it is a principle that should be sought by the church as she seeks to be true to her nature. In fact it becomes more than a principle when put into practice. It is a defining statement. The church does not simply have mission activity as a part of her obligations; rather she is mission by her very essence. However, this assertion can only be made insofar as it applies to the whole church. In order for this to be maintained, the whole of the church must be moving toward an acceptance and understanding of her missionary nature. The church has been crippled by the fact that it is assumed by many within her membership that this mission identity only applies to a certain minority group, the clergy, comprised of pastors, ministers, and vocational missionaries. It therefore becomes clear that for a theology of the laity (i.e. a whole ecclesiology) to be possible, a change must take place in the church. Kraemer refers to this change as a "radical reorientation in our ecclesiastical institutionalism and in the minds of its members."¹⁰

This radical reorientation requires that the church accept the notion that she is mission by her very nature. Moreover, in terms of its membership the local church must accept that it is a “missionary society.”¹¹ Within this society each member has his/her own part and most importantly each member has the same common purpose and the same common expectation to be a part of that purpose. As this change comes to fruition, the church will move closer toward a whole ecclesiology.

Mobilizing the Whole Assembly

The first order of business in moving the church toward a whole ecclesiology is to ensure that the church in her entirety is included. This of course means the inclusion of the laity, which is actually a preposterous notion because the whole church is the laity. However, because the laity are not currently understood to be fully included in the life and activity of the church, they must be our focus.

Typically the inclusion of the laity in the mission of the church has been seen primarily in terms of their strategic importance. This of course makes sense because, as the laity represents the majority of the church’s membership, they have the opportunity to make the biggest impact. As we have already seen, it is in the life of the “ordinary Christian” working in the secular world that the church and the world meet. If we take seriously the notion that the church exists primarily on behalf of the world, then the inclusion of the laity must be of primary concern.

It should also be noted that the witness of the so-called “ordinary Christian” living and working in the secular society has a particularly significant impact. An example of this is Acts 4:13, “When they [the priests and scribes] saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.” The mere fact that Peter and John were laity in terms of training and occupation made their witness all the more noteworthy to those who were in attendance.¹² The witness of the Christian who is compelled

It is generally accepted by both the church and the world that two classes of Christians exist within the church: the clergy and the laity.

by Christ alone and in no way by money or professional responsibility is most profound. Roland Allen points this out when he says:

If he [the Christian witness] is a paid agent both speaker and hearer are affected by that fact. The speaker knows, and knows that the other knows, that he is employed by a mission to speak. He is not delivering his own message because he cannot help it. He is not speaking of Christ because Christ alone impels him.¹³

Although the inclusion of the laity in the mission of the church is of particular strategic significance, our primary reason for including the laity is of far greater importance. We should seek to include the laity as full members of the church because only in doing so can the church be true to her nature. If the entire church acknowledges her missionary nature and therefore the missionary purpose to which all of her members are called, there will be no more need for a strategy that includes the laity because they will already be naturally active as they are a part of the intrinsically active community.

On the other hand, as long as members of the laity are treated as subordinate in the whole of the body, the church will never live up to her true calling and nature. There will always be the problem of motivating the whole church to action provided that there exists a paid superior class whose job and pay come primarily from their focus on ministry.¹⁴ This does not necessarily mean that we should get rid of these positions, but rather they must be redefined in terms of the church as a whole. This goes beyond simply redefining the positions of those who are paid; it means coming to a definition of the membership of the church as a whole.

Rediscovering the Whole People of God

At this point it becomes necessary to redefine what it means to be laity. The word “lay” can be traced back to the Greek word *laikos*, which has the original meaning of: belonging to the “*laos*,” or chosen people, of God. The word itself originally was strictly a religious word but through the years it has taken on secular meaning. Today the word “lay” is simply taken to mean unqualified or inexperienced regardless of the field. The word “clergy” on the other hand comes from the Greek “*kleros*,” which was a term for a magistrate. As the church grew up in the midst of Graeco-Roman society, she adopted a dualistic mindset of Graeco-Roman municipal administration. Thus the church reflected the idea of the “*kleros*” or magistrate as having authority over the “*laos*”

or people. By the end of the first century, the church was beginning to emulate this distinction.¹⁵

However, it cannot be stressed enough that this distinction is a departure from the biblical concept of the “*laos*” referring to the whole people of God. In fact the words *kleros* and *laos* can both be found in the New Testament, yet in each case they refer to the same people. There was no distinction. J.B. Lightfoot infers that, “The only priests under the Gospel designated as such in the New Testament, are the saints, the members of the Christian brotherhood.”¹⁶ Biblically the *laos* are the whole people of God.

In the New Testament there were not two bodies but rather one body with one purpose and the same expectation of all. To be a Christian was to be a part of the *laos* of God. In light of this New Testament principle we are forced to reconsider what it means for us today to be a part of the *laos*. Since our current distinctions do not appear in Scripture and are in fact contrary to Scripture, we must question why we have them at all. If indeed we intend to return to the biblical definition of the people of God, then we must all become the laity. Before considering what this means, it should be noted that this is not an ant clerical idea or an attempt to diminish the importance of those who are currently ordained in the church. Rather, this is a rediscovery of the laity, not in the sense that they are those who are unqualified and inexperienced, but rather in the sense that the laity is the whole people of God.¹⁷

Learning to see ourselves as the laity means both elevating the standard of the non-clergy and changing the motivation of the clergy. The clergy should not serve because they are the clergy, rather they should serve because they are a part of the laity. Those who are not clergy must recognize their role and deliberately seek to be part of God’s mission for the simple fact that they also are part of the laity.

S a v e d t o b e S e n t

If indeed we reshape our view of what it means to be the laity in the church, we soon realize that this has implications for our view of salvation. As mentioned earlier, in order to move to a point where a whole ecclesiology becomes possible, we must first endure a “radical reorientation” or change. This means a change from the roots (*radix*) upwards.¹⁸ To consider the roots of what it means to be a part of the *laos* of God, our best starting point is our view of salvation. This is because it is through salvation that we become the *laos* of God. If we reconsider what it means to *be* the *laos* of God, we must reconsider what it means to *become* the *laos* of God. It is through becoming the *laos* of God that we become a part of the church.

God's church, or the *ecclesia theo*, is defined as the assembly that is called by God.¹⁹ According to Francis Dubose, "all Christians are called, and inherent in that call is the ingredient of purpose."²⁰ This would suggest that call means more than just a call *from* where we were before, but rather a call *for* a purpose. Dubose says, "We are

**As Christ was sent, so now
the church, as the people
of God, is sent for the same
purpose.**

called not simply to bear fruit and to be holy. We are called 'out of' darkness, 'into' light, 'that' ('in order that') we may declare His wonderful deeds."²¹ We are called not for our purpose but for God's purpose, God's mission. The call of

Christ therefore is a missionary call demanding our allegiance to God's missionary purpose.

However, as we look at the current ways in which we define this missionary call, it becomes evident that even in our very language we distort the call of Christ as something other than a call to participate in God's mission. The *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* says of the 'missionary call':

All Christians are called to the service of the church as witnesses for Christ in every part of their lives. But the missionary call is more than this. It is a special and unique call to full-time ministry.²²

According to this definition, there is not one call but two: an initial call to the service of the church, and a "special and unique" call to full-time ministry. This definition of Christ's call becomes problematic, however, when we consider its implications. To suggest that there are two calls, one that includes membership in Christ's church and one that includes full-time participation in God's mission (i.e. the so-called "missionary call"), runs contrary to the mission identity of the church. If we maintain that the church is mission, then this statement necessitates that *all* who are in her membership are part of that mission. There cannot exist a group of Christians that are called to anything but full-time participation in God's mission. Therefore, the call of Christ for the purpose of God's mission must necessarily be the one call to full-time ministry and participation in the church. Francis Dubose rightly asserts, "There are no calls to Christian life and involvement divorced from the call to mission."²³

God's call to mission is seen throughout the New Testament and

indeed all of scripture. For instance, Peter informs the early church that they “are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God.” (1 Pet 2:9-10) This clearly points to the fact that the church is an assembly of those who are chosen and called out by God.²⁴ Being chosen is not to be an end in itself but rather the church is chosen so that we may “declare the praises of Him who called us.” Thus, Lesslie Newbigin can say:

God chooses men and women for the service of his mission. To be a Christian is to be a part of a chosen company – chosen, not for privilege, but for responsibility. The doctrine of election, so central to the whole of the Bible, is necessarily central for a true understanding of missions. It has been misconstrued and therefore widely rejected. The rejection of false and immoral forms of the doctrine of election is right. But no doctrine of Christian mission can be true which does not recognize that it is God’s sending, and that he sends whom he will.²⁵

Inherent in being chosen is being sent: “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world” (John 17:18). Therefore, the *laos* of God are those who have been called out of the world only to be sent back into the world to labor and strive for God’s purpose.²⁶

Baptized to Join a Struggle

Having come to the conclusion that the church is a sent community and that all who share in the life of the church are called to share fully in her missional task, it is now necessary for us to explore what it means to gain entrance into this sent community. This requires us to look at our current views of ordination and baptism. Currently the method by which the church conveys trusted entrance into her missional task is ordination. It is by ordination that one comes to be recognized as one who is “called” into the ministry of the church. It is also by ordination that one is trusted and received by those who are unfamiliar with his or her call. Simply put, it is by ordination that a “minister” is seen as a minister and trusted to faithfully carry out the ministry of the church. Webster’s Dictionary even defines ordination as, “admission to the Christian ministry.”²⁷ However, baptism, if viewed correctly and according to the New Testament model, makes this modern ordination redundant and unnecessary.

In 1 Cor 12:13 Paul tells us, “For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free.” Similarly he

says in Gal 3:26-28, "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Through baptism comes a radical change in both societal relationships and self-understanding. This means that by being baptized, and thus incorporated into the body of Christ, all previous human distinctions should become irrelevant in the church. Ernst Kasemann says of baptism that it is "the seal of membership in the eschatological people of God."²⁸

According to Hans-Ruedi Weber, when we are baptized, we are not simply going through a perfunctory ritual, but rather we are "baptized to join a struggle."²⁹ This accurately reflects both the eschatological urgency that the church must possess for her mission and the importance of baptism in incorporating her members to become a part of that mission. Baptism is more than what we have made it as simply a confession of faith; it is an ordination of one who is called to live out the missionary task common to all Christians.

The fact that we have created this second ordination reflects an unfortunately distorted view of the call of Christ as being separate from the call to participate in God's mission. We created this second ordination for those who are "called to the ministry." However, if we define the call of Christ as necessarily including the call to mission and ministry, then we have only one ordination to perform, that of baptism. Thus, by virtue of baptism alone, a believer becomes ordained into the royal priesthood of the church.³⁰ If the church is mission, then the method by which men and women gain entrance into this church, and indeed this mission, is baptism.

Transforming the Whole

The points that have been outlined in this paper are certainly not meant to be exhaustive, but rather they expose major categories that need to be refined if the church is to move toward a whole ecclesiology. To say that the church is mission implies that all those who are in her membership are called to be a part of God's mission. The Christian life should not be categorized as involving either full or part-time ministry depending on one's career but rather, it should be seen as a life commitment to Christ and God's mission. This means that we must elevate the standard for the whole church so that all Christians recognize their duty and indeed their privilege to participate in the mission of God. In order for this to occur, the church will be forced to make specific changes in the areas that currently hinder her movement toward a whole ecclesiology. Of these more specific refinements, two deserve mention at this point:

Promoting Full Participation. Any discussion today of moving toward a whole ecclesiology is incomplete when it fails to address the role of women in the ministry of the church. Although it seems almost redundant to mention the role of women when speaking of the whole of the church, the contribution that women make and their right to full participation in the church deserves special attention due to the severity of the problem. In order for the church to move toward a whole ecclesiology, it is necessary for the whole of the church, both men and women, to be allowed and expected to participate fully in its mission. Equality amongst the sexes is not only a missional principle but also a kingdom principle. By not allowing for the equal treatment of women, the church damages its witness. Furthermore, by attempting to deny women full participation in the mission of the church, the church threatens the foundational assertion that every person who is called by Christ is necessarily called to participate in God's mission. If we are to maintain that "there is no participation in Christ without participation in His mission to the world," then we must allow and encourage women to fully participate in the ministry of the church.³¹ Although the specific roles that women will play will ultimately be decided upon by the local church, the Christian community worldwide must come to recognize that the participation of women in the ministry of the church is essential if the church is to move in the direction of wholeness.

Encouraging Whole Leadership. It is imperative that any discussion of moving toward a whole ecclesiology be translated to how it will shape the local church. This is because a whole ecclesiology is only possible insofar as it can be practically lived out in the local missionary body (i.e. the local church). Although many aspects of the life of the local church should and will be refined as it moves in the direction of wholeness, the best place for us to begin is to address the way the local church is governed.

In order for the local church to move toward a whole ecclesiology, it must formulate a church government that reflects this wholeness. This will entail a re-evaluation of several aspects of church government including decision-making and

leadership. For too long Western churches have appointed leaders based not on ability, merit, gifting, or even tenure within the body, but

**This radical reorientation
requires that the church
accept the notion that she
is mission by her very**

on a seminary degree or a certificate of ordination. While education and previous experience are no doubt invaluable assets to assist leaders with their difficult task, these should not be the basis by which leaders are chosen. In the book of Romans Paul tells us:

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve... if it is leadership, let him govern diligently (Rom 12:4-8).

Many pastors today are placed in a situation where they are expected to lead congregations through good times as well as bad, but they have not earned the authority to do so. This would be comparable to sending a lieutenant fresh out of the academy into a combat situation with volunteer troops he has never met and expecting him to be able to successfully lead. Not only has he not earned the authority to make the difficult decisions, but when the gunshots go off the troops will undoubtedly look to someone who has, creating divisions and lack of trust. In many churches today "gunshots" are going off and the leaders of those churches have not earned the authority to make the difficult decisions that should be made. In order for this to change, leadership positions within the local church must be determined by gifts and abilities, not certificates or titles. Furthermore, the authority that accompanies leadership must be earned and not taken while maintaining the understanding that the whole church is equally a part of the *laos* of God.

Throughout her existence the church has always had to realize that change is crucial to her existence. Since the first century, the world in which the church exists and to which she has been called has been steadily changing, forcing her to adapt in order to remain relevant and ultimately to survive. Today is no different. With the "dechristianization" of the West and the world increasingly advancing in the direction of religious pluralism, the church finds herself in a precarious situation.³² No longer can she exist and thrive safely within the bounds of Christendom, exclusively serving the needs of her own members and taking the position that missions are endeavors to be carried on elsewhere.³³

Today the church faces a situation in which her missionary nature is not simply an ideal she must aspire to, but a necessity for survival. The church must move forward. The church can no longer afford for the majority of her membership to be dormant as she seeks to carry

out her missionary calling. The church must move forward as a whole, wholly participating in the mission of God. Wholeness will enable the church to engage the world with strength and unity of purpose that she cannot possess otherwise. Moreover, only as a whole can the church fully live up to her missionary nature. By moving toward a whole ecclesiology the church will move closer toward a whole participation in Christ and God's mission.

NOTES

1. Hendrik Kraemer defines this as "A systematic attempt at a theological foundation and motivation of the laity's place and meaning, as inherent in the nature and calling of the church." He goes on to make the important distinction

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between a theology of the laity and a theology for the laity. See Hendrik Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1958), 10-12.

2. We should always be especially cautious of any analogy that includes the church and warfare; however, the mere absurdity of this illustration aptly reflects the problem.
3. Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church and the Causes Which Hinder It* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1962), 106-107.
4. Stephen Charles Neill and Hans-Ruedi Weber, ed., *The Layman in Christian History* (London: SCM Press LTD, 1963), 15.
5. Ibid.
6. Yves M. J. Congar, *Lay People in the Church* (1957). As noted in Kraemer, *Theology*, 72.
7. Kraemer, *Theology*, 132.
8. All scripture quotations are from the New International Version.
9. Kraemer, *Theology*, 127.
10. Ibid., 130-131.
11. Allen, *Spontaneous*, 97.
12. Kraemer, *Theology*, 19.

