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The *Truett Journal of Church and Mission*
facilitates critical and creative engagement
with what it means to be the church
and how the people of God participate
in God's mission in the world.
The *Journal* offers scholarly reflection
for the purpose of faithful application.

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Cover Design: Fred Thayer
Special thanks to the Martin Bodmer Foundation in Geneva, Switzerland for permission to use an image of the Prologue of John from their codex known as P66, which dates from the second century.

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Vol. 4, No. 2 Fall 2006

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A Letter from the Editorial Board

In Memory of Dr. Ruth Ann Foster

As we at Truett continue to grieve the loss of our beloved professor, mentor, advocate, colleague, and friend, the Editorial Board has decided to dedicate this issue of the *Truett Journal of Church and Mission* to Dr. Ruth Ann Foster, who passed away after long battles with auto-immune disease and cancer on September 28, 2006. This issue contains several reflections on Dr. Foster by various members of the Truett community. We hope that these memorials help you remember this remarkable woman, or if you never had the chance to meet her, in some sense to know the amazing person alongside whom many of us at Truett had the privilege of walking on our Christian journeys.

Besides University of Kentucky basketball, one of Dr. Foster's

greatest passions in life and work was the Prologue of John's Gospel. She studied John 1:1-18 continually, never confident that she had fully plumbed its depths. It was the basis of her dissertation at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and she loved to teach it to her students in Scriptures and Greek Readings classes. In memory of her, we chose for the cover of this issue an image of an ancient Greek manuscript of the scripture she loved so dearly.

A quote by C.S. Lewis in *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* that Dr. Foster cherished encapsulates her own life's journey. When Lucy asks Mr. Beaver if Aslan, the lion and Christ figure in the story, is safe, he replies, "Safe?...Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good." Dr. Foster lived a life that was far from safe: she blazed trails for women in Baptist theological education and ministry; she battled diseases that sapped her strength and energy; and she died much too soon. Her life was not safe, but we can all say without reservation that it was good. She followed the never-safe-but-always-good Lord into uncharted waters, and in the process she showed us how to follow him as well. We will remember her for her humor, her kindness, her strength in weakness, her love for what she did, and the love she showed all of her students, who became her children.

After Dr. Chip Conyers' death in 2004, Dr. Foster became the last of the founding faculty members of Truett Seminary still on staff. She paid tribute to him in the Fall 2004 issue of this journal, and her closing words reflect how we feel now: "I am grateful that my dear friend is now in the presence of the One whose dying brought life to us all."

-The Editorial Board

Eulogy

A Colleague Remembers Ruth Ann Foster

HULITT GLOER

The following is the text of the eulogy Dr. Gloer offered at Dr. Foster's funeral on October 3, 2006.

WE'VE HAD A SAINT AMONG US. Oh, I don't mean a perfect person. I mean a saint in the truest New Testament sense of the word: a human being who allowed God to use her in ways she could never have imagined back in the beautiful, bluegrass-draped mountains of Kentucky, when she first heard the call and said "yes." Yes to a Bible college from which she graduated at the top of her class but wasn't allowed to walk across stage at graduation. Yes to a seminary across the Mississippi from which she graduated with a 4.0 grade point average and became the first female to receive a Ph.D. And, ultimately, yes to being a member of the founding faculty of the seminary which she spent the rest of her years molding and shaping into the incredible place we enjoy today.

Her fingerprints are all over that place. Her wisdom helped cast and move the Truett vision from a yellow legal pad to a living laboratory of theological education and Christian community. Her voice will ever echo in its hallways and classrooms, making the crooked places of New Testament study straight and preparing the way for us to follow the Lord she loved and served selflessly.

Her irrepressible and, dare I say at times, mischievous sense of humor will continue to keep us laughing as "Ruth Ann stories" achieve legendary status—like every class heard her say how disappointed she was going to be if she found out that Jesus had really said "celebrate" rather than "celibate"! I suppose that's an issue she might take up with the Almighty. But I suspect that wasn't her first question. I suspect her first question was, "Would it have upset some divine eternal plan to have had at least one female apostle?" Am I right?

And if you're looking for the "signs and wonders" that are said to follow saints, just look around this room. This room is filled with "signs and wonders": people who learned from her how to really read the Bible for all it's worth; people who learned from her that God is

not threatened by our questions or our doubts; people she encouraged to serve in ways they had never thought possible because their vision of God had been shaped by the traditions of the elders rather than the fresh winds of the Spirit. Like the Apostle Paul, Ruth Ann has children in the faith and in ministry all over the world, women and men who learned from her the freedom for which Christ has set us free.

You and I know that she would never, ever have spoken of her life in that way, but she couldn't see the whole story. Nor can we now, for the results will continue to be realized until history's final curtain falls. Only then will it be clear what a difference her one solitary life has made. She probably won't believe it even then, but we'll be standing in line to speak of what a difference she made in her very special way for each of us.

Her voice will ever echo in Truett's hallways and classrooms, making the crooked places of New Testament study straight and preparing the way for us to follow the Lord she loved and served selflessly.

When I arrived at Truett in the summer of 2000, I was assigned to share an office with Ruth Ann. It was a remarkable experience as I'm sure you can imagine. I found her at once to be an extremely warm person, but I couldn't seem to get warm in the office we shared. This had always been a problem in Sioux Falls, SD, but I certainly didn't expect this in Waco, Texas. I wasn't outside, and it wasn't even what we call "winter" here. I later learned that her office was affectionately known as "the meat locker" and learned to dress accordingly.

From our first days together, I began to notice how often she struggled from a variety of physical problems. I'm not sure how many people knew how much she struggled to carry on during the last years for the love of her students, "her children." Because we shared some common maladies, we shared about that struggle often. When we moved to the new building and would share lunch in her office, inevitably the conversation would turn to matters of health. She was always an encouragement to me, and I hope in some small way to have been an encouragement to her. Here's what I know: she showed me

how to keep on keeping on when it seems impossible to keep on. She helped me see more clearly that God does make a way when there is no way. I didn't know at the time just how much her example would mean to me.

The last time I saw Ruth Ann, I told her that though I knew office space in heaven will not be in short supply, I had requested that we share an office again. She could hardly speak, but I thought I heard her say, "You know you'll have to bundle up because I'll have the thermostat turned way down." Maybe I'll be buried in my overcoat just in case.

Last Thursday at about two o'clock, if you were listening closely enough, you could hear it, an ever so slight rustling in the leaves of the trees. And then this: "Well done, good and faithful servant …Enter the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." But Ruth Ann wasn't really into kingdoms. What she was into was the classroom, and I have a suspicion that by now she's made her way to The Dean's Office to ask for another assignment, another class, another eager bunch of new students who've at last reached the highest level of graduate education that she might continue what she has done without fear all these years: teaching the newly arrived how to understand those parts of God's magnificent eternal plan that somehow we never quite got, helping us to understand even the parts we'd just as soon ignore, and challenging us, all of us, Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female, to live more fully into the reality of God's kingdom.

Ruth Ann, my colleague, my mentor, my sister, my dear, dear friend, we will thank our God in our every remembrance of you because of our partnership in the gospel from the first day we met you until we meet again. We know that the One who began a good work in you has brought it to completion, and the One who has begun a good work through you will bring it to completion. We will struggle to be as faithful to do our part in that work as you were to do yours.

Yes, my friends, we've had a saint among us in the truest New Testament sense of the word. In his own inimitable way, Frederick Buechner defines a saint with these words: "In God's holy flirtation with the world, God occasionally drops a handkerchief. These handkerchiefs are called saints." How grateful I am that the gracious wind of the Spirit blew this handkerchief our way. Yes, my friends, we've had a saint among us.

HULITT GLOER
has been Professor of Preaching and Christian Scriptures at Truett Seminary since 2000. He and his wife, Sheila, are members of Calvary Baptist Church in Waco and teach the twenty-somethings' Sunday School class. He may be contacted at William_Gloer@baylor.edu.

Remembering a Saint

A Former Student's Reflection on Dr. Foster

DELAYNE VAUGHN

Where does one begin in writing a remembrance of a beloved teacher, mentor, colleague, and friend?

I SUPPOSE THE ONLY PLACE ONE CAN start is with one's own experience. This essay is not meant to be about me, but the best way I can talk about Ruth Ann Foster is to talk about who she was to me; my knowledge of this extraordinary woman is necessarily mediated by my interaction with her. Mine is one story, among countless others, that reflects the impact of a woman who was passionate in her devotion to Christ, relentless in her pursuit of truth, patient in suffering, selfless in her dedication to those she loved—her family, colleagues, students—and compassionate in her concern for a lost world and for the church that ministers to it.

I came to Truett Seminary in January 2001. At that point, classes still met at First Baptist Church in Waco, and that was where I met Dr. Foster. In December 2000, I had graduated with a degree in computer engineering from an institution that offered little along the lines of religious studies. Needless to say, I felt vastly unprepared to begin a master's degree in theology. Fortunately, students who had come to Truett before me had convinced the faculty that introductory courses would be prudent. So, I found myself in Dr. Foster's Introduction to the Christian Scriptures class.

I could never have anticipated what this first semester would mean to my faith and to my understanding of the Bible. Of all the classroom memories I have of Dr. Foster, many of the most formative come from this initial experience. Though I learned more about the Bible in her later classes, I learned more about myself in this introductory class. I know this was true of many of her students. That was the way she taught the Scriptures. She knew that before we could read

the Bible, we had to understand how the Bible had been read to us and for us; before we could read the Bible, we had to be prepared for what we would find there. Whether she was giving her famous "Adam the Wimp" lecture or questioning how someone with a dossier like David's could be called a man after God's own heart, she was constantly challenging us to ask the questions that the text demanded, to eschew pious pleasantries and engage the rugged reality of the biblical landscape.

Her approach was one that unflinchingly fought for truth while it compassionately nurtured those confronted with that truth.

But Dr. Foster also realized that this process was not an easy one; she knew the pain that often accompanied growth. Her approach was one that unflinchingly fought for truth while it compassionately nurtured those confronted with that truth. She often shared with her Introduction classes the story of finding her college roommate in the fetal position after she had realized that no one has the original manuscripts of the biblical texts. She made it clear that we did not have to don a façade of erudite sophistication, pretending that everything we learned was entirely within our realm of expectations. We were free to rail against the enigmas of Scripture, to weep over the atrocities of Scripture, and even to laugh with the joys of Scripture.

It was, in fact, laughter that was one of the hallmarks of Dr. Foster's classroom. She had known many Christians who had taken themselves all too seriously, and she was determined not to be one of them. As I consider my fondest memories of Dr. Foster, most of them involve laughter. Once, in her Greek Readings class, we were discussing Nathanael's question: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46) Knowing that my undergraduate degree was from Texas A&M University, she quipped, "This would be like someone today saying, 'Can anything good come out of College Station?'" She shot me a sidelong glance, and we all laughed. She was never afraid to bring levity to the classroom.

At Dr. Foster's funeral, David Garland read from the Greek New Testament that he had found in her office. He commented that the Bible was falling apart from use. As I had the opportunity to study with Dr. Foster and later to work as her assistant, I often saw her using this

copy of the Scriptures. What Dr. Garland did not mention was that there was one page in particular that had completely released from the binding of the Bible. This one page had been read and studied so often that she had to be careful lest she lose it as she took the Bible wherever she was going. To many who know her, it will be no surprise that this leaf was the first page of the gospel of John. The Prologue to John (John 1:1-18) was easily one of her favorite passages of Scripture. She once commented that if all the literature of the world were to be destroyed and she could choose only one text to save, she would save the Prologue to John.

What was it about this passage that held such sway over her? She often noted the literary styling of this passage, the way that the language was so intricately fashioned. She also admired the way in which the Prologue interwove hypostatic constructs of Middle Judaism—the voice of God, wisdom, *Shekinah* glory—to portray Jesus as the fulfillment of Jewish expectations. But her attraction to this passage was much more than merely aesthetic. She saw in this passage the hope of the Christian faith: the assurance that the Word *had* become flesh and dwelt among us, and from that one who was with God in the beginning we all continue to receive grace upon grace. The incarnation was what really drew Dr. Foster to the Prologue.

She saw in the Prologue the hope of the Christian faith: the assurance that the Word had become flesh and dwelt among us, and from that one who was with God in the beginning we all continue to receive grace upon grace.

Of course, one cannot spend as much time with a text as Dr. Foster did with the Prologue and remain unchanged. The incarnation became for her not a lofty theological concept, but a way of life. Her ministry among her students was *incarnational*; she understood that she could teach each day without touching the lives of her students, but she chose instead to give of herself in such a way that those around her could not but be changed. Dr. Foster did not teach because it was her job; she taught because it was her calling. She was called to live the love of God among the Truett Seminary family, and she fulfilled that calling with grace and dignity. She expected

nothing less of her students. She knew that the work of the church had to be rooted in the incarnation; God had drawn near to an injured world in the person of Christ Jesus, and we were to be the enfleshed manifestation of his kingdom in that world.