13. Allen, *Spontaneous*, 11.
14. *Ibid.*, 106.
15. Kraemer, *Theology*, 49-51.
16. J.B. Lightfoot, *The Christian Ministry*. As noted in Kraemer, *Theology*, 50-52.
17. Neill, *Layman*, 388.
18. Kraemer, *Theology*, 131.
19. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: Sketches for a Mission Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1978), 18.
20. Francis M. Dubose, *The God Who Sends: A Fresh Quest for Biblical Mission* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1983), 103.
21. *Ibid.*
22. "The Missionary Call," *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, A. Scott Moreau, ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 645.
23. Dubose, *The God Who Sends*, 103.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 19.
26. David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), 373-374.
27. Jean L. McKechnie, ed., *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language* (U.S.A.: Collins-World Publishing, 1977), 1260.
28. Ernst Kasemann, "On the Subject of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic," *New Testament Questions of Today*, trans. W. J. Montague (Philadelphia: Fortress Press), 119. As noted in Bosch, *Transforming*, 167.
29. Hans-Ruedi Weber, *The Militant Ministry: People and Pastors of the Early Church and Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), 1.
30. Neill, *Layman*, 30.
31. Willingen Conference of the International Missionary Council (1952). As noted in Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 1.
32. Bosch, *Transforming*, 3.
33. Bosch, *Transforming*, 3.
34. Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 2-12.

“A Whole Ecclesiology” ... **So What?**

Questions for Consideration:

1. What distinctions between laity and clergy do you observe in the Bible, in church history, and in your own local church?
2. If the laity is the most strategic entity for mission in the world, what might its activity look like in and through your local church?
3. Berryhill agrees with Hendrik Kraemer in saying that a movement toward a whole ecclesiology requires a radical reorientation. Where and how must this radical reorientation begin?
4. Do you agree that “baptism, if viewed correctly and according to the New Testament model, makes this modern ordination redundant and unnecessary”? How might Berryhill’s understanding of ordination compare with the practice of commissioning?
5. In addition to the role of women and the form of church government, what other practical implications does a whole ecclesiology have on the local church? For example, how might it impact church discipline?

Poetry

Our Lady of the Doorway

T E R R Y Y O R K

She is as ancient
as the cathedral
where she sits and begs,
as ancient as Guadalajara itself.

The shawl about her head
keeps one guessing,
“Is this just an old beggar woman
or is it...?”

This is her job, her calling,
her mission;
be the last of the sacraments,
the first of the responses.

She tests the Christ
in all of us.

Dr. Terry W. York
Associate Professor of Christian Ministry and Church Music

Anabaptist Missions

Distinctives of the Radical Reformers

A M Y W I L K I N S

Finding relevance within the Anabaptist tradition and allowing it to speak to our own mission practices today.

THE ANABAPTISTS WERE BORN into the context of the Protestant Reformation, begun by those who believed the reformers such as Luther had not purified the church enough of its Roman Catholic elements. In contrast to the other Protestant Reformers, the Anabaptists embarked upon “a remarkable program of missionary outreach.”¹ The Roman Catholic and Protestant churches of their time followed a medieval parish pattern, but the Anabaptists envisioned a church without borders. They were a pilgrim people, sent out as apostolic emissaries to fulfill the Great Commission throughout the earth. Their idea of church and mission was fundamentally a “concept of mobility,” and they sent missionaries wherever they could find an ear to listen; no land was to be excluded from this proclamation.²

The Anabaptists sought a restoration of New Testament Christianity, a return to the primitive church apart from the destructive influence of Constantine and Augustine. Many of the movement’s first leaders were scholars who had previously served as Catholic priests,³ and leaders like Balthasar Hubmaier and Menno Simons left a legacy of Radical Reformation that has far-reaching influence on Christian theology even today. The Mennonites, Amish, and Hutterite colonies and the Churches of the Brethren (Dunkards) claim religious ancestry from the Anabaptists.

Those of the Radical Reformation emphasized the separation of church and state, repudiated coercion of religious belief, proclaimed believer’s baptism instead of infant baptism, and focused on regeneration by God’s spirit over “forensic justification.” They often practiced separation from the world and from society, often starting Christian communes, and espousing pacifism and simplicity. The Anabaptists rejected creeds and doctrinal confessions in exchange for an emphasis on the practical aspects of Christian life and relationship.⁴ They

have much to contribute to a modern-day understanding of missions as well, as can be seen in several Anabaptist distinctives.

Desire to Reform and Purify the Church

The Anabaptists could not have begun such an impressive movement of missionary activity and missional lifestyle if they had not separated from the established churches. They overturned the authority of church tradition and renounced such beliefs and practices as purgatory, the penitential system, indulgences, sacraments, and prayers to saints. They desired a genuine return to apostolic, New Testament Christianity, and so they sought to purify the church from any nonbiblical elements.

These early Anabaptists held that “the Reformation must purify not only theology but also the actual lives of Christians.”⁵ The church must not be coextensive with the civil community. “In the New Testament, the church is a community gathered from the world at large, very different from it, and consisting only of those who have personally decided to be incorporated into the body of Christ.”⁶ They saw the church of their day as being indistinguishable from secular government and culture, and they recognized that a radical break was necessary and imminent in order to have a church that was purified and separate from the world around. The primitive church of the New Testament became the model for the Anabaptist reform.

Centrality of the Scriptures, Especially the Great Commission

Anabaptist reformers such as Menno Simons took seriously the absolute authority of scripture, even encouraging Anabaptists “to study and memorize the scriptures so that when they were arrested and interrogated they often astonished the magistrates and leaders of the state churches by their superior grasp of the New Testament.”⁷ To cite one example from the Radical Reformation, a number of Anabaptist families submitted an apologetic document to justify their rebaptism which cited the Mark 16 Great Commission, Peter’s Pentecost sermon in Acts 2, Philip’s encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8, Acts 19, and then Rom 6:4 to link the internal baptism of the Holy Spirit with the external water baptism.⁸ In many records from court documents and martyrs’ confessions, scripture verses appear intermittently throughout, as an apologetic witness to the Anabaptists’ biblical basis and authority.

Menno Simons's near-obsession with memorizing and citing scripture likely arose in part from the extreme lack of biblical foundation prior to the leader's conversion to Anabaptism. Menno tells of his first pastorate in the Roman church, "I had not touched [the scriptures] during my life, for I feared, if I should read them they would mislead me. Behold! Such a stupid preacher was I."⁹ Finally, Menno turned to the scriptures to ascertain the truths he needed to minister effectively. Menno Simons discovered the Bible to be vital to true Christianity, and the scriptures are an inseparable and all-important element of Anabaptism to this day. Anabaptists especially emphasized the Sermon on the Mount and the Great Commission. In fact,

no biblical texts appear more frequently in the Anabaptist confessions of faith and court testimonies than the Matthean and Markan versions of the "Great Commission", along with Psalm 24:1. They were among the first to make the mission mandatory for all believers.¹⁰

The Anabaptist interpretation of the Great Commission closely follows that of Erasmus, and both link the Matthean imperative to the book of Acts, where the apostles spread Christianity throughout the world. The Matthean Great Commission becomes the *locus classicus* for the Anabaptist insistence on believer's baptism. Hubmaier's writings generally cite Matt 28:18-20 first among references supporting adult baptism. Felix Mantz preached Acts' evangelism and baptisms as well as the apostles' understanding of the command of Christ related in Matthew's Great Commission.¹¹ This influence continued even after revolutionary Anabaptism had run its course. "Erasmus's interpretation of Christ's Great Commission and Menno's emphasis on the 'new birth,' then, were the twin pillars upon which post-revolutionary Dutch Anabaptism was built."¹² Anabaptists may or may not have recognized their commonalities with Erasmus's interpretation of the Great Commission. Regardless, this scripture was the

They sought to counteract the complacently Christian culture of their time to help emerge a radical, contagious Christianity comprised of mission and obedience.

motivating and driving force behind their missional church and missionary outreach.

Necessity of Repentance and Personal Faith before Baptism

Although this element of Anabaptism may appear on the surface to have more to do with theology than mission, the Anabaptist insistence on believer's baptism only following an adult conversion, which must include both repentance and faith, was key to their sense of mission and evangelism. They sought to counteract the complacently Christian culture of their time to help emerge a radical, contagious Christianity comprised of mission and obedience. Anabaptists, more extremely than other Protestant reformers, concentrated on human nature as sinful rather than counting the sins of individuals, and salvation became subjective and individualized.¹³

Genuine salvation can only occur through a conscious repentance and faith, involving a radical life conversion and resulting in sanctification. This responsibility of decision implies an age of moral discretion, which Baptists today typically call the "age of accountability."¹⁴ Menno Simons, probably the most outstanding Anabaptist leader and organizer, experienced a profound conversion from a life of immorality after authorities martyred his brother Peter, an Anabaptist. His "heartfelt conversion involving conscious repentance and trust in Jesus Christ followed by a filling of the Holy Spirit became the paradigm for the early Anabaptist theology of salvation."¹⁵

Following their adult conversion to Christ, Anabaptists thought it fitting that they should be baptized. Disregarding their infant baptism, they baptized each other in the first true baptism of faith and repentance. Others dubbed them "rebaptizers," hence the name Anabaptists. Ancient laws created by Theodosius and Justinian against the heretic Donatists decreed the death penalty for anyone who practiced rebaptism, and Anabaptists everywhere died for this practice.¹⁶ The first Anabaptists baptized by effusion—pouring—but later Anabaptists began baptizing by immersion in order to conform more closely to the New Testament.¹⁷

Social Justice

Some of the leaders of Anabaptism, such as Thomas Müntzer and Melchior Hoffman, linked the main tenets of Anabaptism with a concern for social justice.¹⁸ Reports even show that various Anabaptist groups worked together, cooperating in a project for poor relief.¹⁹ Anabaptists historically have been unique in their insistence

that spirituality and economics are necessarily linked. They have been willing to challenge the notion of private property, as seen in the Hutterite communalism and the Mennonite provision of mutual aid, and through their beliefs they speak volumes on the issues of peace, justice, community, and lifestyle.²⁰

The Anabaptists in most groups were even radically egalitarian, granting women the same rights as men and treating as equals the poor and the unlearned along with the rich and the educated.²¹ Women did not overtly preach or baptize, but they actively participated in the spread of the Anabaptist faith, defending the faith against their unbelieving husbands, confessing their faith without fear, and sharing it within the sphere of everyday life among their friends, relatives, and neighbors. “The woman in Anabaptism emerges as a fully emancipated person in religious matters and as the independent bearer of Christian convictions.”²²

In addition to the Great Commission, Anabaptists emphasized Jesus’ vocational statement in Luke 4:16-21 to be applicable to all apostolic Christians throughout the ages. They exhibited profound concern for the poor and unemployed and lived without regard for race and class distinctions. The Anabaptists lived simply and trusted in God’s promises to care for them. Balthasar Hubmaier wrote,

Concerning community of goods, I have always said that everyone should be concerned about the needs of others, so that the hungry might be fed, the thirsty given to drink, and the naked clothed. For we are not lords of our possessions, but stewards and distributors. There is certainly no one who says that another’s goods may be seized and made common; rather, he would gladly give the coat in addition to the shirt.²³

Mennonites today welcome the social emphasis from the gospel in liberal evangelical circles, and the movement Evangelicals for Social Actions was founded by a person of the Anabaptist tradition.²⁴

Rejected Coercion and Adopted Pacifism

If one asserts that the Protestant Reformation had a missional aspect, this aspect existed only by the sword and coercion. It was a territorial religion enforced by the ruling prince or government in each geographical area. The Anabaptists rejected this forced “conversion” and recognized it as inauthentic religion. Balthasar Hubmaier insisted that Christians never use coercion of any kind to evangelize or establish God’s kingdom. The radical Anabaptists, such as those at

Münster, allowed their communal living to escalate their eschatological fervor to the point of violent extremism, and their movement was completely wiped out. Authorities used these unfortunate extremities as an excuse to blame, judge, and persecute Anabaptists everywhere, and even to this day that is the entire legacy that continues in some circles.

Menno Simons, however, corrected the extremism of the Münsterites and returned to Hubmaier's stance of nonviolence, but he took this a step further to require complete nonresistance of his followers. From then on, Anabaptists rejected Christian participation in any form of violence or coercion. They maintained the state's right to use force to protect citizens and establish justice, but Christians may neither participate in battle nor defend themselves against personal attack.²⁵ This led many Anabaptists to denounce Christian participation in any state governing role or office. Mission, then, entailed a voluntary conversion, based on a person's free will in response to God's gracious offer of salvation, and this resulted in a lasting, obedient faith that lent itself to rapid and thorough extension and expansion.

Willingness to Sacrifice All

The most common factor among all Anabaptists is the tendency to martyrdom. For the Anabaptists, mission is life, and they were willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of the gospel and their mission to extend it to all people. The Anabaptists were martyred for various reasons, not only for their proselytizing but also for their refusal to cooperate with and serve in the military branches of government. Especially those under the influence of Menno Simons refused to give oaths or offer military service, even while most states in Europe required that their citizens serve in the armed forces.²⁶ Both ecclesiastical and civil courts pressed charges against the Anabaptists, and they were accused of religious heresy and civil sedition. It is likely that more Anabaptists were martyred than were Christians from the three centuries of persecution before Constantine.²⁷ Even Zwingli and other former friends and mentors urged for the Anabaptists' arrest and execution, because they viewed them as dangerous rebels and heretics.

Most commonly Anabaptists died a martyr's death by drowning, a mocking simulation of a third baptism preferred by both Catholic and Protestant authorities. Even during the first few years of Anabaptist existence, thousands of men and women were executed and their children sent off to be reared by families who attended officially recognized churches. Church authorities accused Anabaptists of child abuse for refusing infant baptism for their children.²⁸ It did not take much instigation for authorities to accuse and try an Anabaptist for

sedition and heresy. They died by the thousands, but bravely remained unwavering to their deaths. Many records tell of how the Anabaptists' persecutors and executors were so impressed by the Anabaptists' conviction and testimony that they themselves were won over to the faith. Still, persecution continued and multiplied. However, the more fiercely the Anabaptists were persecuted, the more the movement grew.²⁹

The Anabaptists became firmly convinced that a fellowship of true believers must be, and will be, a suffering community. As Christ yielded to God in his sufferings, so we are to yield to God to become true Christians.³⁰ Because the Anabaptist churches were suffering churches, they developed an acute awareness of the biblical texts that emphasized Christ's suffering continuing to God's people, who would then experience intense physical and spiritual suffering. Suffering, then, is the sign of a true Christian and a true church and the most direct route to eternal life. The suffering of the cross is translated into the suffering of the disciple as a great redeeming and liberating movement of God. In this way, through persecution and martyrdom the Anabaptist participates in the suffering of Christ as a sort of co-sacrifice.³¹ The Anabaptist willingness to suffer for the sake of Christ and his message demonstrates the authenticity and validity of their message, and it is this unshakable confidence that is required for effective mission outreach.

Freedom of Conscience and Separation of Church and State

The context within which the Anabaptists found themselves was riddled with religious strife and war. The Anabaptists came to believe that the tension between the church and the Roman Empire in the first centuries of Christianity was somehow normative, that the church is not to be allied with government, that a true church is always inviting persecution, and that the conversion of Constantine was therefore the great apostasy that marked the end of pure Christianity.³²

The Anabaptists separated from state churches and frequently preached sermons against them, ensuring opposition from the magisterial Protestants and Roman Catholics who believed that church and state must work in cooperation. The Anabaptist insistence on freedom of conscience made them Christian pioneers and, in the eyes of some, anarchists.³³ It also meant that cooperation between church and state in mission was impossible and forbidden, whereas at the same time Protestant mission only went where civil authorities existed or in collaboration with colonization.³⁴ The church, not the state, chose its own ministers and supported them through their voluntary financial gifts.³⁵ This freedom enabled the spread of the Anabaptist faith

beyond territorial boundaries and facilitated mission to lands far from the earliest Anabaptist origins.