As a student in her class, I recognized the devotion that she had to her students and colleagues, and I knew that she was often quite ill, but I never realized how much she sacrificed just to be at the seminary each day. Only after I started working as her assistant did I begin to realize how much pain she often was in and how tired and stressed her physical body really was. When I worked with her, I saw a remarkable woman whose vibrant spirit and will to serve were so often at odds with her physical limitations. She would push herself so hard during the week that she sometimes spent the whole weekend in bed recovering. Even so, when she had to miss class, she considered it more of an inconvenience to her students than to herself. Her selfless commitment to others was unparalleled.

When I decided to pursue a doctorate in biblical studies, I could not have asked for a better advocate than Dr. Foster. She was fiercely supportive of me, as she was of all her students. She believed in those whom she had taught; she trusted that we could and would make a difference in the world. I never realized how confident she was in my abilities until she asked me to teach with her during what would be her final semester at Truett. I was astounded at the opportunity she gave me to teach alongside her.

As I prepared for the beginning of the semester, self-doubt hung over me like a cloud, but she assured me that I was up to the task. Finally, as the first day of classes drew near, I began to feel comfortable in my academic ability to lead her classes when she was not able to be there. But when the first day of classes came, I was in for another wave of self-doubt. As one of the students raised a question about his church, it suddenly occurred to me that these classes were far more than academic: we were preparing students for ministry. Once again, I felt inadequate, and once again Dr. Foster calmed my fears. Just as in my first semester at seminary, so now she was there to encourage, support, and guide. She believed in the students who came out of Truett Seminary.

That semester was such a blessing. She constantly worried that she was calling on my assistance too much, that I was being overworked, but I saw an opportunity to learn even more from a woman who had taught me so much already. About halfway through the semester, she called me into her office and asked me to sit down. I was no stranger to sitting in her office and conversing, but this time was clearly different; usually, it was I who would ask if I could sit and talk.

She wanted to tell me the prognosis that the doctors had given her. The cancer was terminal; she probably did not have more than a year to live. The news was devastating. But she persevered; she did not let her physical woes crush her spirit. In a fashion that was typical for her, she would even joke about her own funeral arrangements. For a while, she considered cremation, and she suggested that we could put her ashes in the courtyard of the seminary and perhaps plant a tree over them. She mentioned that to her lawyer once, and he suggested that only a nut tree would be fitting. Ever quick of wit, she replied, "I think a dateless palm would be more appropriate."

Where does one begin in writing a remembrance of a beloved teacher, mentor, colleague, and friend? I only had the blessing of knowing Ruth Ann Foster for five and a half years, and that feels far too short a time. I am sure, though, that those who knew her far longer than I still wish for more time with her. Fifty-nine years is far too short a life for someone who offered so much. Her role in the early days of Truett Seminary cannot be forgotten, but her role in the lives of her loved ones *will* not be forgotten. Even now as I write these closing lines, tears well up once again in my eyes.

I weep not for Dr. Foster. She no longer suffers, she no longer endures the hardship of this world, and for that I rejoice. I weep, instead, for we who are left behind. We have lost a friend, a daughter, a sister, a colleague, a teacher. I can find no words more fitting than those spoken by Dr. Hulitt Gloer at Dr. Foster's funeral: "We have had a saint among us."

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Hero

Feather Boas, Leather Whips, and Lunch at Chili's

COURTNEY ANN LYONS

Any reflection on Dr. Foster, I think, must begin with stories. Tales of Ruth Ann Foster are in no short supply. Upon hearing of her death, I spent most of the following days savoring memories that came flooding back. There aren't enough pages to share every story, but the following are some of my favorites featuring her.

Dr. Foster taught my Introduction to Christian Scriptures class. Our class had about five to ten students with dynamic, humor-driven personalities. Picture, if you will, the combination of all of us with her. I remember one day we were talking about death, specifically, about why young people die. Dr. Foster quipped that when she was a girl, some in her church would tell her that God plucks the prettiest flowers first, and that's why babies die. Cliff Reeves joked back that if that were true, then God would have plucked him first. She started laughing immediately and corrected him: "If God plucked the prettiest flowers first, he would have plucked Courtney first." She had a knack for shock-value, those unexpected zingers that you don't forget.

Anyone who has ever taken a class with Dr. Foster knows to bundle up. She usually kept classrooms in the mid to upper 60s, even in the winter. Yolande Chatman and I used to bring big winter coats to put on in the middle of class to tease her about how cold it was. About the time we had put on our coats and gloves, she would stop to giggle, and she'd turn up the temperature a degree or two. In her office, though, she didn't budge on the temperature. She had posted a sign on her filing cabinet declaring her office the official Truett Seminary meat locker.

I still remember my first time in Dr. Foster's office. She had all of her students meet with her individually to get to know them. We had been talking for a few minutes when I noticed the whips hanging behind the door. She told me how students had given her the whips because she would playfully threaten to throw things at them if they made silly comments in class, and all we could do was laugh together. I noticed that all of her gag gifts had been "manly" gag gifts. I asked if she'd ever received a "girly" gag gift, and she said she hadn't. My mission was clear! At our final exam for that class, I brought her a tiara, a purple feather boa, and a CD of what I call "Boa Music."[1] She laughed so hard that I had actually gotten her a "girly" gag gift, and she wore the boa through our entire exam!

When I first arrived at Truett, I was a bit naïve. Thinking back on some of her comments during those days, I'm sure Dr. Foster sensed my rookie status. The Preacher of the Day during my first year at Truett was Julie Pennington-Russell. (At the time, I was not comfortable with the idea of women as pastors.) Hearing Julie preach in addition to speaking with her some throughout the day left me with questions about women in ministry. Dr. Foster agreed to meet with me to talk through the controversial passages in the Bible that address women in ministry. She met with me for several hours, talking through different interpretations and showing me how to see the overall message of Scripture rather than focusing on proof-texts. Dr. Foster's willingness to talk with me about such a tense issue drew me to her.

We started meeting together more often, either over brown-bag lunches in her office, or she'd take me out to Chili's (she never would let me pay). Over lunch, we'd share our stories with each other. Sometimes, we'd open up with one another about struggles or challenges we were facing. She was such a good encourager. She would speak tenderly to my struggle, but she would speak authoritatively to my responsibility to live an authentic Christian life in spite of the struggle. "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen," she would say.

Our student-teacher relationship had become a friendship. Most days, I would stop in her office for a quick hug on my way to and from classes. She drank Caffeine-Free Diet Dr. Pepper, and I drink Diet Dr. Pepper; she would tease that I was her, but with energy. We both were big fans of NBC's "American Dreams." Every Sunday night after the show, Dr. Foster, Dorothy Terry (an administrative assistant at Truett), and I would email each other about the episode and what we wished would happen. The summer after my first year, I brought her a magnet of St. Liberata (the patron saint of protection from unwanted husbands or suitors) from Christ of the Desert Monastery in Abiquiu, NM, which she put by her desk. I remember calling her the night I got

engaged. She had such joy over two of her students "getting hitched," as she said. During a painful experience at a church where I'd been serving, I would call her often for advice on how to be a faithful minister in those circumstances. Usually, I would be crying too hard to ask my question. She'd listen to me cry, sometimes even cry with me, and then she'd remind me that God sustains, provides, and is faithful. She would challenge me to complete the task with integrity.

She would speak tenderly to my struggle, but she would speak authoritatively to my responsibility to live an authentic Christian life in spite of the struggle.

Dr. Foster was a determined woman. She wasn't scared to be a pioneer, to blaze a new trail for what is right. She was meticulous about her academic studies. She loved to laugh. She could articulate exactly what she was thinking. She knew what it meant to be a friend. I always felt an affinity with her in that our personalities are similar, and she was a particularly kindred spirit to me. I hope to emulate her commitment, excellence, and faithfulness.

Dr. Foster didn't just teach me facts, though she certainly did teach me plenty of those. She taught me how to live. Don't be afraid of who you are. Don't be afraid to follow God's call for your life. Don't let stumbling blocks prevent you from doing what God has called you to do. Never stop learning. Invest in the community of the body of Christ. Mentor young leaders. Ask for help from others when you are in need. Be an example to others and treasure the examples around you. Don't take yourself so seriously that you forget to laugh. Trust that God is good, even when life makes no sense. Take time to heal, but don't let any wound keep you from doing God's work. Love boldly. Preach faithfully. Study God's Word humbly. Think in terms of God's kingdom. Minister fearlessly. Pray always.

Before I met Dr. Foster, I was convinced that the most I could do for the kingdom was to support a man who was doing God's work. She helped me learn to read the Bible for what it is actually saying, and not just related to women. She helped me understand that we are *all* called to be disciple-makers, to follow where God is leading us to go, and to be God's people. We are *all* called, and we are *all* responsible.

Whether minister or laity, man or woman, rich or poor, old or young, we are *all* called to follow Jesus faithfully where we are. Because of Dr. Foster, I have experienced God in relationship with me and at work in me in a completely new, liberating, and wonderful way.

Though it may sound trite or cliché, Dr. Foster is my hero. In every sense of that word, she is my hero. She had incredible strength through seemingly insurmountable obstacles. She demonstrated excellence academically and in her character. Her sense of humor was creative and quick. Her dedication to her students and to the quality of her teaching makes her the kind of professor you have only once in a lifetime, if you are lucky. Throughout her illness, she was a model of humility, patience, and faith. I have thought of her funeral service as her final liturgy, and it could not have been more beautiful or more inspiring to those who knew her. She was the kind of woman I hope to be. She is my hero.

The thing about Dr. Foster is that she never tried to be anyone's hero. I don't think she wanted anyone to see her as a hero. I think she wanted her students to see the heroes in themselves. Everything she did was done in order to equip us for our ministries. She sought to challenge us, to push us, and to love us in the best way, not necessarily in the most comfortable way. She was a mobilizer: she mobilized her students to follow God as disciples and as ministers. She empowered her students to be the hands and feet of God in every aspect of our lives. She was a hero and a hero-maker.

When I miss Dr. Foster, I remember her life. I remember her heroism. At her funeral, we celebrated her life with Frederick Buechner's words: "When you remember me, it means that you have carried something of who I am with you, that I have left some mark of who I am on who you are. It means that you can summon me back to your mind even though countless years and miles may stand between us. It means that if we meet again, you will know me. It means that even after I die, you can still see my face and hear my voice and speak to me in your heart. For as long as you remember me, I am never entirely lost."[2] I will always remember how Dr. Foster taught me to see

She sought to challenge us, to push us, and to love us in the best way, not necessarily in the most comfortable way.

greatness within myself. And as I continue to ponder her words, I find she is teaching me still....

COURTNEY ANN LYONS
is a native of Arlington, TX, and will complete her M.Div. with a concentration in theology in May 2007. She is currently the youth pastor at First Baptist Church of Marlin, TX. After graduation, she plans to pursue doctoral studies in practical theology. She has trained as a competitive figure skater for fifteen years. She is married to Victor Lyons, a Truett student who also serves at First Baptist Church, Marlin. She may be contacted at Courtney_Lyons@baylor.edu.

Notes

1. The "Boa Music" CD featured, among others, "Feelin' Good" by Michael Buble, "Overture / All That Jazz" from *Chicago*, "Que Sera, Sera" by Doris Day, "You Make Me Feel So Young" by Frank Sinatra, "I Got Rhythm" by Ethel Merman, "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" by Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell, "Save the Last Dance for Me" by Michael Buble, "Hero" by Mariah Carey, "Fever" by Peggy Lee, "Mack the Knife" by Bobby Darin, and "Smile" by Barbara Streisand.
2. Frederick Buechner, *Listening to Your Life: Daily Meditations with Frederick Buechner* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992), 14.

The Kenotic Trinity

Critical Paradigm for Missiology, Ecclesiology, and Theology

CHRIS MOORE

Martin Luther asserted years ago that only a theology of the cross can serve as the basis for a truly Christian theology. This article is an attempt to sketch briefly what the triune God, the mission of God, and the church would look like if the cross were stringently applied to theological reflection. It is the author's belief that an understanding of the triune God as essentially kenotic love would move the church out into a mission of humble service and love that is shaped by the everlasting life of Jesus Christ.

IN WHAT NAME IS THE MISSION of the church carried out? While an initial answer may come quickly, the historical activities labeled "missions" have often failed to be activities that can be rightfully associated with the name of Jesus Christ. While numerous commendable tasks have been undertaken in the name of Christ, they have often failed to be carried out in the ethic of their Lord. In the name of Christ wars have been waged, nations put to the sword, families ripped apart, conversion forced upon the unwilling, physical and social ills ignored, and minority groups have had their dignity denied and status stripped because they were different from the ruling class. In the name of Christ, the proclaimers of faith have assaulted every culture except their own, labeling them corrupted and pagan. In the name of Jesus, crusades

have been launched by "God-fearing" believers to suppress "infidels." Aggression, force, and socio-political dominance arising from a Christendom[1] paradigm have marred the presence of Christ within the church and its mission. In light of such a legacy, the question must again be asked: In what name is the carrying out of mission to be done?