Priesthood of All Believers

Anabaptists both affirmed and radicalized Luther's conception of the universal priesthood of believers. While Luther still held to the Peace of Westphalia's (1648) famous rule *cuius region eius religio*, where each territory follows the religion of its ruler, the Anabaptists renounced the ideas of a special and exclusive office and of ministry being limited to a specific geographic area. They regarded all of Germany as a mission field and any parish was fair game for them. They even systematically sent out preachers to many different parts of Europe, considering themselves pilgrims.³⁶

Anabaptists affirmed the personal role and responsibility of individual believers, who stood in direct relationship to God without the need of the church as mediator. Every Christian thus had "a calling and a responsibility to serve God, to be actively involved in God's work in the world, and thus to break with the concept of 'ordinary' believers being mere 'minors' and immature 'objects' of the church's ministry."³⁷

Wolfgang Schäufele insists that the concepts of "laity," "lay mission," and "lay missionary" do not apply to the Anabaptists because their sect sociology did not even recognize these distinctions. "There was no distinction between an academically educated ministerial class on the one hand and the laity on the other. Each member was potentially a preacher and a missionary, and each single member had equal opportunities. . ."³⁸

Bold Christian Proclamation

Anabaptists emphasized "inward conversion and outward testimony."³⁹ Leading radical reformers such as Balthasar Hubmaier emphasized the importance of individual conversion and staunchly opposed the nominally Christian society that infant baptism produced. Conversion must be a free response to God's gracious salvation through Jesus Christ, and regeneration naturally follows.⁴⁰ The Anabaptists preached openly and often for the adult conversion of their neighbors, and many were "fairly confrontational in their methods...and defiant of what they considered apostate religious and civil authorities." Some even interrupted Reformed and other nationally recognized church services to proclaim their particularly Anabaptist message.⁴¹ The Anabaptists believed all of existent Christianity to be apostate—the world consisted exclusively of pagans—and Europe became again a mission field. They did not distinguish between "mission in 'Christian' Europe and mission among non-Christians."⁴²

Menno Simons, perhaps the best known Anabaptist leader, said:

Therefore, we preach, as much as possible, both by day and by night, in houses and in fields, in forests and wastes, hither and yon, at home or abroad, in prisons and in dungeons, in water and in fire, on the scaffold and on the wheel... We could wish that we might save all mankind from the jaws of hell, free them from the chains of their sins, and by the gracious help of God add them to Christ by the Gospel of his peace.⁴³

The Anabaptists' bold proclamation played a major role in their outstanding missionary enterprise and the roles of their missionary teams.

Missionary Impetus

The Great Commission in Matt 28 and Mark 16, combined with the global emphasis of Ps 24:1, provided the biblical basis for Anabaptist missions. These Scriptures indicated to them that "because the earth belonged to Christ, the apostles had been commanded to go forth into all the world to preach Christ's gospel."⁴⁴ The Anabaptists saw themselves as called to carry out the apostolic mission commanded in the Great Commission, and it became their commission as well. They sought to gather a church of believers who freely responded to the gospel by preaching, baptizing and teaching.⁴⁵ Formerly, scholars had assumed that the Great Commission applied only to the apostolic era, but the Anabaptists insisted that it was applicable to all true disciples of Christ in every age.

They obeyed this binding command by going into all of Europe with Bibles, tracts, hymns, and sermons to "preach, teach, live, suffer, and die for Christ's sake."⁴⁶

They exhibited profound concern for the poor and unemployed, and they lived without regard for race and class distinctions. The Anabaptists lived simply and trusted in God's promises to care for them.

Missionary Claus Felbinger, in his Confession of Faith, demonstrated the missionary motivation of the Hutterite Anabaptists:

We have been asked by sundry people why we have come into the prince's (of Bavaria) land, and draw people away. My answer is, we do not go only into this land, but into all lands, wherever our language is known, for where God opens a door for us and shows us zealous hearts that truly seek him, hearts that are discontented with the godless life of the world and would gladly do what is right—there we go, for we have divine cause to do so. For heaven and earth are the Lord's and all men are his; but we have given, surrendered, and sacrificed ourselves wholly to God. Where he sends us and will use us, there we go, in obedience to his divine will, regardless of what we must suffer and endure.⁴⁷

Jakob Hutter himself built colonies designed to be economically communal and organized so that they might “missionize” fervently and more vigorously than had been previously done.⁴⁸ Melchior Hofmann asserts that the King of Kings “commands his servants that they should go thither and be his emissaries, and teach all people, yea, all peoples, pagans, tribes, tongues, and nations, just as it happened in the time of the apostles...just as the Lord Christ himself calls them.” This preaching centered upon the crucified Christ, and to which people respond of their own free will and are baptized.⁴⁹

Obbe Philips, who staunchly refuted the Anabaptist extremists of Münster, says that those in the apostolic office were sent out in pairs as apostles and emissaries of Christ to various cities.⁵⁰ Hans Kasdorf says that they were typically sent in teams, usually of three people: a minister of the word who served as the preacher and teacher, a servant to the needs of others, similar to a deacon, and a common lay brother who served as liaison between sending church and missionaries. Although the sending church usually supported these missionaries, the missionaries who were professionals often worked to support themselves.⁵¹

The Missional Church

The Anabaptist mission did not consist solely of a sending apparatus limited to the activity of a few willing emissaries. The Anabaptists seemed to live the famous words of Emil Brunner before they were even penned: “The church exists by mission as fire exists by burning.”⁵² John Howard Yoder, who worked as a consultant for the Mennonite Board of Missions, said, “the Anabaptist vision calls for a Believers’ Church. With reference to the outside this means that the

Church is by definition missionary...is a church which invites men and women into fellowship.”⁵³

A supporting church commissioned the Anabaptist missionaries, in a service observed by the entire congregation that was a kind of covenant between the congregation and the missionaries. Candidates reported on their call, the church admonished and encouraged them, the missionaries gave a charge to the remaining members to be faithful in their tasks (such as caring for the poor and unemployed), and the missionaries in turn asked also for faithfulness in prayers and material provisions. The congregation then promised support, wished them well, and prayed for God’s mercy upon their mission endeavors. As the missionaries were usually married men who left families behind, the church also promised to provide for their families should something happen to them.⁵⁴ The genius of the Anabaptist missionary movement is its ecclesiastical roots. The Anabaptist missionaries established and baptized new converts, disciplined them until they were established in the faith, and then gathered them into local congregations of believers who would in turn send out apostolic missionaries.⁵⁵

Lay Ministry

Another Anabaptist distinctive that made possible such incredible mission and evangelism is the empowerment of all people equally. Among the Anabaptists, lay members did not abrogate the responsibility for evangelism and mission to the ordained clergy, but rather the obligation lay with the ordinary, individual members to spread the gospel in the framework of their various contacts within the world. The Radical Reformers found the missionary church the norm in the New Testament, and they sought to actualize this in their own church and lives.⁵⁶ The absence of a hierarchy in the Anabaptist church resulted in an “emphasis on community and brotherhood and on the enfranchisement of the lay and common people.”⁵⁷

Hans Kasdorf highlights three specific ways that ordinary Anabaptists related to others to point them to Christ. They used the web of family relationships, where one family member is won to Christ, and then the faith is contagiously spread to cousins, uncles, and aunts. Anabaptists also channeled their witness to neighbors and other acquaintances, through Bible study groups meeting in homes, social events, and community affairs, all with the objective of winning converts among their close contacts. The third opportunity for lay missionary outreach came through occupational contacts. Employer and employees were all active in sharing their faith, and laborers and artisans witnessed to their masters and fellow workers through a deliberate and conscious effort.⁵⁸

Communal Discipleship

Unlike so many mass evangelism events today, Anabaptism had a high retention rate despite intense and severe persecution. They did not create converts and then abandon them to discover how to live as a Christian on their own. Rather, Anabaptism is greatly concerned with Christian living, and both church and home life function together to instill core values—honesty, labor, community, ecclesial commitment, thrift, service, and peace.⁵⁹ The Anabaptists provide us with the insight “that every sinner needs to be born again into a nurturing fellowship and not stand or fall as an individual convert.” Anabaptists today have begun to question the notion of instantaneous conversion and sanctification, and have realized through mission work that often conversion is a nurturing process involving an entire community.⁶⁰

Eschatological Perspective

The Anabaptists exhibit a surprising combination of focus upon liberation and evangelism, issues that are often thought to be mutually exclusive. Their emphasis on the ‘Not Yet’ lent an eschatological vision to act. It was largely their gaze toward the future that led many to evangelize rigorously throughout the world, converting thousands to a fervent faith. The Anabaptists saw the Church of their day as too much at home in an alien world, and thus they issued a charge “to move from the old age into the new by the act of either revolution, evangelical decision, or conventicular withdrawal.”⁶¹

Separation and Seclusion

While the Anabaptists were the only ones during the Reformation period who embarked upon mission outside of the territorial principle, “after having been persecuted ruthlessly during the Reformation century, even they began to concentrate on maintenance rather than mission.”⁶² In fact, the Mennonite missionary congregations have become secluded sects, where the missionary zeal has expired and congregations have focused inwardly until they were, in effect, closed congregations. N. van der Zijpp gives several reasons for this decline. First, the eschatological expectations were frustrated as God’s kingdom did not come imminently. Second, Mennonites gradually began to submit to governmental authority for the sake of their own peace and safety. As secular authorities recognized the benefits of their community service, they began to cooperate together and certain inevitable compromises crept into the movement. Third, attention began to shift from missionary outreach to congregational organization. Their house-congregations precluded any form of massive gathering. In addition to

this, the Anabaptist emphasis on personal faith often expressed itself as “individualistic atomism,” and members became self-focused. Finally, cultural optimism crept in and as the world seemingly began to improve, the necessity of mission became less apparent.⁶³

Conclusion

After its missionary beginnings, “Anabaptism soon withdrew geographically, whenever possible, and theologically into quietism. With this came a quick loss of missionary zeal, except among the Hutterites.”⁶⁴ However, even though Mennonite and Anabaptist mission saw a definitive decline after its initial thrust, the Anabaptist distinctives provide an incredible model for mission activity and a missional church. Their legacy trickles down today among many different denominations, not excluding their own spiritual descendants. Even in the twenty-first century we have a lot to learn from their example.

Mission-oriented Christians today would do well to remember their emphasis on evangelism, discipleship, and missional churches. We could find support in our local congregations as sending bodies, commissioning apostolic emissaries who rely on congregations for material needs or even serve as “tentmakers,” continuing their professional enterprise elsewhere while serving as Christ’s ambassadors in foreign lands. The tension within Anabaptism between the outward and inward focus, between missionary and community, is one that necessitates further study and contemplation. It may be said that the Anabaptists are a model of mission in, by, and through community—one from which we have much to learn.

**The genius of the Anabaptist
missionary movement is its
ecclesiastical roots.**

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“Anabaptist Missions” ... **So What?**

Questions for Consideration:

1. How can you see the legacy of the Anabaptists in your church today?
2. Baptist churches in the United States, along with Mennonite and Amish communities seem to have lost their penchant for radical change. Where do you see prophetic, reforming forces at work in these churches now?
3. How do our mission efforts reflect the constitutions and convictions of our church?

Paul's Formation of a New Family:

An Exegesis of 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12

M E G R A M E Y

Paul as an infant, a nurse, and a father in 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12.

FOR CENTURIES, MINISTERS HAVE FACED THE CHALLENGES not only of sharing the gospel but also of trying to mold new Christians into a tightly woven community. How does one develop group cohesion among former strangers coming from various social, ethnic, and racial backgrounds? Paul faced these same challenges and answered them by developing a new family out of Christian converts. 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12 gives a glimpse of how this New Testament missionary ministered and related to the Thessalonian proselytes. The examination of this passage shows three familial metaphors of an infant, a nurse, and a father that Paul uses to describe his relationship with the Thessalonians and gives attention to other devices and language employed by Paul. Throughout this passage one can see Paul's dual purposes, both pastoral and parenetic, as he reminds the congregation of his conduct while among them and offers his behavior as an example. To better understand Paul's efforts in forming this new family and the significance of the metaphors used in this passage, a preliminary examination of the importance of belonging to a family in antiquity, the significance of the household, and the role of fictive kinship language is prudent.

Forming a New Family

Cults, fraternities, and other voluntary associations were common in the Roman Empire, and while the early Christian movement shared many similarities with such groups, the Christian communities were different entities. Whereas the Stoic philosophers' slogan was "self-sufficiency" and the Cynics were concerned with freedom, early Christian missionaries fostered a communal life in which members were bound together by their allegiance to Christ.¹ Today, churches might resemble Stoics or Cynics more concerned with individualism; however, this attitude was not typical in the ancient world. For the

ancients, concern for the group superceded concern for the individual, and a person's sense of identity was derived from the community. To stress individuality would have been seen as deviant behavior whereas group conformity was considered the norm.²

In antiquity, just as in modern times, one was born not only into a family but also into a faith.³ However, the process of "conversion to a new family or body of believers in antiquity was in various essential ways different from what it is today, not least in that one was not merely joined to a new religion, one was joined to a new people."⁴ When one became a Christian, one joined a new group, and loyalties to this new group often conflicted with old allegiances, including family ties.⁵ Proselytes were considered orphans because they had broken away from their biological parents upon conversion, and consequently they often experienced social ostracism.⁶ Left with a social void, converts needed a new family with which to identify. Wayne Meeks, a scholar known for his research into social roles in antiquity, defines this process of changing social dynamics as the "resocialization of conversion."⁷

In light of the social rejection experienced by converts, it seems pertinent that both Paul and Jesus viewed fictive kinship rather than natural kinship as their primary identity.⁸ For example, when Jesus' family came seeking him, instead of claiming his relatives, he declared his family to be those who did the will of God (e.g. Luke 8:19-21). Jesus taught that he would bring division within households (e.g. Luke 12:51-53), and he did as he called children to leave their parents to follow him (e.g., Matt 4:21). He encouraged followers to love him above their natural kin (e.g. Matt 10:37) and shockingly told them that they must "hate" their families in order to follow him (e.g., Luke 14:26). Division within households was likely the experience of many in Thessalonica; however, Jesus promised that whatever they lost for his sake would be replaced a hundredfold (e.g. Mark 10:29-30).

During the foundation of the Thessalonian church, Paul was implementing Jesus' promise as he taught new converts to regard one another as family in Christ. These new relationships helped to compensate for the natural ones lost by following Christ.⁹ Abraham Malherbe, a scholar focusing on the Thessalonian epistles, states that it "may very well be that it was the experience of new converts, who underwent a painful reorientation of social relationships, sometimes including marriage relations (cf. 1 Thess 4:2-8), that made Paul's approach particularly appropriate to the situation to which he wrote."¹⁰

Importance of the Household

Converts at Thessalonica have been referred to as a new “family of God,”¹¹ and part of becoming a family meant they began to meet and

spend time together. In the Pauline corpus, there are references to four different households where these new Christians gathered (1 Cor 1:11; 1 Cor 1:16, 16:15; Rom 16:10; Phil 4:22). Pauline congregations met in private homes, and “[w]e can safely assume that ‘house church’ is not simply a term to designate where the Christians met but that the structure and behavior of the household as a social institution had a ma-

How does one form group cohesion between former strangers who come from various social, ethnic, and racial backgrounds? Paul faced these same challenges and answered them by developing a new family out of Christian converts.

major influence in shaping the young churches.”¹² It is striking that these new families were from the beginning linked to the most basic societal unit.¹³

Paul not only centered the new communities around the household but also became a member of one. Whenever Paul stayed in a city, he typically joined a household. In Macedonia, he first became part of Lydia’s house in Philippi (Acts 16:18), and when he journeyed to Thessalonica, he joined Jason’s household (Acts 17:5-6). In living with his new family, Paul exemplified a holistic approach to missions and ministry. Meeks correctly notes that the “centrality of the household has a further implication for the way we conceive of the Pauline mission: it shows our modern, individualistic conceptions of evangelism and conversion to be quite inappropriate.”¹⁴

Importance of Fictive Kinship Language

For any social organization to survive, it must develop its own culture, which involves definitive language, practices, and expressed sentiments. This new distinctive culture provides boundaries from the

outer culture and cohesion within the group. Language especially was essential in the resocialization process not only when used by members but also when used in a derogatory fashion by outsiders. When one was slanderously called a “Christian” or any other term belonging to the group’s new phraseology, the pejorative reinforced the self-stigmatization and caused members to identify even more closely with their new family.¹⁵

Meeks points out that one of the particular distinctives of Christian communities was the usage of “language of belonging.” Paul fills his letters with terms such as “saints,” “holy ones,” “elect,” “loved by God,” and “known by God.” Much of this terminology was taken from the Old Testament, where these terms described the Jewish people, but Paul applies these terms to “God’s new family” of Christians.¹⁶

Perhaps Paul’s most important use of language for solidifying and identifying the new community can be seen through his use of fictive kinship terms. These were terms used to “portray the community as a family. It [fictive kinship language] served to link together people who often had no previous contact with one another.”¹⁷ This approach was appropriate since the Christians were forming a new family based on ideology rather than bloodlines. Thus, the familial language helped in this resocialization process.