De Deo Uno – The False God

The history of aggression, domination, and coercion in mission stands in direct contradiction to the image of the crucified Christ. What then is the source of this false history of oppression? The God who hides behind the atrocities committed in the name of missions is God *per se*, the lofty philosophical God of strict monotheism. The unitarian God of philosophical monotheism is the absolute monarch who reigns unquestioned above and opposed to the created order. The nature of the divine One who remains forever apart from the created order is, therefore, describable only in stark contrast to creation: where creation is flawed, God is metaphysically and morally perfect; where creation is limited by death, the One is eternal and immortal; and where creation lives in the fluxes and pressures of history, the eternal Monarch is immutable and impassable.[2] This God is God over and against creation, against temporality, against change, and against love. Strict philosophical monotheism demands a God imbued with unassailable dignity and glory, One due abject fear and obedience.

The God constructed in this system is a deity whose dignity precludes the dignity of the other. There is no possibility for equality or reciprocity with the only perfect being. Therefore, the One has only subordinates. The divine dignity allows only a subordinate and inferior *Logos*, and a subordinate king who rules a subordinate people. A similar formulation of the relationship between divinity and political power is testified to in the great empires of history. An unbending hierarchy under-girded the sadistic Roman and National Socialist worlds and was the foundation from which the Roman emperor and German Führer claimed to be the image and embodiment of the universal monarch.[3] Historically, strict philosophical monotheism has not only given support for the rule of totalitarian political regimes, but also to the subordination of "lesser" family members, subordination of the "lesser" members of the faithful community, and subordination of the "backward" groups who are encountered in mission.[4] Unchecked hierarchy leads inevitably to subordination and oppression.

To ensure the proper ordering of society, the proper construction of the high deity is needed. The person of the male king and the societal understandings of the proper order are gathered and

projected onto an idea called God, the divine One. This One is the almighty king-become-"Father." Thus constructed, the Father then reciprocally validates the established system of authority. The faithful male king is affirmed by this system as the closest approximation of the *imago Dei*; then God's male follower, as the image-bearer, is to be obeyed as the divine One is obeyed. Once the divine hierarchy of God>king>male>lesser beings is established, the social, political, and religious domination of "inferior" humans (wives, women, children, and those who adhere to divergent views of faith) has an ontological and cosmological foundation.[5] The universal hierarchy, which finds its source in the king-become-divine-One, commands submission of the divergent and relegates them to a life of abject servitude. This theology of perfect glory in the name of maintaining sacred order eliminates women from occupying a significant role in politics or faith, and children become superfluous.

The entitlement and power that is engendered by being made in the image of the apathetic Monarch has far reaching effects. In fact, this divine seal of approval—the divine "Yes"—has often led to the assurance that the authority figures (clerics, politicians, fathers, etc.) can promote this faith of the male dictator-become-God through evangelical violence. Those outside the divinely sanctioned order are treated even worse than the lesser beings within the divine order and are oppressed, "converted" at the point of a sword, or simply murdered. The faithful conquerors of strict unitary monotheism then sharply segregate themselves from the aberrant conquered groups in the name of the "Father," who cannot bear for his image to be sullied or his order to be broken. There can be no mingling of the righteous and unrighteous, nor table fellowship between the pure and impure.[6] Domination and violence are often the outworking of the glory of the dictator-become-God. This monarchical theology without doubt is a theology of glory, but it attests to an anthropocentric view of glory which is retrogressed upon divinity. Glory, thusly defined, is then declared to reside in the ruling classes and used to launch crusades

Christian monarchical theology makes the same mistake of which Luther accused his scholastic enemies: it is a theology of glory that "calls evil good and good evil."

against and marginalize the divergent, who dare to defy the structures laid out by the king-become-God. This anthropocentric, kingly theology lends itself strongly, and perhaps inevitably, to a hermeneutic of oppression which only serves to bring its adherents back to the ruling-class-become-God's own definitions of glory, faith, and mission.

A Proposed Methodological Turn

Destruction, violence, and oppression in the name of the Abba of Christ are unacceptable. The foundation for this false image of God is a faulty methodology. It begins with philosophical and natural theology and then reconfigures the Spirit, Son, and Father into preconceived categories. Christian monarchical theology makes the same mistake of which Luther accused his scholastic enemies: it is a theology of glory that "calls evil good and good evil."[7] It replaces theology and Christ with Greek philosophy, metaphysics, and the projections of its writer's aspiration and dominating tendencies on the Godhead. Monarchical theology is fostered and relied upon by the ruling class philosophy and kingly theology that create a universal God *per se*, the dictator deity who validates the establishment's political, religious, and social ordering. Only when society has been properly unified and power firmly grasped by the human authorities does this theology begin to broach the portions of the revealed God that meet preconceived categories of glory. The divine monarch, the dictator-become-God who is what the world is not, can only be *totaliter aliter* (wholly other) and stand in unmoved power above and against all creation. As Karl Barth discovered in his later attempts to develop a distinctively Christian theology, any discussion of God who is only *totaliter aliter*, or exists solely as judge, fails to reflect the revealed God in Jesus Christ. The methodological foundation necessarily constructs nothing more than a distortion—a corrupt, power hungry idol of a pagan deity.[8] *De Deo Uno* (The One God) is the speculative work of strict philosophical monotheism, which serves to remind that the One can have no equal. The One is always the isolated One, who can-

No other theological methodology than the one that finds its genesis in the passionately suffering God in Jesus should be considered authentically Christian.

not enter into trinitarian relationship, and who of necessity remains forever aloof and domineering.[9] Without a true possibility of the One having an equal, the Trinity must be reinterpreted along Sebellian or Arian lines. Strict metaphysical unitarian doctrine therefore must neglect or ignore the condescension of Christ crucified, the centerpiece of Christian faith and theology.