As noted previously, identity with this new family of Christ served to ease the pain suffered by converts who had lost their own natural families. When “[d]isenfranchized by the larger society, the language of kinship is used to make them feel secure in a new fellowship.”¹⁸ Malherbe notes that in other passages in the New Testament where there is “evidence of domestic tension, whether caused by mixed marriage (1 Cor 7; 1 Pet 3:1-6) or relations with slaves (Phlm), the language of kinship is also concentrated.”¹⁹ The first letter to the Thessalonians teems with fictive kinship language perhaps because their church was undergoing affliction (e.g. 1:6; 2:14-16; 3:3-4). Nowhere is Paul’s use of familial language more concentrated than in 1 Thess 2:7-12, which falls in the midst of a section in which Paul defends himself from presumed, implied, or actual slander.

Pertinent Background and Context for 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12

Two phases involved in the founding of the church at Thessalonica are described in 1 Thessalonians. The first phase, which is outlined in 1:9-10, involved the initial proclamation of the gospel, the Thessalonians’ reception of it, and their consequent rejection of idols. The second phase, as seen in ch. 2, consisted of Paul’s explanation and further teaching of the gospel message to his new converts. This

stage presumably lasted for several weeks, or even months, and it was during this time that the Thessalonians could have witnessed Paul's upright manner and distinguished the difference between his character and ministry and that of other itinerant preachers.²⁰ It is this latter phase that gives the historical context for his metaphors and methods found in 1 Thess 2:7-12.

Also important to recognize is the overall style and function of the letter. Malherbe detected two main functions operating in this "first Christian pastoral letter," namely the pastoral and the parenetic functions. He sees both throughout the letter but notes that the pastoral function is stressed particularly in the first half, which is known as the thanksgiving section (1:3-3:10). This section has the specific purpose of strengthening the bond between the apostle and his converts and of establishing his "pastoral credibility"²¹ to prepare them for the more deliberate parenetic section in the latter part of the letter.²² Of course, when Malherbe discusses the pastoral and the parenetic, he is referring more to the style that Paul employed in his letter writing. I would go even further to say that these pastoral and parenetic functions are the same strategies Paul employed as a missionary among his new converts and are exactly what is being displayed in 2:7-12. He functions as a pastor shepherding his new flock and as a teacher instructing by his own example how the Thessalonians are to treat one another as a new family.

Finally, before examining the text, here is my own translation of 1 Thess 2:7-12 divided into the sections addressed in this essay:

A. 7a-b: *being able to be in authority as apostles of Christ (over you), but we became infants in your midst.*

B. 7c: *As when a nurse comforts her own children,*

C. 8: *thus longing for you we considered it good to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become beloved to us.*

D. 9-10: *For you remember, brethren, our labor and exertion, working night and day in order not to weigh any of you down(,) we preached to you the gospel of God. You (are) witnesses and also God, how devoutly, righteously, and blamelessly we became among you believers*

E. 11-12: *just as you know, how to each one of you (we became) as a father (with) his own children, encouraging, consoling, and exhorting you in order that you might live in a manner worthy of God who is calling you into his kingdom and glory.*

2 : 7 a - b Paul as an Infant

Through this passage and the three principal metaphors contained therein, one may glimpse a portrait of Paul's pastoral ministry among the Thessalonians. The first metaphor, in which Paul describes himself as an infant, is found in v. 7; however, a general perusal of most English translations for the word "infant" leaves one sorely disappointed since the word "gentle" is the usual translation. The Greek word used here for infant is *nepioi*, but there is serious debate about whether Paul wrote *nepioi* (translated as infant) or *epioi* (translated as gentle).²³

Before examining the metaphor's significance, one must first make an exegetical decision as to whether the apostle meant to describe himself as a gentle person or as an infant. One has to admit that those who choose the "gentle" reading have the appeal of one consistent and beautiful metaphor as Paul becomes "gentle...as a nurse" and also avoid the confusion of having two seemingly conflicting metaphors with Paul referring to himself in one breath as a helpless infant and then in the next as a

responsible adult—a nurse, one who even cares for infants, such as he had just called himself. ²⁴ Even so, I believe that a strong case can be made for choosing *nepioi* as the correct reading and that Paul deliberately chose this metaphor to emphasize part of his missionary strategy and relationship with the Thessalonians.²⁵

One of the first steps when trying to decipher the conflicting metaphors of babe

and nurse is to view the metaphor within the context of ch. 2. Paul begins this chapter by encouraging the Thessalonians that their faith was not based on a deceptive gospel. As he reflects on his own motives in preaching, especially in vv. 3-6, Paul emphasizes the truth of the faith that they received. The Thessalonians may have been skeptical of Paul and of his message because Paul was not the only wandering

Whereas the Stoic philosophers' slogan was "self-sufficiency," and the Cynics were concerned with freedom, early Christian missionaries fostered a communal life in which people were bound together by their allegiance to Christ.

preacher/philosopher of his day, and it was highly probable that the Thessalonians had already come in contact with some of Paul's less than savory contemporaries. Aware of the possible prejudices caused by such charlatans, Paul is careful to acknowledge their tricks (vv. 3-6) and uses these charlatans as a contrast to his own positive conduct while among them (vv. 7-12). Malherbe is again helpful by pointing out that Paul's comparative strategy was a common rhetorical device used by other ancient philosophers. The most illustrative example with which Paul's defense may be compared is that of Dio Chrysostom, the wandering Cynic philosopher who knew of his audience's skepticism and had to combat it.²⁶ By presenting the foil of a characteristic false philosopher first, Dio Chrysostom enabled his audiences to draw their own comparisons between his behavior and the negative presumptions of some philosophers.²⁷

Philosophic orators fit the role of clients as they traveled from town to town living off the fees paid by their benefactors, often their audiences or their students of rhetoric or philosophy. Some may have even viewed these wanderers as little more than parasites draining the local economy. While in Thessalonica, Paul made a concerted effort not to become anyone's client.²⁸ He forewent the financial support to which he as an apostle was entitled so that no one would accuse him of any impure motives or equate him with the Cynic preachers.²⁹ Such an accusation could have damaged the close relationship that he had worked so hard to engender with the community, and without this relationship, the gospel message would have been in jeopardy.

With this backdrop in mind, the "demands" in v. 7 seem to refer to the right to gain room and board in exchange for his apostolic work. Instead of waltzing into town and expecting the grand treatment that other wandering philosophers presupposed, Paul entered with the attitude of an infant, presenting himself as one absent of expectations as to what his status demanded and deserved even though he alludes to the typical treatment of an apostle. Paul wants to make clear that he has not sought these rights.

Baros, which is translated as "demands," carries the connotation of a weight or authority. This word calls to mind an imposing and domineering figure. Instead, Paul does not desire to intimidate the Thessalonians and so approaches them as an infant.

Paul characterizes his behavior with the infant metaphor because an infant is the antithesis to all the negative qualities denoted in vv. 5-6, such as flattery, greed, and desire for glory. Instead, infants are related to opposite qualities like innocence, guilelessness, and a lack of ambition, with no care for what others think of them.³⁰ These characteristics of an infant are endearing because they are unassuming and

would have further fostered genuine warmth between Paul and the Thessalonians.

Otto Merk, another New Testament scholar, hypothesizes that “infant” could have been a derogatory term thrown at Paul by pagan pastors. Perhaps Paul is doing exactly what he did many other times in his letters by appropriating his opponents’ criticisms and transforming them for his own purposes.³¹ If this theory is true, then here is another example of how important language is solidifying the group’s new image and of reinforcing the stigmatization associated with being a Christian. Paul was proud of his infantile behavior when compared with that of the more experienced and beguiling preachers.

Yet this metaphor can be turned on its head to say the exact opposite of Paul’s intention because infants are also connected with dependence as they demand food and lodging and cannot provide for themselves. Clearly, there is some tension in the fact that as an infant, Paul did accept lodging and was adopted into the households of his converts, but he was not willing to be dependent financially. It is a limited metaphor, so to assure the correct interpretation, Paul follows it with other metaphors describing himself as a nurse and as a father, two figures who provide for their children. A nurse is a caregiver and not demanding, so this word limits the interpretation of the infant metaphor to a positive one.³² Perhaps the infant metaphor actually causes Paul to think next of an infant’s foil, a nurse. By using contrary images, he emphasizes the best in both while each serves as a corrective to the negative aspects of the other.

The main point of the metaphor seems to be that Paul did not take advantage of the new congregation as did other wandering philosophers. Innocent as an infant, he laid aside his apostolic rights and approached the Thessalonians in an unassuming manner. Like an infant, Paul did not worry about others’ opinions or care for their flattery but was grateful to be adopted into a new family and household in Thessalonica.

2 : 7 c Paul as a Wet-nurse

Turning to consider the wet-nurse image found in v. 7c, one can examine Paul’s relationship with the Thessalonian congregation as exemplified through this metaphor. Since *trophos* occurs only here in the New Testament,³³ there is no assistance from other Pauline usages with which to compare this occurrence. Instead, one must look to other ancient writings, to the social context of the word, and to its grammatical situation within the passage to help interpret Paul’s metaphor.³⁴

The main debate surrounding the interpretation of *trophos* is

whether it should be translated as “nurse” or “mother.” Some suggest that the use of the reflexive pronoun in the phrase “her own children” indicates the latter translation as correct with the actual mother act-

The infant metaphor speaks poignantly to the beginning of ministry.

ing as a nurse rather than a wet-nurse hired to suckle the child.³⁵ Those scholars suggest that the image of a mother nursing her own child seems more appropriate given the situation of Paul caring for his converts as yet

unweaned children in the faith.³⁶

Beverly Gaventa, who has done significant research into the background of this word, however, notes that the reflexive pronoun does not demand that the children are the woman's own. Instead, she refers to the strong connection forged between the nurse and her charges as something mentioned throughout ancient texts. Thus, a nurse could easily care for the children as if they were her own biological children and even feel that strongly for them.³⁷ Keith Bradley in his study of wet-nursing practices in ancient Rome points out that a mother breast-feeding her own child was the exception rather than the rule. It was common not only among the elite but also among the servile classes to use a wet-nurse.³⁸ I tend to agree with Gaventa since the relationship between a nurse and her children speaks more poignantly to the relationship between Paul and his spiritual children than the metaphor of the actual mother and children would. Like the wet-nurse and her charges, Paul and his converts were not related by blood but were bound together by a love that forged a new relationship where one previously had not existed.

According to Gaventa, a nurse generally had the responsibility for infants and young children, and her responsibility for the children continued on into their early adulthood.³⁹ She also acted as an assistant in the domestic affairs of the household. In performing these roles, she exercised a good deal of authority, especially regarding the children. In fact, “the nurse also acted, with parents and other child minders, as an instrument of socialization and became an important element in the child's emotional framework of reference.”⁴⁰ Second, writers generally portrayed the nurse in a positive light as a kind, tender, and gentle figure. While the nurse was not of blood kin to her wards, she was probably close to a family member in their young minds.⁴¹

The question remains as to how successful and applicable this metaphor was for Paul's actions among the Thessalonians. I disagree

with some scholars who view the nurse as a pagan metaphor emphasizing how a foster-mother was paid for her work and therefore see it as an unsuccessful metaphor because the apostle was not paid.⁴² There is an assumption in this critique that the wet-nurse refers to one who was paid, but there were also many slaves employed in this capacity.⁴³ The metaphor becomes even more potent when remembering that Paul often referred to himself as a slave for Christ (e.g. Rom 1:1; Phil 1:1; Titus 1:1; 2 Cor 4:5) and to the basic teachings that he gave to converts as milk (e.g. 1 Cor 3:2). As a slave to Christ, he was required to deliver to his children the pure milk of instruction that they needed to grow. Ancients believed that moral characteristics were transmitted to children by the nurse's milk,⁴⁴ so as Paul was comforting his children, he also was imparting to them moral wisdom. It was also the nurse's job to wean the children from milk to solid food⁴⁵ just as Paul would have weaned them to solid spiritual teaching.

Lest one think that there was no love attached because nursing was a requirement for the slave, Paul adds that the nurse views the children as her own. She also comforts (*thalpe*) them, implying that this was a tender and gentle relationship, not a duty discharged coldly. It appears that even without choosing *nepioi* as the variant reading in 7b, gentleness is still implied by *thalpe*, and therefore that image need not be lost. One of the most important characteristics of the metaphor is the love that is exemplified in this metaphor and further clarified as it continues into v. 8. I believe that the image is successful for it displays the "affectionate nature of the care and intimacy of the personal relationship."⁴⁶ It shows a type of pastoral care that is even more poignant and perhaps stronger than the typical shepherd allusion. It seems especially pertinent that Paul chose a feminine allusion as he served in his pastoral role with the new church. He displayed the typically "feminine" characteristic of gentleness in caring for his new family. It also behooves us to remember that Paul viewed this gentle quality, along with love for one's charges and the duty of imparting pure spiritual milk to new Christians, as part of the pastoral function.

2 : 8 Paul as an Incarnational Witness

In v. 8, the love found in the nurse metaphor is further explained, and Paul's role as a pastor is developed when he describes how "*thus longing for you we considered it good to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become beloved to us.*" Here the two gifts that Paul shares with the congregation are "the gospel of God" and "our own selves." In this passage "the messenger is the key to the message, for the community can apprehend and perceive a visible incarnation of the gospel most credibly in their founding apostle."⁴⁷ The

heart of this verse embodies what is typically referred to today as an “incarnational witness.” The true missionary is revealed in this verse as someone who not only delivers the gospel but also who lives it out among his people. Paul did precisely this as he joined a household and fostered a faith family.

The Thessalonians would have known what Paul did since he lived among them and even called them as witnesses of the devout manner in which he behaved (2:10). There could have been no charade in such close quarters, so the Thessalonians would have quickly been able to see if Paul's life did not embody the gospel message. One scholar notes that such an “intimate and consequently defenseless manner of proclamation...is so in keeping with the essence of the gospel that the method itself in this way becomes part of the message and, vice versa, the message takes shape in the method; the method communicates analogously/non-verbally what the message contains digitally/verbally in words.”⁴⁸

Paul embodied the gospel by giving his own life to the Thessalonians, much as the nurse gave of her own self through the milk that she imparted. This self-giving act is similar to the example of the self-sacrifice that Jesus also made for his children. While some commentators⁴⁹ think that *psyche* (life) refers to Paul's willingness to sacrifice his life for his spiritual children, others disagree saying that the term refers more to his inner being that he is willing to share. Here the “language is that of love in which a lover wants to share his life with the beloved in an act of self-giving and union.”⁵⁰ In other letters, Paul uses similar imagery to display how he willingly expends himself for them (2 Cor 12:15) and how he pours himself out for them as a drink offering (Phil 2:17).