A truly Christian theology and mission must deny the idol of human authority and look elsewhere for its source. Christian theology cannot begin with God *per se*. It is forced to see the God who remains forever *totaliter aliter* as an idol and turn to the living and true God revealed in Christ Jesus. Christian theology must, therefore, begin where the Godhead is revealed to humanity—with the crucified Christ. Christian theology is necessarily a theology of the cross, an explication of glory found in suffering and self-emptying (*kenosis*). No other theological methodology than the one that finds its genesis in the passionately suffering God in Jesus should be considered authentically Christian. But what will be the form of theology, ecclesiology, and missiology in light of the crucified God? And will the church let the strange truth of a crucified Lord guide its living?

Christ – The Glory of God Revealed in Passionate Suffering

Jesus affirms that no one knows God except as God is revealed to him or her, by saying that no one "know[s] the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him" (Matt 11:27). John Calvin affirms this principle, saying "that in seeking God, miserable men do not rise above themselves as they should, but measure him by the yardstick of their own carnal stupidity, and...fly off into empty speculation."[10] Humankind, as irretrievably sinful and broken, has no ability of its own to construct a doctrine of God that does not amount to the false king-become-God. Therefore, Christ is the only possible starting point in the process of constructing a doctrine of God.

Christ does for humanity what it could not do of its own accord: he exegetes the divine nature and lays bare the mystery of the trinitarian nature of God for the sake of the redemption of humanity.[11] The history of Jesus Christ is then necessarily the only foundation of a truly Christian theology, as Jesus alone is the "icon of the invisible God" who dwells in unapproachable loftiness (Col 1:15). Any understanding of God as an overriding power, a never-ceasing judge, or a divine dictator fails simply because it does not begin with what can be known most fully about God, the divine nature in the person of Jesus Christ. Thus, any discussion of the Christian God necessarily begins with the

multiplicity of divine "persons,"[12] with the Father and the Son, united in other-oriented love.

When correctly constructed, the doctrine of the Trinity finds its foundation in the delineation of the mystery of God as it is revealed in the economy (*oikonomia*) of salvation, particularly in Jesus Christ and the Abba that Christ proclaimed. The revelation of the Son and the Father of the Son therefore deconstructs any strict hierarchical unitary monotheism. Because God is only known in the *oikonomia*, it then is the foundation and measure of any discussion of God.[13] God *ad intra* cannot be known or speculated about, except as Jesus Christ has revealed divinity *ad extra*.[14]

The shape of Christ's divinity reveals to both the faithful and the needful world the true character of divinity, a divinity that contradicts rather than upholds the corruptions of creation and society.

The revelation of God in Christ is at its core the revelation of a crucified God of *kenotic* condescension. Paul affirms this fact in his appropriation of what is commonly believed to be an early Christian hymn in Philippians. Here he asserts that Jesus, "who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied [*ekenōsen*] himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross" (2:6-8).[15] For the sake of the coming kingdom and alienated creation, Christ laid aside the divine prerogative to sit in judgment and entered into the ebb and flow of history and human life. The exact nature of Christ's *kenosis* has been greatly debated, with proposals ranging from simply a laying aside of divine prestige, to laying aside particular attributes (omniscience, omnipotence, etc.), to a total divestment of divinity. The *kenosis* may best be understood within the framework of Christ's exemplary life. Jesus' messianic work is not to be seen solely through lenses of atonement for the corrupted creation, but also through the lenses of modeling the messianic faith to all who would follow. His life pointed creation back to the freedom of true life. Along these lines, *kenosis* functioned to allow Jesus to depend fully on the movement of the Spirit in his life

as he sought the desires of his Abba. Despite the lack of a definitive statement of what Christ's *kenosis* fully entailed, it can tentatively—but accurately—be asserted that the traditional Greek metaphysical categories do not find support in the divinity of Christ Jesus. Christ's divinity evidences a severe lack in the traditional Greek metaphysical categories. The earthly Christ, in his inability to do deeds of power in Nazareth due to a human lack of belief, demonstrates at least an economical lack of classical omnipotence (Mark 6:1-6); in his failure to know the date of his *parousia* fails to be omniscient (Mark 13:32); and in his very embodiment destroys the Greek category of omnipresence.

The church has endeavored from early in its existence to mute or ignore what it regarded as an unbecoming divinity in the life of Jesus Christ. The contextual Neo-Platonic underpinnings of the early apologists and church fathers could not fully allow for the divine dignity to be disgraced by the scandal of a *kenotic* and disgraced deity nailed to a cross. *Kenotic* divinity destroys false images of despot-become-God and the heretical ordering of society in which the poor exist for the wealthy. The shape of Christ's divinity reveals to both the faithful and the needful world the true character of divinity, a divinity that contradicts rather than upholds the corruptions of creation and society. Despite every attempt to reinterpret Christ and Christ's divinity along more authoritarian philosophical lines, there remains within the very divine nature of the *Logos* a *kenotic* element which seeks the good of the other above its own privilege. This *kenotic* element finds its *telos* in the crucifixion.

The divine Son's *kenosis* was an intentional act for the purpose of incarnating the eschatological kingdom of God in the midst of a sinful and corrupt creation (Matt 6:10).[16] Jesus was "sent" (John 3:34; 4:34) and willingly "came" (Matt 5:17) to proclaim and manifest the kingdom of his Abba. With the proclamation of the in-breaking kingdom, Jesus began his earthly ministry, declaring, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news" (Mark 1:15). The incarnation and proclamation of the kingdom that frees bound creation were not peripheral to Jesus' ministry, but its very center. In the words and deeds of the carpenter from Nazareth, God was shattering the corrupted order and offering enslaved humanity freedom. Catherine Mowry LaCugna asserts that Jesus "not only announces God's rule, he himself lives it, embodies it, and therefore is the criterion for the conclusions we draw about the rule of God's life."[17]

The embodied eschatological kingdom, then, should be viewed as the realm where God's rule is realized as a *prolepsis* of the coming consummation breaking into history. In this *prolepsis* sins are forgiven,

reconciliation is offered, the poor are raised up, and life is freely and authentically lived. Thus, the reign of the Abba of Christ Jesus serves as the criterion of theological, political, and social judgment against the oppressive kingdoms of the king-become-God. The kingdom of Jesus' Abba is marked in every way by the love of Christ for the Father. The kingdom is thus the kingdom of freedom and overwhelming love which seeks the inclusion of all people (2 Pet 3:9; 1 Tim 2:4).

Jesus on the cross—the crucified God, the self-emptying Son—puts an end to any theology claiming to be Christian that does not have at its core the Jesus who is passionately for the other, even to the point of death.

The love of the divine Persons creates a kingdom that, as Paul declares, destroys the dividing walls between Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free, poor and wealthy (Gal 3:28). In the kingdom of Jesus' Abba, estranged humanity is offered peace/reconciliation with God (John 1:12-13) and humanity (Matt 5:9; 5:21-25; 5:43-48), women are moved from the periphery of society to the status of disciple (Luke 10:39),[18] sinners and tax collectors are identified with and accepted at table fellowship, and the physically and spiritually oppressed are liberated. In Jesus' words, deeds, and desires, it becomes painfully obvious that the kingdom of the God-become-human stands in sharp contrast to the kingdom of the solitary despot-become-God.[19] Preferential treatment for the social elite, dehumanizing social structures, and promotion of the self drive the empires of the world, but to these idols Jesus offers the divine "No." These false social, theological, and political idols are then contradicted by Jesus' other-oriented love for the outcast, acceptance and renewal of sinners, and laying aside of his own royal status for those who are bereft of love and status.

Nowhere are the royal *kenosis* and the shape of the kingdom of Christ and his Abba more clearly demarcated from the shape of worldly kingdoms than in Christ's willingness to suffer humiliation and crucifixion as a political criminal. Jesus' death as a political revolutionary is attested to in each of the gospel passion accounts with the sign

declaring him "Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews" nailed above his head (Matt 27:37; Mark 15:25; Luke 23:38; John 14:19). The shape of the kingdom and Jesus' passion for the desires of his Abba, expressed in his fellowship with the poor and the outcast, grated against the Jewish authorities' sensibilities and the Roman ruler's authority.[20] The unmoved Roman God and his ordained ruling class could not allow Jesus to invert its value systems. Jesus' kingdom freed humanity, offered equality, prompted self-sacrifice from those in power, and called into question the establishment's very existence, which then crucified the man of peace in the name of Roman peace. On the cross the Son identified and suffered with and for all of creation, which cries out of bondage for release and redemption (Rom 8:21-23). Jesus' cries from the cross are the cries of the oppressed, the poor, and those cut off from the Abba: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Ps 22:1; Mark 15:34). Christ finished his *kenotic* ministry with the ultimate self-denial: he suffered and died to complete the messianic ministry of reconciling all of creation to his Abba (Eph 1:10).

Jesus both gave himself up to and was delivered up by his Abba for the sake of humanity and the entirety of the cosmos. The crucifixion of the Son and his experience of Godforsakenness on the cross bring the experiences of suffering, rejection, and death within the experience of divinity. Jesus' cries of abandonment from the cross and desolation in the grave open his other-oriented Lordship and his fellowship with his Abba to all humanity who suffer under the burden of sin and death. Those who respond to the invitation are not accepted as inferiors, but instead as brothers and sisters of the *kenotic* Lord Jesus (Mark 3:34-35) and as daughters and sons of his Abba.[21] Jesus on the cross—the crucified God, the self-emptying Son —puts an end to any theology claiming to be Christian that does not have at its core the Jesus who is passionately for the other, even to the point of death.[22] The crucified Jesus, the disgraced God-become-human, is the end of all divine support for violent and oppressive systems and an end to any understanding of a God of compulsion.

The Father of the Son – The Passionate God

Christ's Abba is revealed in the history of the passionately suffering Son as the passionately suffering God. The Son is the revealer of his Abba, and the revelation of the Son as such necessitates the Father. Fatherhood is by nature a relational term; however, this relationship can only be applied to the Son.[23] There are two errors that can be made in regard to the fatherhood of God. The first is to think of the Father as a solitary monad, the general Father of creation, of which the Son

is the highest manifestation. This runs the risk of ascribing to the Father a solitary and corrupt concept of "maleness" and creating an idol that legitimates the over-lordship of males-become-Gods over all creation, and it forces a reinterpretation of Christ along Arian lines.[24] The other mistake is to project upon the Father an anthropomorphic view of the monarchical *paterfamilias*. The result of this mistake is viewing the divine essence manifest solely in over-lordship, which condones oppression and suppression of the "lesser" members of society.

In the Son's passion for the sake of others, the Father is revealed as the God who suffers in the suffering of others.

The Father is not the Father of creation. Accordingly, there is no natural theology that testifies to the Father of the Son. However, the *oikonomia* reveals the Father as the Father of the Son. The Father is the invisible God of whom Jesus in his embodiment, and proclamation of the kingdom of freedom is the icon. The person and mission of Christ reveals a Father who is the merciful, loving, and forgiving God who rejoices when the prodigal returns home.[25] If Christ is the image of the Father, then the Father cannot be conceived of in terms of a wrathful monarch who must be appeased and who therefore punished the innocent Christ to his divine delight. Jesus reveals that the Father loves the Son and the Son returns that love. The fundamental relationship between Father and Son is one of self-giving love (1 John 4:16).

The divine *kenotic* love moves the Father to send the Son only to suffer his loss and moves the Son to come willingly to suffer and die "for us" (Rom 5:8). In the Son's passion for the sake of others, the Father is revealed as the God who suffers in the suffering of others. The Father suffers in the giving up of the Son, in the suffering and death of the Beloved, and for the beloved creation. The passion of the Son is the image of the suffering of the invisible Father on behalf of creation. The atonement is thus a trinitarian event. It involves not only the suffering of the Son to reconcile lost humanity, but also the Father's divestment of divine *apatheia* so as to be reconciled to redeemed creation. The suffering of the Father and the Son stretches and opens the very center of divine love up to those suffering as "Godforsaken" at the margins of society. If the Father did not suffer along with the Son, the opening of the divine fellowship to the other could not be effected, and the Father

would remain forever apart from the world.[26] As no strong distinctions can be established between Father and Son, the life of Christ reveals a *kenotic* Father whose glory is found in passionate suffering for a rebellious creation. The Father, too, removed the royal accoutrements and underwent *kenosis* for the sake of a rebellious creation and in order to usher in the eschatological kingdom of freedom.

The Father is eternally the Father of the Son, thus God is eternally relational. The Father is the Father only to the Son (and by extension to those in Christ), the Son is the Son only to the Father, and they operate eternally in the divine love. The kingdom of God that Jesus proclaimed is, therefore, not the divine monarchy of the single and domineering God, but one established in loving equality. The future kingdom of the Father and the Son is marked by a willingness to lay aside dignity for the sake of a broken creation. The kingdom being brought about by the Father and the Son is a kingdom of reciprocity between the two as they suffer in divine unity for the oppressed.[27]

The economic outworking of the Trinity reveals the Father and the Son equally as God, without differentiation of status within the Godhead (John 1:1-4, 14; Phil 2:6). The church fathers, in their struggles against the Sabellians and Arians, asserted what divinity meant in Christian terms by declaring the divine equality as an equality rising from the single *ousia* (essence). The Father's begetting of the Son out of the single divine *ousia* immediately establishes equality within the Godhead. The eternal mutuality within the Godhead thus denies the world an ontological foundation for enacting its oppression of the masses and its violence.[28] Even if the Neo-Platonic metaphysical foundation of *ousia* is to be rejected, the key insight that the divine Persons are eternally equal Persons is to be retained. The Father is not the divine male monarch who rules in over-lordship above the subordinate Son and the world, but is always eternally the self-giving co-ruler of the universe.