Also it is important to note that Paul fills this verse full of friendship imagery by using such words as: *omeiromai*⁵¹ (longing), *eutokeō* (consider good), *metadidōmi* (to share), and *agapetos* (beloved).⁵² The Thessalonians are not only loved by God (1:4), but also they are Paul's beloved. The end of the verse, “because you had become beloved to us,” corresponds with the beginning description of Paul's yearning for them since one naturally yearns for those whom one loves and considers family.⁵³ The type of longing described by *omeiromai* is the same as that of parents yearning for a child from whom they had been separated.⁵⁴ As the second chapter continues, Paul goes on to compare himself to one who has been orphaned (*aporphanizō*) from them and to describe how he desires (*theleō*) to be reunited with them (2:17-18). One scholar proposes that it is the emotion provoked by their separation that causes Paul, the parent, to write such a longing and heartfelt letter to his children in Thessalonica.⁵⁵ Even the fact that Paul takes

the time to continue communicating with his separated children displays the care and responsibility that he felt.

With this concentrated use of friendship and familial language, one begins to see not only the affection that Paul has for this church but also the type of community that he hopes to develop and model. When this verse is viewed in light of the parenetic function of the letter, one notices that the Thessalonians have already begun to imitate Paul's example. They are sharing themselves with one another as they abound in love towards each other (3:12) and to "all the brethren in Macedonia" (4:9-10). The Thessalonians also have begun to share the gospel of God with those in Macedonia and Achaia (1:8).

2 : 9 - 1 0 Paul as an Example and a Brother

Paul continues functioning in a parenetic role by displaying his exemplary work ethic before the congregation. Paul will later encourage them to follow his example in both 1 Thess 4:9-12 and 2 Thess 3:7-9.56 Paul's refusal to accept financial assistance has been viewed as part of his missionary strategy⁵⁷ (cf. 1 Cor 9:1-18; 2 Cor 11:7). He did not accept the financial support that was his due as an apostle (2:7) in order that no one could accuse him of any impure motives. In v. 10, Paul calls on God and on the Thessalonians as witnesses to the blameless manner in which he had lived. Paul worked diligently and acted uprightly to model for his children the type of Christian that they were to become.

As noted previously, Paul probably was part of Jason's household while residing in Thessalonica. One wonders if Paul accepted such hospitality freely. Could it be that because of his desire not to burden the Thessalonians (v. 7), he worked night and day (v. 9) to compensate for his room and board? Ronald Hock believes that Paul would have contributed to the finances of the household since this was a practice in Rome.⁵⁸ His working to help support the household could also be viewed as an extension of his love that is referred to in the metaphors of the nurse and the father, two adult figures who would provide for their children.⁵⁹ Whether or not Paul worked to help with household finances cannot be discerned, but it is certain that in joining a household he most definitely was able to share much of the normal routine of life with some of his new converts (v. 8).

In v. 9, there is one of the sixteen occurrences of *adelphoi* in this short letter. It is noteworthy that Paul not only uses maternal and paternal language but also uses fraternal language. While it is common to hear of fraternities' addressing members as brothers in our modern society, this practice traces its roots back to antiquity as pagans and

Jews addressed members in conventicles and associations in fraternal terms. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul also views his fellow believers as siblings and not just as children. Besides the high frequency with which this word occurs throughout the epistle, it is also striking that this is its highest incidence of occurrence in the entire Pauline corpus.⁶⁰ In 2 Thessalonians, the term is used seven times, and Paul also twice refers to someone as “a brother.” In the non-disputed Pauline letters, *adelphoi* is used sixty-five times. The term is not used in Colossians, Ephesians, or the Pastorals,⁶¹ so Meeks posits that this term of endearment might be peculiar to Paul.⁶²

2 : 1 1 - 1 2 Paul as a Father

Christians can view themselves as a family of brothers and sisters precisely because God is their father (1:1). In 1 Thessalonians, God is referred to as “our father” three times and as the “father” of Jesus Christ twice.⁶³ “God as father” was an idea inherent in Platonism and Stoicism and had trickled down into common use among the masses. There was also an early baptismal tradition in which converts responded with an “Abba, Father” as they were immersed into their new family. Viewing God as father refers to his work as the progenitor of both creation and of the new relationships among these converts.⁶⁴ This paternal reference is another example reflecting the idea that the church is a new family in a metaphorical sense.

Paul, however, views the church members not only as God’s children but also as his own.⁶⁵ Verses 11-12 contain the third major familial metaphor that Paul applies to himself in just six verses. Paul reminds his converts that

just as you know, how to each one of you (we became) as a father (with) his own children, encouraging, consoling, and exhorting you in order that you live in a manner worthy of God the one calling you into his kingdom and glory. (my translation)

Perhaps Paul’s memory of his labor among them (v. 9) and the blameless way of life that he modeled for them (v. 10) drew to his mind the metaphor of father.⁶⁶ Fathers work diligently so they may not burden their children and strive faithfully to live out a model of integrity. Perhaps the female metaphor in v. 7 caused him to ponder the ways in which a masculine metaphor might also embody his relationship with the Thessalonians. Since Paul began by using female imagery, he concludes this pericope by using male imagery so as not to leave anyone out.⁶⁷ The female image was related to birth and called to mind Paul’s tender care during the initial evangelization, the church’s birthing

process. The father imagery here is appropriate to convey the continuing sense of pastoral care as the congregation grows and develops. To mine the riches hidden within this metaphor, one must know how fathers were viewed in antiquity.

Trevor Burke researches both Judeo and Greco-Roman concepts of paternal relations in the ancient world and cites such primary sources as Philo, Josephus, Aristotle, Hierocles, Pseudo-Phocylides, Plutarch, and Epictetus. He concludes that since fathers in antiquity operated within a patriarchal society theirs was a hierarchical position of authority. Fathers often regarded children as property and as dependents,⁶⁸ but this view did not mean fathers were free to abuse them. He quotes Pseudo-Phocylides, who states that parents are to be *epioi* (gentle) with their children.⁶⁹ Since such was the father's role in antiquity, Burke views the paternal metaphor in v. 11 as an allusion to Paul's authority concerning the young church similar to the apostolic authority that he alluded to in v. 7. Instead of enforcing his apostolic right over the Thessalonians, he exercised his paternal rights over them.⁷⁰ As obedient children, Paul would have expected them to listen to his teachings, to respond to his exhortations,⁷¹ and to respect his authority.⁷²

While fatherhood implied the hierarchy and authority Paul had over the congregation, Burke points out a second aspect of this metaphor that many overlook because this aspect is contrary to the authority implied. Affection was also characteristically shown from fathers to their children as seen in the Judeo and Greco-Roman texts that Burke cites.⁷³ The ancients were quick to note that a parent's love for his child came much quicker than a child's love for the parent. There is a great attachment between a parent and his progeny. In view of this fact, Burke concludes that since Paul viewed himself as the congregation's spiritual parent because he had fathered this group, naturally he had a great affection for them.

Aside from the authority and the affection that are implicit, there are several other important features that commentators have drawn from this rich metaphor. The use of "father" also brings the notion that a father can hope that his children will imitate his example.⁷⁴ One of the father's main responsibilities in the ancient world was to teach his children how to live moral and responsible lives.⁷⁵ Paul goes a step beyond the parental role of socializing his children to their native culture and focuses on resocializing them to their new Christian culture.⁷⁶ Paul accomplishes this resocialization not only by the example that he refers to in vv. 9-10 but also by "encouraging, consoling, and exhorting" them to "live in a manner worthy of God" (v. 12).

In these verses, Paul focuses on his individual care for each con-

vert as he functions in a paternal role towards “each one” of them. One-on-one training was recognized as an important function in antiquity (just as it is today in psychotherapy).⁷⁷ Malherbe reads this text against a Cynic backdrop and notes that Dio Chrysostom also speaks of being kinder to his followers individually, even more than a father.⁷⁸ He sees a connection with the way that philosophical converts received individualized attention and instruction from their teachers.⁷⁹ The parenetic function of Paul's example is again seen when later in 5:11, he exhorts them to minister to one another.⁸⁰

Finally, Paul concludes this pericope by employing eschatology as a motivation for Christian behavior and for joining the Thessalonians together as an eternal family. Paul exhorts them to “*live in a manner worthy of God, the one calling you into his kingdom and glory*” (my translation). ‘Kingdom of God’ theology is not as common in Pauline literature as it is in the Gospels, but it is also seen in 2 Thess 1:5. Paul's use of eschatology throughout the letter serves to emphasize that this is no ordinary fraternity or mystic cult that pledges fidelity only for this life. Rather theirs is an eternal family that even death can not damage.⁸¹ Here Paul emphasizes the need for living in light of their eschatological call from God to join in his glory and kingdom. “Living in a manner worthy of God” also seems similar to the exhortation that a father might give his child, such as when one says, “make your father proud by living up to your family name.” Meeks suggests that there is a parenetic element in eschatological literature that gives more authority to the one giving instruction.⁸² Paul is better empowered and emboldened to exhort the congregation to live holier lives based on the eternal aspect of the characters that they are now developing since they will reside forever as this new family of God.

Thoughts and Possible Applications for the Church Today

Symbolism and imagery have the ability to be re-imagined continually to speak a fresh message to each generation.⁸³ After all, the Bible is said to be living and active (e.g. Heb 4:12) and what better example can be given than in the application of these metaphors to ministry today.

The infant metaphor speaks poignantly to the beginning of ministry. As missionaries enter into new cultures, it pays for them to be as innocent as infants. In the first place, infants are teachable. It is generally considered offensive when individuals from outside the culture enter into it as presumed “experts” and begin to apply their presuppositions to ministry there without investigating their validity or talking with those familiar with the culture. Language acquisition also

requires a teachable spirit, something that an infant has. Those who are teachable do not take themselves too seriously when they stumble in their often too slow learning process. It may be valuable to remember that infants spend most of their time listening and absorbing the language and culture around them.

Second, infants are guileless, and this characteristic is important for missionaries today who may be entering hostile territory. Those they encounter may have presuppositions formed against missionaries, especially those from the United States, just as those in Thessalonica may have had hesitations about Paul based on their encounters with or knowledge of other wandering philosophers. The new community to which the missionary goes may have been burned by profit- and glory-seeking ministers. Their skepticism can best be combated by a humble and guileless approach.

Third, infants are unpretentious and unaware of any self-importance. Just as Paul did not use his apostolic authority to demand rights, neither should a new missionary or pastor. Paul was grateful for the hospitality and the blessings received but knew better than to wield a heavy stick of power. Ministers in new situations should be quick to forget their own importance and should not seek to intimidate their congregations.

The wet-nurse metaphor likewise has important applications for ministry. First, ministers need to be comforting and gentle. There will be many times when parishioners will come to them with deep wounds needing the comfort of gentle hands and soothing words. Ministers need to have not only leadership preparation but also sensitivity training to adequately care for their congregations.

As a father, a minister has both the authority over the spiritual children and also the responsibility for resocialization to Christian life.

Second, just as nurses were believed to impart moral wisdom through their milk, so too ministers should impart moral wisdom through their words. While they may begin by giving their spiritual children milk, they also have the responsibility of weaning them to solid food. Moral application of the word and instruction for growth are two of the essential jobs for any minister.

Third, while a nurse is not the biological mother of her charges, she cares for them as if they were her own children. She has been bonded with those who are not blood related because they have become beloved. As ministers spend more time with their congregants, they too become beloved family members.

The final metaphor of a father speaks to several ministerial roles. Instead of using his apostolic authority, Paul focused on his paternal rights. Parental authority that is strengthened by the bonds of love can carry more weight. So when a minister exerts authority as a parent and not just as a pastor, there most likely will be a greater willingness on the part of the “children” to obey.

As a father, a minister has the authority over the spiritual children and the responsibility for resocialization to Christian life. The best way to resocialize them is through the parenthesis of offering them a fatherly example. Ministers need to be aware of the importance to actually “do as they say” in light of so many recent scandals involving the clergy.

Fathers today, like philosophers in antiquity, still are expected to give individual attention to every child. Each needs to have someone who devotes time to instruction in a one-on-one relationship. While it might not be practical to assume that with so many large congregations ministers will be able to spend quality time with every congregant, it is important that every Christian has someone who can fulfill the role of a spiritual father.

All of these metaphors serve to emphasize the fact that Paul was striving to form a new family based on faith, not blood. Today, more than ever, we need to remember that Christians are able to create a new “family” regardless of biological, social, economic, racial, or political differences.⁸⁴ Indeed, many have begun to urge and to attest to the resurgence of “faith families,” which can be seen in small group Bible studies, cell churches, and Life groups. Diana Garland, a social work specialist focusing on family ministries, views the church’s ministry to families as encapsulating not just the biological family but also groups within the church that function as faith families. She urges that the “church must follow Christ by ensuring that no one in the family of faith is familyless—that everyone is adopted into a family.”⁸⁵ In our post-modern society where “family” has become a fluid term, the church has an amazing opportunity to assert not “traditional family values,” but traditional church values that show that in Christ we have been born into a new family. We have a generation that is being reared on television shows and movies such as *Friends*, *Seinfeld*, *About a Boy*, and *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, all of which tote the notion of a “modern urban family” in which friends rather than kin compose the family

unit. We also have generations that are growing up without their parents' physical or emotional presence. Christians can step into the roles by being true fathers and mothers to these children. More than ever, we have become a mobile society where biological families are spread across the world and where job changes call for frequent moves. So much change causes people to feel rootless. The church can be the living vine into which transients may graft themselves. As Christians, we have the opportunity to show that "faith families" are built on bonds stronger than those of friendship or blood. In this case, baptismal water is thicker than blood.

Conclusion

Paul faced a challenge as he tried to unite the congregation at Thessalonica and to teach the members how to live as a family in light of eternity. He brilliantly employed several strategies in doing this, such as his use of language to bring cohesion in the congregation by exhorting them to become a new family. He entered into church members' households and lived among them and became a part of their lives by sharing his. While living there, he never took advantage of them as others might have but was as guileless as an infant. After the birth of this new congregation, he nursed them with the milk of his teaching. Because he had been part of the church's inception, he considered himself as the Thessalonians' father and took on the responsibilities of resocializing them to their new Christian life. These few verses are replete with imagery detailing the manner in which ministers should nurture and mature their children of faith. Paul's example is instructive for ministers who are striving to unite their congregations and to create new families of God. We should follow the wisdom of the three metaphors in 1 Thess 2:7-12 by being as innocent as infants, as nurturing as nurses, and as formative as fathers.

Notes

1. John Porter, "Professionalism and Ministry (some insights from I Thessalonians

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- 2:1-12),” *Evangel: the British Evangelical Review* 17:2 (1999), 36.
2. Ben Witherington III, *The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 25-27.
 3. *Ibid.*, 35.
 4. *Ibid.*, 34.
 5. Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 77-79.
 6. Abraham J. Malherbe, “God’s New Family in Thessalonica,” in *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks* (eds. L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 122.
 7. Meeks describes this process as one in which “[t]he natural kinship structure into which the person has been born and which previously defined his place and connections with the society are here supplanted by a new set of relationships” (*Urban Christians*, 88).
 8. Witherington, 28.
 9. Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians: The Philosophic Tradition of Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 50.
 10. Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians*, 125.
 11. Malherbe, “God’s New Family,” 117.
 12. Fred B. Craddock, *Philippians: Interpretation* (Atlanta: Westminster John Knox Press, 1985), 7-8.
 13. The basic unit in antiquity was not merely the nuclear family since the household included the extended family, slaves, freedmen, and others. It is therefore the household that was the most basic unit upon which their society was built (see Meeks, 75).
 14. Meeks, 77.
 15. *Ibid.*, 85-86.
 16. *Ibid.*, 85-86.
 17. Charles A. Wannamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 147.
 18. Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 85.

19. Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians*, 50.
20. Otto Merk, "1 Thessalonians 2:1-12; An Exegetical-theological Study," *The Thessalonians Debate: Methodological Discord or Methodological Synthesis?* (2000): 99.
21. Porter, 34-35. This is exactly what Malherbe also refers to as the pastoral and the parenetic functions of the letter.
22. Malherbe, *Letters*, 81-86.
23. Two likely suggestions have been postulated as to the appearance of these variant readings. Haplography, a scribal error in which a letter is omitted, could account for *nēpioi* losing the *n* and becoming *nēpioi*. Likewise, dittography, another scribal error in which a letter is mistakenly repeated, could account for an extra *n* being repeated after *egenethemen* and attached to *ēpioi*, thus producing *nēpioi*.
24. As to how the infant and the wet nurse metaphors can reside in the same sentence without being conflicting, some scholars suggest a different punctuation of the verse so that a comma is placed after *apostoloi* and a period after *en mesō umōn* (in your midst), since the *ōs* (as) in 2:7c is related to the *outōs* (thus) in v. 8. In other words, v. 7a and v. 7b form one thought, with *alla* (but) setting off the contrast between those two thoughts that demonstrate Paul's integrity (Sailors, "Wedding Textual," 94). The actual thought represented in v. 7a is really the end of one continuous thought that began in v.5 with the first *oute* (for). The *alla* points out the antithesis to all that lay before it in vv.5-7a. Then v. 7c and v. 8 should be joined together to form another thought that displays Paul's care for his converts (Merk, "1 Thessalonians 2; [sic] 1-12," 105). The two images then are neither in the same sentence nor are they part of the same point of Paul's discussion. There is no longer the problem of a "mixed metaphor" but only that of "peculiar adjacent metaphors" (Sailors, "Wedding Textual," 97). In this case, the two sentences now found in vv. 5-7b and in vv. 7c-8 would read something like this:

For never did we come in a word of flattery, just as you know, not in pretense of greed, God (is our) witness, and not seeking glory from men, neither from you nor from others, being able to be in authority as apostles of Christ (over you), but we became infants in your midst.

As when a nurse comforts her own children, thus longing for you we considered it good to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become beloved to us. (my translation)

Beverly Gaventa, however, makes a strong case that these two metaphors need not pose a problem at all because "mixed metaphors" were not as uncommon in the Pauline corpus as some suggest. She goes on to provide several striking examples of other instances in her work. (For more information, see Beverly Roberts Gaventa, "Apostles As Babes and Nurses in 1 Thessalonians 2:7," in *Faith and History; Essays in Honor of Paul W. Meyer* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1980): 197).

Charles Crawford offers a completely different solution to this problem by suggesting that *nēpioi* be viewed as a vocative. Thus the verse would say something like, "But we, O Children, were among you as a nurse that comforts her own children." This would leave the current punctuation in place and solve the mixed metaphor problem. While this would solve the problem quite nicely, I am not convinced that it is the most probable answer. (For further discussion see Charles Crawford, "The 'Tiny' Problem of 1 Thessalonians 2.7: The Case of the Curious Vocative," *Biblica* 54 (1973): 69-72).

25. Scholars preferring *nepioi* (gentle) are at a textual disadvantage since *ἠπιοί* (infant) has the better manuscript evidence of the two (i.e., date, number, family text-type, and geographic location. For a more explicit discussion of this evidence, see Weima, "Infants, Nursing Mother, and Father," 215; cf. Stephen Fowl, "A Metaphor in Distress. A Reading of NHPIOI in I Thessalonians 2.7," *NTS* 36 [1990]: 470.) The only other occurrence of *ἠπιοί* in the New Testament is in 2 Tim. 2:24, where the word is also contested but where *nepioi* is generally the preferred reading. Those that champion the *nepioi* reading explain the variant by saying that a scribe could have chosen to replace the less familiar *nepioi* with the more familiar *nepioi*, which occurs fourteen times in the New Testament. Of course, this argument may be countered with the suggestion that the earliest scribes would have been familiar with more words than just those found in the New Testament, so the argument that it was not a familiar New Testament word and thus was changed to a more familiar one would work only for later scribes whose knowledge of the Greek may have consisted only of the New Testament Greek (see Timothy B. Sailors, "Wedding Textual and Rhetorical Criticism to Understand the Text of 1 Thessalonians 2:7." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 80 (2000): 82-87). While some scholars (e.g., Wannamaker, *Epistles*, 100) argue against *nepioi* because Paul's general use of this word was in a negative connotation (cf. Rom 2:20; 1 Cor 3:1; Eph 4:14) and in this section Paul is meant to be viewed in a positive light, *nepioi* was used in a positive light in the New Testament, albeit in the Gospels (cf. Matt 11:25; 21:16; Luke 10:21), and also was used by Paul to make a positive point of being infants in regards to evil (1 Cor.14:20). Here he could be using "infants" in the same manner (For a fuller discussion on the word's usage in other letters, see Joël Delobel, "One Letter Too Many in Paul's First Letter? A Study of (*n*)*epioi* in 1 Thess 2:7," *Louvain Studies* 20 (1995): 128-129).

Indeed, those supporting the *nepioi* variant do have a strong case, but after perusing the writings of scholars defending the *nepioi* reading, I believe that they have the stronger case. Scholars arguing based on the internal evidence still do not present a case strong enough to outweigh the external evidence for *nepioi*, which does have the best manuscript evidence and also is the more difficult reading given the context, two guidelines used in textual criticism. Also, in order for the structure within the pericope to retain its balance of positive and negative images, it requires that there must be three positive metaphors rather than just the two that the *ἠπιοί* reading would give (For further discussion, please refer to J.J. Janse Van Rensburgh, "An Argument for Reading *nepioi* In I Thessalonians 2:7," in *South African New Testament scholars presented to Bruce Manning Metzger during his visit to South Africa in 1985*, ed. J.H. Petzer and P.J. Hartin (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986): 258-259. He offers several helpful charts that diagram the thought flow exhibited in the pericope.

26. Abraham J. Malherbe, "'Gentle as a Nurse': The Cynic Background to I Thess ii," *Novum Testamentum* (2001): 203-205, 215-216. For a complete comparison between Paul's and Dio's speeches, see pp. 216-217.
27. Still and Weima disagree with the current scholarly swing to view the pericope in a parenthetic light, in which Paul uses the Cynic philosophers as a teaching tool by contrasting his behavior with theirs. This swing disregards the long-established view of its apologetic function, in which Paul defends himself from actual criticism leveled at him. For Weima's debate, see Weima, "Infants, Nursing Mother, and Father," 210-212. For Still's, see Still, "Conflict at

- Thessalonica: A Pauline Church and its Neighbours,” 137-149.
28. Merk, 106.
 29. Edgar Krentz, “Status or Service?,” *Christian Century* 113:29 (1996): 963.
 30. Fowl, “A Metaphor in Distress,” 470; cf. Van Rensburgh, “An Argument,” 255.
 31. Merk, 107.
 32. Fowl, 471-472.
 33. W. Arndt, F. Gingrich, “*trophos*,” *GELNTOECL*.
 34. Technically, this (and also the “father metaphor” in v. 9) is a simile since Paul says “as” a nurse, but most discussions refer to all three images (infant, nurse, and father) as metaphors. The distinction is irrelevant to the discussion, and so I also will refer to all as metaphors.
 35. John Gillman, “Paul’s *Eisodos*: the proclaimed and the proclaimer (1 Thes 2:8),” in *The Thessalonian Correspondence*, (Louvain: Leuven University Press, 1990), 64. (cf. Weima, “Infants, Nursing Mother, and Father,” 221; I. Howard Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (NCB, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983), 71).
 36. Ernest Best, *A Commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (BNTC, Harper and Row Publishers: New York, 1972), 102.
 37. Gaventa, 205.
 38. Keith R. Bradley, “Wet-nursing at Rome: a Study in Social Relations.” in *The Family in Ancient Rome: New Perspectives*. (ed. by Beryl Rawson; Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1986): 201-202.
 39. Keith R. Bradley, *Discovering the Roman Family: Studies in Roman Social History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 26.
 40. Bradley, *Discovering the Roman Family*, 27.
 41. Gaventa, 199-203.
 42. Merk, “1 Thessalonians 2;1-12,” 107.
 43. Bradley, “Wet-nursing at Rome,” 206-207.
 44. *Ibid.*, 214.
 45. Bradley, *Discovering the Roman Family*, 27.
 46. Gillman, “Paul’s *Eisodos*,” 64.
 47. *Ibid.*, 67.
 48. Merk, “1 Thessalonians 2:1-12,” 97.
 49. Best, *Commentary*, 102. Malherbe also reads this as Paul’s willingness to sacrifice his life for his followers, just as Dio Chrysostom offered to do for his followers (cf. Malherbe, “Gentle as a Nurse,” 216-217.).
 50. Marshall, NCBC, 71.
 51. Cf. 2:17; N. Baumert produces a thorough investigation into the meaning of *omeiromevoi* and suggests that it should be translated as “being separated from” or “being kept apart from.” With this new translation, he connects the wet nurse metaphor with v. 8 to show how as a nurse cares for her charges, so Paul also cares for the Thessalonians, even when they are separated from him (see Merk, “1 Thessalonians 2;1-12,” 108).

52. Gillman, "Paul's *Eisodos*," 64.
53. *Ibid.*, 66-67.
54. *Omeiromai* is another New Testament hapax legomenon (occurring only once in the New Testament), so one must look to other ancient sources for its definition. Burke cites several grave inscriptions in which this word is found describing the yearning that parents felt for their dead children (see Trevor J. Burke, "Pauline Paternity in 1 Thessalonians." *Tyndale Bulletin* 51.1 (2000): 78).
55. Gillman, "Paul's *Eisodos*," 80.
56. Malherbe, *Letters*, 60.
57. Wannamaker, 103.
58. Ronald F. Hock, *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 30-31.
59. *Ibid.*
60. Malherbe, "God's New Family," 122.
61. Although Meeks notes that instead of the vocative use of *adelphoi*, there do appear references to particular individuals or groups as "a brother" or "the brothers," but the church members are not addressed corporately by the "brethren" title.
62. Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 87.
63. Malherbe, 48.
64. *Ibid.* 117-120.
65. Meeks, 86.
66. This is not the only time that Paul calls himself a father in his letters. He uses the paternal metaphor to define his relationship with converts also in 1 Cor 4:14-16 and Phil 2:22.
67. Malherbe, *Letters*, 150.
68. Burke, "Pauline Paternity," 61-64.
69. *Ibid.*, 65. Burke connects this mention of *cpioi* with 2:7 and like Malherbe views a Cynic background to Paul's reference to gentleness.
70. *Ibid.*, 75, 79.
71. Wannamaker, *Epistles*, 106.
72. Weima, "Infants, Nursing Mother, and Father," 225.
73. Wannamaker, 66-69.
74. Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 74.
75. Best, *Commentary*, 105.
76. Wannamaker, *Epistles*, 106.
77. Malherbe, 151.
78. *Ibid.*, 216-217.
79. *Ibid.*, 150.
80. *Ibid.*, 122.
81. *Ibid.*, 123.
82. *Ibid.*

83. Ellen F. Davis, "Reading the Bible Confessionally in the Church," *Anglican Theological Review* 84 (2002): 28.
84. William H. Willimon, "Why 'Family Values' is not a Good Idea," *Family Ministry: Empowering Through Faith* 15:1 (2001): 13.
85. Diana R. Garland, *Family Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide* (Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 320.

“Paul’s Formation of a New Family” ... **So What?**

Questions for Consideration:

1. How does Paul’s use of metaphor in this text advance his testimony and ministry? What do you think of his word pictures?
2. Which metaphor do you think resonates the most? Why?
3. What do Paul’s ministry roles as pastor, teacher, and exemplar teach us as a community about ministry today?
4. How do you see these metaphors affecting your personal theology of ministry? How do they affect your particular ministry?

Prepared by Holly Sprink

A Seminary Community Travels:

Reflections on India

W E S C R A I G

This past summer, a group of thirteen Truett students traveled to Hong Kong, Macau, and India for a missions practicum. Before going, we read books and articles on the history of India, popular Hinduism, Christianity in the Hindu context, and various perspectives on issues related to Christianity in India.

BEFORE LEAVING MY WIFE, SUSAN, AND THE COMFORTS OF HOME, I had come up with three general purposes for making the 38-day journey from Hong Kong to India. One was to gain more exposure to issues related to cross-cultural ministry and hands-on experience in international mission work. The second purpose was to learn as much as possible during this opportunity while participating with other fellow students in this interactive classroom. I believed all I would learn from this experience could be applied to any other place the Lord may lead me and Susan. And finally, I desired to go to India and be changed. Before leaving home, I did not fear getting sick or being uncomfortable, but coming home unchanged. I feared looking but not seeing, hearing but not listening. Now that I have returned from India and come back to life in Waco, I can confidently say I have fulfilled my purposes for going. I gained exposure and experience, learned more than I could possibly imagine, and definitely was changed. This paper will be organized in the order of the cities in which we lived, and I will discuss the people, events, and issues we encountered that personally impacted my life.

H o n g K o n g

As I reflect back on Hong Kong, my clearest memories were the endless walking and the modern, technologically advanced appearance of the city. The streets were busy, and as we walked it seemed that many people were well-dressed, educated, and in a hurry. But the city inside the buildings was different.

Fairly early the first day we met Hoshee, an Indian believer from Kolkata, who led us to a building where he served in an inner-city ministry. This building was like a city within the city. It included stores, restaurants, hostels, and people from all over the world. Not long after arriving, we were worshiping with a group from all over the globe. One significant conversation I had was with a young man named Tembo from Uganda, who was seeking asylum. He told me he had been a Christian for two years and was in Hong Kong trying to find work, while also hoping to become a boxer. He was a pilgrim living in exile without a home or job and separated from his family. Tembo was a kind person with a gentle spirit, who had been through more in life than I could ever imagine. I couldn't begin to try and relate to, understand, or minister to him, but he had so much to offer me through his testimony of lived faith. I believe I was the one who needed ministering to that day. In the city, appearances can be deceiving, and the negative can always easily be hidden.

Another memory that has stayed with me was the night we had dinner at the American Restaurant with the pastor of the International Baptist Church and his family. During our conversation, the question was asked to the pastor's wife, "Do you believe seminary prepared you for what you are doing now?" She answered "No." Then, soon after answering she gave the advice to the group to cherish our relationship with Jesus, and that it was her relationship with him that got her and her family through all the challenges they have faced. It wasn't a class, which came alongside her to teach and guide her in relation to people and life events, but Jesus himself and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It was that advice that has stuck with me and has continued to encourage and inspire me to grow and cherish my relationship with Jesus Christ. These two people in Hong Kong gave me a picture of what it means to follow Christ and the necessity of abiding in him. One picture was given to me from a refugee from Uganda and another picture from a minister with a seminary degree.

M a c a u

I was most thankful for visiting Macau because of Pastor Lam. He was such a delight to be with, and he definitely made our visit worthwhile. I really admired his love for the people of his congrega-

tion. During dinner one night, he gave the advice to never leave your flock behind. He encouraged those who were to lead a congregation to always look back to see if the people are following. The other issue he spoke about concerned personal standards, and he advised us not to compare ourselves with others. This is something I personally have struggled with for years. There have been many people in my life whom I have come to admire, and then at times I look at myself and see someone who is ignorant and incompetent in many ways. This obviously has kept my self-confidence at a bare minimum. I believe this can be a good thing in many ways, for it has kept me from becoming prideful, but it has led to short periods of despair in the past. Pastor Lam encouraged me to live focused on a right relationship with the God who is gracious and is constantly working within me to prepare me for what he has for me. This was also the first time I began to intentionally recognize, as we later did as a group, that every person is at a different point in life, and that I am to live with the same grace toward others that God has shown me.

Hyderabad

Hyderabad was our introduction to India and to all the complex issues we would later come in contact with as we traveled. Looking back, the people had an ethos about them that was more welcoming to diversity and outsiders than possibly any other city. As I walked down the streets, I was struck by the number of people on the streets interacting with one another. I couldn't help but contrast the streets of Hyderabad with our private streets and individualistic lives in the States, where it is possible not to even know your next-door neighbor.

After reading some articles by H.L. Richards and Herbert Hofer,¹ I was looking forward to witnessing ministries that were void of Western influence and methodologies that were sensitive to the complex issues which involved being a 'Christian' in a Hindu context. To my dismay, I was placed in a group that was to go to Centenary Baptist Church, where we were to spend time with the children and youth. I really wasn't that excited about going because of my desire to explore the contextualized Muslim ministry, a ministry that retained cultural and religious continuity with Islam but redirected its worship toward Jesus. I made it a point, though, to remain open to the possibility of being placed in this group for a purpose.

Once we arrived at the church, I saw exactly what I didn't want to see. We worshiped with both children (small children to age 14) and teenagers (ages 15-25) to *Western* worship songs in *English* with the accompaniment of drums and an electric guitar. During the skits, my group (15-25 year olds) insisted that I explain the meaning of the

parable we acted out and also that I lead. I wanted to hear what they thought it meant and to follow their lead, but that was not the case. I was asked to lead a devotional, and in it I expressed that we had come to learn from them and to see how they followed Jesus. My struggle was between the desire to witness indigenous Indian worship and to accept the good that was coming out of the church and the people that are being reached through their ministry.

The first place I came into a face-to-face encounter with poverty was with Jennifer Adams, another Truett student, when she asked me to go with her to the slums. To see the conditions these people were living in was heartbreaking. How was I to respond? How could I help? These were the questions that continued to plague me the whole trip. Even though they had only one meal a day and perhaps only had one or two sets of clothes, they were full of smiles and life. My only response was to say hello, smile back, and touch them. At one point, I thought to myself, "I don't know where these kids' hands have been or what disease I could possibly contract by being this close to them." But God quickly calmed my fears, and Jesus began to love these children through me. In the end, I found myself reaching out to these children and walking down the street holding hands with two young boys, one on my left and one on my right.

In Hyderabad the ministry of one particular mission organization horrified me. Most of this organization's members were Indians, but it is funded by Western donors. I'm confident God is using this organization in many ways despite of itself, but I could not help but have concerns after leaving this ministry. What concerned me were its apparent formulization of its methods for reaching all the people of India, its use of emotional manipulation to motivate people, and its segregation and special treatment of those who are responsive to the gospel. "Picture a child you love burning in hell." Should guilt be a motivation for evangelization? Do we give up on those who do not respond to the gospel immediately? Can one method or formula work in a diverse and large nation the size of India?

As for their literacy program, we were told that its purpose was to help people succeed in life, but the primary purpose was so people could read their Bibles and grow spiritually. Could we just love people so much that we desire for them to live better, and provide literacy programs because of this, with no strings attached? This does not negate the importance of sharing the person of Jesus but begs the question, 'Are people becoming 'Christians' because of physical incentives or because of spiritual truth?' This temptation is something that all who are mixing social reform and evangelism together should be aware of as they proceed prayerfully and cautiously.

Anyone who studies the history of Christian missions in India will quickly learn that most of it has been done among the lower castes. I believe this has been the case for two basic reasons. The first is that Christians are drawn to the poor and suffering, which is natural and should be expected. The second reason is because the lower castes are easier and more responsive, but does this mean we are not to even attempt to reach the middle and upper classes? It was enlightening to learn that the upper caste people will usually not help the poor and suffering due to their belief in *karma*. *Karma* is the idea that one's status as a person in this life is dependent on one's past lives, and one's goal in this life is to do penance for past sins/*adharma*. The upper caste do not refuse to help because they do not care or because they are evil, but because to help the lower caste poor is to ultimately hurt them by preventing them from working out their penance.

What if a movement of God were to happen among the middle and upper classes, in which their worldview is changed and they begin to minister to the lower classes? For this reason, I suggest more of a focus on the upper class within Indian society. Jesus looked at the rich man and loved him. He told him to sell everything and follow him. Every believer would affirm that Jesus offers discipleship to the Brahmins as well as the Dalits of India, but our efforts must reflect that belief.

It was our experience visiting the Banjara gypsies in the rural area that led to the question of the role of the missionary, especially the white man or woman in the Indian culture. India's history of European colonialism and the missionaries who came with Britain's military who abhorred the Hindu culture and religions left a lasting mark on the Hindu mind and heart. Missionaries, especially Western ones, must be aware of this history and strive to promote following Christ, as opposed to Western civilization, morals, and even Western Christianity. An Indian pastor, Dayanand, suggested that Westerners partner with local Indian churches in an effort to reach the rural tribes and value the local peoples' culture. He elaborated by saying that Westerners would most appropriately serve in behind-the-scenes roles. It was encouraging to hear missionaries James and Robbi talk about their efforts to mobilize the Latin American Church to send out missionaries to India who would be able to relate to Hindus more easily. Hyderabad was definitely an introduction to the complex issues of mission work in India.

B a n g a l o r e

I believe my first experience of culture shock took place in the

city of Bangalore. I vividly remember walking near an intersection and seeing *every* head turned toward us. I was overwhelmed with concern for the girls because of the many men who constantly stared at them. The people in this city seemed much more aggressive than the people in Hyderabad, and this was the first time on the trip that the issue of suffering and death became a real issue for me. All of a sudden I was confronted with the question, “If Susan and I came to India and she was raped or murdered, how would I respond? Could I stay and love a people who hurt or killed my wife? Are we willing to lose our lives and follow our calling if it is to a place with an environment such as Bangalore?” I came to the point where I could only pray for faith and a surrendering of our lives to the call of God.

Some of our meetings with missionaries left me with a number of concerns and questions. One meeting, which introduced us to the Camel Method, is the one I would like to comment on because I believe it is a good example of what to avoid. This method was inspired by the conversion of a Muslim in Bangladesh to Christianity. This person’s story led to a method that has been duplicated across the Muslim world and uses the Koran to point to Jesus as the hundredth name of Allah. My opinion is that it manipulates the text, takes passages out of context, and directs the conversation artificially. Its foundation is not a trusting and open relationship with Muslims, but a theological argument to prove the Christian message.

In addition to the use of the Koran in witnessing, going to the mosque in order to evangelize was also encouraged. Should going to a mosque and using the Koran be the foundation for conversation and witnessing? Where is the authentic relationship in all of this? A pre-written method is artificial and impersonal. How can we pull verses out of context and manipulate both the Koran and people into following Jesus? Like the agency in Hyderabad, we were told to look for the people God is working in and focus on them. Do we not desire to take the time to build a relationship with those who may not respond the way we want them to immediately? I believe our approach or “method” should be authentic and relational. The gospel does not necessarily have to be shared in one sitting, but throughout the entire relationship as the Holy Spirit works in people.

After a couple of frustrating meetings, visiting with H.L. Richards was a breath of fresh air. Christianity has been in India for over a millennium and has failed to reach the Hindu world. Richards introduced us to a movement outside the church where followers of Christ are flourishing. Our discussion with him aided my understanding of “Hinduism” (which is a post-colonial Western term) as more of a civilization with a family of religions as opposed to one, uniform religion.

He also informed us of the important issue of community within the unique Hindu context. Are we to ask Hindus to no longer be Hindu and join a new community where they will be pushed in a corner of society and no longer be a witness within their own social structure? It is hard for Westerners to understand the importance of community and its relationship to the Hindu worldview. For many Westerners, you cannot be Hindu and follow Christ simultaneously. I witnessed this personally the day after our discussion with H.L. Richards. As the fireworks from a Hindu wedding procession were taking place outside of the Church of South India church, I turned to an Indian man and asked him if his wedding was like the one taking place outside. He responded, "No! They are Hindu. We are Christian!" This is one example of the Western brainwashing that has taken place over the centuries that have separated the Christians from the Hindu world.

This has also raised the issue of the dilemma Hindus face regarding 'baptism.' To be baptized is to change from a Hindu community to a 'Christian' community with a different (Western) culture. This shows the need for an awareness of the baggage that terminology carries (e.g. Christian) and also the need for rethinking baptism and possible parallel rites or ceremonies for initiation. Would it not be more appropriate for followers of Christ to stay within their own caste and community in order to be a witness to their own family? This even leads to a reconsideration of followers of Christ marrying unbelievers and taking seriously honoring your father and mother. Have we put up unnecessary walls for people coming to Jesus? Have we not learned our lesson regarding segregation of believers from the rest of society and how it will only cripple spontaneous expansion through all the castes of India?

Another important issue is money. I'm thankful H.L. Richards pointed out the negative ramifications of missionaries, especially native ones, being financially supported from the outside to propagate the faith. This only results in the loss of credibility with Hindus and teaches them reliance on those who support them. As for discipleship, it could take on a form such as a Hindu follower of Christ being a guru to another follower of Christ and religious teaching taking place within the home as opposed to a classroom in the church building. I believe Paul's advice to the Thessalonians applies very well here. He says in 1 Thess 4:11-12, "This should be your ambition: to live a quiet life, minding your own business and working with your hands, just as we commanded you before. As a result, people who are not Christians will respect the way you live, and you will not need to depend on others to meet your financial needs." As for Bangalore, I'm thankful for the hope found in those who value the good within the Hindu culture, are

sensitive to the complex issues believers are dealing with, and are willing to rethink how to reach the Hindu world in a way that the gospel takes root and spreads through Hindu followers of Christ.

Cochin

Our time in Cochin was the point in our trip where our discussion had a great influence on my life in regard to ideologies and ecclesiology. After reflecting on the issues we talked about during this mid-point stop, I've come to realize that they relate to many of my own personal struggles back in the States, even though I may not have been able to put my finger on them or see them clearly before.

In our first meeting, there were three things that really impacted my life and have continued to be in the forefront of my mind and heart. One has to do with how we measure success, not only in missions, but also in the Christian life. If I were to spend many years in India and never witness someone becoming a follower of Christ or never "walk someone down the Roman Road," does that mean I have been unsuccessful? Or could it be that living in faithfulness and obedience to the call of being the presence of Christ to those in my life will be regarded as complete success, even though I can't give a good conversion story or a lower statistic of the "lost" in India?

Another challenging idea was that of being creative in mission work. If I were to tell someone in the States I was called to be a missionary to India, more than likely one of the first questions would be about which organization I was going through. Today most people see the only way to serve cross-culturally as through an agency. This implies that people do not live under the realization that every Christian is a 'missionary,' a witness to Jesus Christ. This is a challenge for creativity, knowing that there are many ways of "going," for example, as a UN worker, doctor, businessperson, or agriculturalist. Do you have to be a vocational missionary, or can you just be a person of God living out who you are in Christ with intention and purpose? Is there even such a thing as a 'vocational missionary?' If I see myself as a vocational missionary, then at some point I will see myself as a retired witness to the transforming power of God. This leads into the issue of seen and recognized versus unseen and unrecognized. Am I willing to live my life in faithful witness to Jesus Christ with the possibility of losing my life and not being recognized for such a sacrifice? I pray that my ego never gets to the point where recognition is the motivation or source of pride for following Christ's calling on my life.

The other significant meeting in Cochin was with a couple from the IMB who are presently ministering to Muslims. I'm grateful I was able to make the first half of our meeting with them because I believe

they were a great example of incarnational living. We were told that Kerala, the state in which Cochin is located, sends out six to seven thousand missionaries to the rest of India and has the largest percentage of 'Christians' in all India. However, they have little contact with their own neighbors in Kerala. We were also told that many of the Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) are pastors or teachers and have little contact with the Muslim community.

As I thought about this, I couldn't help but think about Mohammed (name changed) back in Hyderabad. Mohammed was a Muslim who came to faith in Jesus, who then left the Muslim community and culture. Later, he decided to return to the Muslim community he grew up in, and become Muslim culturally once again, in order to be a witness to them. I began to contrast him with the MBBs in Kerala. I believe the state of the church in South India is a prime example of the effects of past missionary activity. I also believe that many of the negative ramifications of the past can be avoided in the future with missionaries who use approaches that are sensitive to the important issue of community and culture in India.

I greatly appreciated the couple's discussion and advice about reaching Muslims. I hadn't been aware of women's role of passing on the faith of Islam to their children. They stressed the importance of knowing their language and not using the Koran unless you know the meaning of the Arabic words (this contrasted with the Camel Method). They said there is no easy way to reach Muslim women. There must be a heart contact, not merely an intellectual one. For me, this underlined the importance of relationships and sharing our life and story instead of a manipulative conversation or theological treatise. I became conscious of the fact that every relationship begins with mistrust, and that trust must be built, especially with Muslims being approached by Westerners.

I will also never forget what they said regarding their calling. The husband said that they are "not in India because they like it, but because of their calling." I know if Susan and I are called overseas there will be times when we will not like living where we will be. This is why we must continue to follow our calling and rely on the grace and strength of God wherever we may be serving. As for Cochin, I'm grateful for all of our discussion that prepared us for the coming cities and all of our discussion that challenged me and played a part in forming my personal ideologies.

Jaipur

Our time in Jaipur was both refreshing and encouraging. It was good to spend time with other Westerners our age who were aware of

the issues we had been discussing. This was our first time to meet Pioneers, who were serving in a frontier capacity with the Rajputs people doing ethnographic research. They were aware of the importance of contextualization, and they asked questions that showed their presuppositions, ways of thinking, and approach. By asking questions like “What will the church look like among the Rajputs; what will worship look like?” they communicated that they weren’t expecting the church to either look or sound Western. It was important to them to know the Rajputs’ way of thinking and living so that they could communicate the gospel in a way that the Rajputs could understand and appreciate, so that they could in turn follow Christ. One question they asked Rajputs who had already become followers of Jesus was, “If we did this . . . how would it be perceived?” I believe it was wise to want to know the perspective of the Rajputs of what they said and did and to be sensitive about communicating anything that wasn’t meant to be communicated.

As for the Pioneer organization, I was very impressed by its methodology and team dynamics. It was good to hear them say that decisions were made at the team level, rather than from administrative headquarters in another country. I also found the option of either forming a new team or joining an already existing team beneficial. In addition to all these, I valued Pioneers partnering with local churches and stressing that the organization does not take the place of the sending church. In my opinion, organizationally, Pioneers are moving in the right direction.

The final thing I’d like to comment on is the experience we had the day we prayer walked through the Pink City (Jaipur’s historic downtown) and visited several temples. Jaipur was the first city where we were actually physically present in a number of temples and witnessed people worshipping. I will never forget one large, crowded temple. There were no pews and no priest giving a sermon, just people coming in and out worshipping. I saw people ringing bells, singing, lying on the ground, standing up with hands raised, and people making offerings of all kind. I walked around the idol with the mass of people in a clockwise direction. There were people touching the wall near the idol and knocking on the doors that went into the idol’s room. All these rituals were done in order to wash away their sins.

Looking back over my notes from H.L. Richard’s articles and reflecting on the question raised by the Pioneers regarding what Rajput worship could possibly look like, I can now see why Richards makes the suggestions he does. He suggests the church building serve as a temple for occasional visits, using pictures of Christ as central for devotion, attending conventions as pilgrimages, and using *ishta de-*

vata theology (an individual Hindu must choose which god to offer devotion, and Hindus may choose Christ). These could be practical examples of what he means when he comments on our desire not to change the religious genius or culture of India, but to simply bring Christ and Christ's gospel into the center of it.

Kolkata ('Calcutta')

By the time we arrived in Kolkata, a skin irritation, which I acquired in Cochin, had begun to spread rapidly. This was a constant distraction, something I struggled with most of our time in Kolkata. Since I still didn't know what the cause of the rash was, I suspected that it was heat related. I attempted to stay as cool as possible in case it was a heat rash. As result of my condition and being on a load of anti-histamine pills, I was unable to participate in many of the opportunities to serve. Instead I had to rely on the group's experiences, which I greatly valued. I'll never forget Jayson sharing his struggle in being concerned for himself in the House of the Dying. When next to a man with tuberculosis, he couldn't help but be concerned for himself. Jayson was afraid to catch the disease, but also wanted to minister to this man. He shared about how we have been taught our whole lives to take care of ourselves, but following Christ involves dying daily to ourselves.

Since Kolkata was the fifth city in India we had visited, I was beginning to get accustomed to seeing poverty. But poverty in Kolkata was so severe that I couldn't help but be taken aback. I saw so many people sleeping on the streets, along with men and women who were hungry and crippled. I couldn't help but be suspicious of professional beggars, but my heart went out to people, whether I thought they were professional beggars or not. Poverty was so overwhelming; I felt so small that I couldn't possibly make a dent in this great giant. I could only love the people the best I knew how, and trust the Holy Spirit to lead me in the ways he would have me respond to the people. In my own life, Kolkata was my guru in regard to the Western idolatry of materialism and my need for contentment in all areas of life. I may not worship an image of Vishnu in a temple, but in many ways I do worship my automobile, clothes, and home when I'm not content and always desire the "better" and "newer" things in life. I pray that God will continue to remind me of the people of Kolkata, especially when I'm not content, and desire unnecessary temporal things as a source of happiness, pride, or security rather than Christ.

Varanasi

Varanasi is the holy city of Hindus. Many people take pilgrimages

to this city in order to wash away their sins in its waters and to worship the goddess Ganga. In addition to this, many hope to be cremated here, in order for their ashes to be scattered in the river. Any person who desires to experience the heart of Hindu religious life should ideally go to Varanasi.

My experience in this holy city created a mixture of emotions. One was of fear because of all the security issues and the tourist disappearances in the past. I also felt hope because of the presence of believers who are committed to the people and to meeting them where they are in life! I'll never forget watching Jeremy (Jai), an American Christ-follower, interact with the people in such a gentle, loving, and respectful manner, and to see a difference in their response to him. This probably touched my heart more than anything else we witnessed while in India. He dressed like them, which showed that he loved India. He spoke like them, which communicated that he loved the people enough to learn their language. It was in this city that I had the privilege to witness in Jai's life an example of becoming Hindu in order to reach the Hindu.

Some of my most memorable discussions regarded the Hindu way of life and worldview versus the usual response of foreigners, who often mistake culture shock and misunderstanding for 'spiritual darkness.' For example, I remember taking the boat ride down the Ganga (Ganges River) and witnessing people bathing, brushing their teeth, washing clothes, and even cremating bodies all on the same river bank. Jai made one brief comment about how you could see all that was taking place and begin praying against demonic oppression *or* you could just see this as daily life for the people. Here were people preparing for the day, yet for them brushing their teeth is not separated from the sacred, and cremating bodies on the Ganges was not only spiritual but practical. As opposed to us Westerners who compartmentalize life, Hindu life is saturated with the spiritual.

Concerning the Hindu worldview, there are a couple of issues I'd like to comment on. One is the fact that one source of authority is a body of myths and stories that are passed on by the elders to the children. I believe this is one characteristic of the Hindu way of life that is essential to understand and appreciate, especially when seeking ways of encouraging the faith to be passed on *naturally* from generation to generation. This is a good example, in addition to arranged marriages, of the similarities between the Hindu culture and the culture of the Old Testament. It's exciting to think about the perspective and understanding that Hindu followers of Christ have and can share with us after reflecting on Scripture and all we can learn from them.

The second issue has to do with terminology and the Hindu

worldview when communicating the gospel. When discussing with a Hindu what is wrong with the human condition, it is important to understand what our terminology communicates to them and how they understand terms such as sin. For Hindus, sin is forgivable through many vehicles, such as sacrifice and ritual bathing. *Adharma* is not forgivable, and it is *adharma's* relationship to *karma* that results in the cycle of life (reincarnation). Would it be better to use sin and/or *adharma* when communicating the liberating message of the gospel? This understanding of *karma* also helps us realize why Hindus many times do not help those who are poor and in need, because to them, not to help is to help free the poor from *adharma*.

Delhi

Coming from Varanasi to Delhi was quite a transition in terms of Western influence and modernity. Before watching the Hindi movie *Hum-Tum* on our first day in Delhi, I was taken aback when I realized that very few women were wearing saris. Then, after watching the movie, I came to realize how much the movie reflected the life issues and struggles of the younger generation in Hindu society, especially those living in the cities. From what I remember, *Hum-Tum* dealt with issues such as arranged versus love marriages, respect for the opposite sex, honoring one's parents, and living according to traditions in the midst of a modern world.

As for the people and experiences we were introduced to in Delhi, I'd like to discuss one positive experience and one negative. The negative experience involved our excursion with some American missionaries, which can be summed up in one word: bangles. I appreciated their enthusiasm and desire to share Jesus with the people they were focusing on, but their approach rubbed me the wrong way. Talking to us as if we were children, we heard how each bangle told a chapter in the story of their lives, which paralleled with the traditional plan of salvation according to the colors of American power bracelets. They ended by offering to talk to any of us if we didn't know Jesus! Then, after this wonderful introduction to their method, we had to go meet strangers in coffee shops. To this day I still haven't figured this one out. I don't want to have a plan to go meet people in order to tell my bangle story to a complete stranger with whom I have absolutely no relationship. I want to meet people *as I go*, with sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's leading. Would it not be better to be who I am and to just live with the intention of loving and knowing people? But when do you share the "plan of salvation?" Who knows? It could be in one sitting or over a period of years as Christ lives and speaks through us and into their lives as the Holy Spirit works in them. I fear approaching people

with a plan simply to talk to them without ever building a trusting relationship, just to tell them our story and ‘convert’ them. Then if they don’t respond, we would cease to extend friendship. We’d move on to the next person who we can save quicker, and in whose life we can invest less. For me, this is *not* incarnational living.

The positive experience in Delhi was a combination of Brian, an IMB missionary, and the Hindu contextualized worship. This was like the icing on the cake! I greatly appreciated his discussion on taking forms familiar to Hindus in worship and giving them new meaning and function, which is contextualization. I had been waiting on this experience since we arrived in India, and here I was able to see a picture of how Indian worship looks and sounds when directed to Jesus. Brian’s love, openness, and enthusiasm in using Indian forms to communicate the gospel were a real encouragement. For example, in the Lord’s Supper, he used the coconut as a symbol of the broken body and outpoured blood of Jesus. Also, the rough outside and smooth white inside of the coconut represented our lives before and after faith in Jesus.

Conclusion

Now that I am back in the United States, I cannot avoid the question of response. The question is not what do I do, but *who am I to be* as a result of what I’ve seen, heard, and experienced?

While in India, I came to a clearer understanding of what it truly means to be the people of God in the world: to intentionally live an incarnational life, which is defined by the fruits of the Spirit and obedience to God, instead of formulas and strategies. For me, this is a life of success. As for the nature of missions, it is being the transformed people of God who have been sent into the world to announce and live under the reign of God in compassion, humility, and love. At its heart, it is not a program, committee, or vocation, but the natural life of the entire body of Christ whose joy it is to share the gospel in both word and deed, so that all people can understand, appreciate, and receive through faith the hope found in Christ.

(Truett Students in front of Taj Mahal)

Notes

1. Richard, H. L. “Rethinking Community,” *Dharma Deepika*, July-December 2000; Richard, H. L. “Evangelical Approaches ot Hindus,” *Missiology* 29:3 (July 2001); Hoefler, Herbert E. “The Burden of the Past,” *Mission Frontiers* (December 2000).

WES CRAIG

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“A Seminary Community Travels” ... **So What?**

Questions for Consideration:

1. We cannot all go to India, but what are ways that you can change your only life here to improve the lives of the Indians?
2. Wes Craig talks about missionaries going into mosques and using the Koran to convert people to Christianity. Should evangelism be done by any means necessary? How far is going to far?

Prepared by Scott A. Smith

Book Reviews

Brief reviews of books that are proving to be to be significant voices in discussions both inside and outside of classrooms at Truett

Silvoso, Ed. *Anointed for Business*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2002. 195 pp.

In a highly readable manner, Ed Silvoso confronts some major theological and ecclesiological issues in practical ways in his book *Anointed for Business*. He builds his discussion on several key concepts. The *marketplace* consists of business, education, and government, and is central to the life of any city. *Anointing* is defined as a divine calling or purpose for a special assignment. *Ministry* refers to spiritual transformation, not just evangelical witness. Silvoso believes that ministry for any Christian begins in his or her sphere of influence and can (and should) impact entire cities, regions, and nations.

One major theological and ecclesiological gap that Silvoso tackles is the *division between clergy and laity*. He observes that the majority of Christians operate as though ministers are those called to church work, while the rest of the people are laity who do not have a calling to ministry. Most business people settle for mere survival in the workplace, trying to hang on to their faith without being corrupted. They may have a religious conversation from time to time, pray before a meal, or have a verse posted in their office, but their witness and their faith is largely passive if not non-existent. The church often reinforces

this mindset because of a faulty theology that sees secular work as corrupt and as less godly than church work or “full-time” ministry.

Another gap that Silvosio addresses is the *division between material and spiritual*, or secular and sacred. The prevailing attitude in most churches is that business is seen as secular (evil) and (at best) second class to spiritual church work. Too often, the message is that business is only good for funding the church. Instead, Silvosio urges readers to reclaim prayer as the number one priority in business. The goal for the Christian in the workplace should be more than survival or making enough money to fund church work; it should be to engage in business empowered by the Holy Spirit. This involves discovering work as worship and business leadership as shepherding or pastoring.

Throughout the book, Silvosio appeals to the Bible to provide examples and to strengthen his argument by showing that this perspective is not new; rather it has been part of Christianity from the beginning. Jesus was a carpenter whose life and ministry was in and about the marketplace. Silvosio notes the prevalence of marketplace images and examples in Jesus’ parables and the number of miracles that occurred in the marketplace. Also, Jesus’ followers came from the marketplace. The church that grew out of these disciples existed as a counterculture in all spheres of life, particularly the marketplace. The early church met regularly all over the city, and initiated citywide transformation. Silvosio teaches that thirty-nine of forty divine interventions in the book of Acts are associated with the marketplace (115-118).

Silvosio is very clear in advocating more than a simple legitimizing of business in the eyes of the church. His book is directed even more at the Christian presently in the marketplace who must learn to conduct business for the kingdom of God. Silvosio states that profit is neither an evil concept nor an impure motive for business. Businesses are supposed to succeed financially; otherwise they are not good businesses. Success, particularly the wealth and power that accompany it, is not evil unless a Christian’s perspective is distorted. Generating income is not sinful, but misuse of resources is. The proper perspective is one of stewardship, being faithful through the wise and calculated use of what has been entrusted. This necessarily includes being generous and using resources to bless others, especially the poor. The goal is reconciliation, a proper perspective of the marketplace that leads to tangible social and spiritual change in the heart of a city. This implies that there are other motives besides business. A successful business should be evaluated along more than just the bottom line of profit; it should equally include ministry opportunities and the ability to contribute to social change.

Silvoso believes that the church needs to rediscover the prayer for the kingdom of God to come on earth. He does not indicate this to be a utopian longing, but it is also not an abstract concept. It means regaining a perspective of the kingdom of God tangibly near to people where they live. Marketplace Christians are on the front lines in taking the kingdom outside the walls of the church to where the population is.

While the message of this book is very strong and clear, at times the author does not support his arguments well. In an effort to make the biblical text highly relevant for today's reader in the marketplace, Silvoso tiptoes the line of reading his own thesis into the scriptural text. This, on occasion, leads to a somewhat distorted application of scripture. For example, Silvoso refers to the household code in Ephesians 5 to illustrate social gaps that exist between genders (husbands and wives), generations (fathers and children), and marketplace roles (masters and slaves) (87-88). His point can be made clearly enough, yet he stretches this passage out of context to apply it to his own message. The next page provides another example where it appears that Silvoso is reading New Testament accounts of slavery with modern eyes, rather than with a first century understanding. Silvoso's interpretation would have difficulty answering why, if slavery is completely dehumanizing across all cultures, Paul does not make any attempt to overtly condemn it. Still, the book, and particularly the heart of the message, is on target.

Anointed for Business contains many helpful practical suggestions. For example, Silvoso teaches about living under a financial ceiling. This practice involves establishing a maximum income level that a family will live on, then giving away everything above that ceiling. In addition to finances, Silvoso suggests simply to begin reaching out to people who are socially different in order to develop genuine love for each other. The book is filled with examples of how the work of business people is used to impact others for Christ in magnificent ways.

Silvoso's aim is clearly to affirm the calling of God on the lives of all Christians and to challenge and motivate them to obedience. He explains four practical ways of how to get going: become part of the marketplace, embrace your position there as a God-given calling, improve the systems at work around you through your thoughtfulness and diligence, and declare that the kingdom of God has come to your workplace when given the opportunity to articulate the differences.

Another strong component to Silvoso's teaching is that of spiritual warfare. He is unwavering in his conviction about the destructiveness of sin, both personal and corporate. He also notes the failure of seeing human wisdom and effort as more efficient than seeking God for all

business decisions. The key is for the Christian to maintain integrity in the workplace.

The church needs to move toward reconciling the gap between pastors and marketplace Christians. Silviso states that this rift goes both directions, but he tends to put initial responsibility on the shoulders of pastors who need to broaden theologically to regard marketplace Christians as both ministers and peers. The working professionals are challenged to wake up and begin to think of themselves in a new way. At the least, this book is important for clearly articulating our need for a theology of labor and a theology of laity in our

Danker, William John. Profit for the Lord: Economic Activities in Moravian Missions and the Basel Mission Trading Company. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971. 183 pp.

The separation of the sacred and secular in God's creation has long plagued church history. Closely related to this is the distinction made between clergy and laity in the witness and work of the church. Perhaps no group has been hit harder with both of these blows than Christian business people. Not only is economic activity considered secular, but the end of making a financial profit is often regarded as synonymous with loving *mammon* instead of God. When it comes to reaching the lost world, that responsibility is typically seen as primarily a sacred calling intended for missionaries (read clergy). The business professional is taught to take his or her place as a financial supporter of the clergy, who are more appropriate ministers of the gospel.

While there are some isolated exceptions to this scenario, it is a tension that appears throughout church history. In *Profit for the Lord*, William Danker examines two of the most successful examples of economic activity in worldwide mission: the Moravian Church and the Basel Mission Trading Company. Danker divides his book equally between each of these case studies, complete with key names, dates, and historical background. He describes in concise yet detailed fashion the economic and theological principles and motives of each group. As

he tells the stories of their activities in different locations around the world, their successes and failures at both business and mission come to the surface.

The Moravians were a small pietistic group that believed it was the purpose and responsibility of the entire church to reach outside itself to the world for Christ. Every church member was considered a missionary candidate. Once missionaries arrived in a location, they soon realized that tradesmen were needed to provide for basic needs of missionaries and locals, to help sustain the missionary force financially, and to create jobs that would improve the station of the locals. Profitable business ventures were essential to success, but the main goal was contributing to the mission of the church.

The Moravians encouraged a communal approach to economics, and discouraged personal gain at the expense of others. Because of their strong belief in loving both God and neighbor, they sought to be a community that labored together for the Lord. Since each person was responsible for labor and was also a missionary candidate, he or she would simply take his or her craft with him or her when moving abroad. Practically speaking, all duties had sacred value. The motivation for working was not for oneself, but for others. A strong work ethic was to be an example of the dignity of labor. All profit was sought for Jesus Christ alone. This was the one criterion that guided the choice of occupation, strategy, and personnel.

The Basel Mission Trading Company, in contrast to the church-based Moravians, was a product of the Basel Mission Society. The mission society aimed not at making money in and of itself, but at proclaiming the gospel by helping people come to see themselves as children of God. Their business ventures were active daily demonstrations of the gospel at work, not just a means to an end. In every location that the company engaged in commerce, it sought to provide an ethical example of business practices in corrupt societies. A key focus was for the missionary business person to train local apprentices to carry on the work and earn their own livelihood.

It is important to learn from the honest challenges and opportunities faced by the Moravians and the Basel Mission Trading Company. Each group was guided by its principles, but cultural and economic conditions made the application a struggle. There were times that ministry success seemed to contradict the strain on relationships with customers and co-workers in economically difficult times. There were also times when economic success threatened to leave ministry behind.

A vital foundational lesson should be learned from the Christians

whose story is told in *Profit for the Lord*: “every Christian is a missionary and should witness through his daily vocation” (73). The church and its mission agencies should “send out high-quality Christians to make their witness in the market place” through a “living demonstration of the gospel in the factory and across the counter” (121). Danker’s book is unfortunately a rare volume in Christian literature. The church today can learn from those who did not cower at the tensions of economics and missions, but instead wrestled diligently with the dynamics – believing that Christ is most faithfully proclaimed when demonstrated by the whole church to be relevant for all of humanity.

Russell Browder
M.Div., Global Missions

To the King eternal, immortal, invisible,
the only God, be honor and glory for
ever and ever.
1 Timothy 1:17 REV

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