The future kingdom of the Father and the Son is marked by a willingness to lay aside dignity for the sake of a broken creation.

Despite the use of the masculine "Father," the God revealed as Abba transcends the categories of human gender. In fact, as the Council of Toledo declared in 675 C.E., the Father is, in the begetting of the Son, the maternal Father who bears the Son in the divine womb. The divine Lordship should, there-

fore, not be understood as an overriding monarchy, but instead as the eternal communion of maternal Father with the servant Son and the servant Son with the maternal Father.[29] John Polkinghorne accurately affirms that the Father should not be described using terms of domination, stating that the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ…can never be the Creator of a divine puppet theater."[30] He prefers to speak of the engendering Father who offers humanity true opportunity and true freedom. The communion of the divine Persons is one of open and *kenotic* love that offers itself in the divine sending/going of the Son to proclaim the kingdom in word, deed, and suffering. In its openness to the world, the breadth of the divine other-oriented love allows for fallen creation to return from death to life and to its rightful place within the divine love. The Father, like the Son, lives not primarily for the assertion of an anthropomorphic glory, but for the good of the other, even to the detriment of the divine "dignity." God's glory is revealed in suffering, and the wisdom of the world is shamed by suffering love (1 Cor 1:20-22). "God is love," and in this love, the Father of the Son and the Son of the Father move toward creation, bearing the eschatological newness.

The Spirit of Freedom – The One who Groans for Renewal

The Spirit is revealed as the creative Spirit of life. The Spirit primordially was present and active as creation was crafted (Gen 1:2), at the initiation of human life (Gen 2:7), in the empowering of political/military leaders (Judg 3:10; 6:34), and as the one who inspired prophetic utterance (Ezek 2:2; 3:12; Mic 3:8). The Spirit's full outpouring was also seen in ancient Israel as the sign of the fulfillment of its eschatological and apocalyptic hopes of restoration and the culmination of God's final reign (Joel 2:29). For this reason, the Spirit is accurately depicted from the beginning of the biblical narrative as the creative Spirit who creates true, overflowing, and empowered life.[31] The same Spirit marks the entire ministry of Jesus. The Spirit was active in the Son's conception (Matt 1:18; Luke 1:35), descended on Christ at his baptism (Matt 3:13; Mark 1:9; Luke 3:21), led Jesus into the wilderness and sustained him during temptation (Matt 4:1; Mark 1:9; Luke 4:1), and continued to empower Jesus' healing and exorcising ministry (Matt 12:28). Christ's ministry bore the stamp of the creative and life-giving Spirit, as his presence engendered new and true life (John 5:40; 6:33; 10:10).

The Spirit also bears the stamp of Jesus. In fact the Spirit can rightfully be called the Spirit of Christ (Acts 16:7; Phil 1:19). The Spirit, like the Son, stands eternally in relationship to the Father and evi-

dences in the Pentecost outpouring that she[32] is indeed the Person and power that leads, as Christ did and does, all creation towards its eschatological fulfillment in the freedom of the coming kingdom (Acts 2:1-36). This final eschatological kingdom is brought about by the continual working of the Spirit of God in the fluctuations of history.[33] The Spirit, in creating new and true life, allows through divine energies the renewal of humanity by tearing down the dividing walls between different groups and creating a single people who "in Christ" are neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, rich nor poor, superior nor subordinate. The Spirit creates communities that in their equality, freedom, and self-giving anticipate the shape of the coming eschatological kingdom of God. Thus, we are told that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor 3:8), and all those who participate in Christ via the call of the Spirit are here and now beginning to be remade into the newness of the eschatological creation.

As Christ suffered his cross, the Spirit of Christ exists in the midst of the groanings of a broken world and groans alongside of and in that which longs for complete redemption.

The Spirit is the power of the Son's ministry but should not be confused with an impersonal force. The Spirit is primarily, but not always, spoken of in personal terms. The personal nature of the Spirit is shown in the fact that the Spirit can be blasphemed against (Matt 12:31), lied to (Acts 5:3), and grieved (Eph 4:30). The Spirit teaches (Luke 12:12) and functions as advocate for the forsaken (John 14:26). Speaking of the Spirit as simply a power or in sub-human names like the "bond of love" fails to communicate the full personhood of the Spirit.[34]

The early formulation of orthodoxy found in the Nicene-Constantinople Creed affirms that the Spirit is not a type of power emanating from the Godhead, but "the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father [and the Son]; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified." Despite the lack of absolutely personal names for the Spirit, to speak of it in less than personal terms is to run the risk of reducing its equal status with the Father and Son and of falling into anti-Nicene heresy. The Spirit is the personal Lord, who is to be worshipped as co-equal to Father and Son. The personhood

of the fully personal Spirit *may* be best understood in feminine terms. The feminine gender of the Hebrew (*ruah*) and the Greek (*pnuema*) words for Spirit, and the Spirit's consistent portrayal in traditionally feminine images like comforter and advocate also lends support to viewing the Spirit as feminine. The Spirit's "birthing" of the eschatological communities of equality also points to a feminine tendency in the Spirit. However, the Spirit, like the Father and the Son, transcends human gender distinctions.[35]

It would be a mistake to view the Father or the Son as pure unadulterated power, and it would be a mistake to treat the Spirit in a like manner. The Spirit is as personal and self-abasing as the Father and the Son are, and like the other two divine Persons, suffers as the passionate God. The Holy Spirit also bears the mark of Christ in her suffering for the sake of fallen creation. As Christ suffered his cross, the Spirit of Christ exists in the midst of the groanings of a broken world and groans alongside of and in that which longs for complete redemption. In fact, there would be no redemption for the estranged and corrupted creation without the passionate entering of the Spirit into the world so as to open the divine community of love to humanity and all of the cosmos.[36] In the Spirit's outpouring and indwelling, she opens the divine relationship to creation. The Spirit and those she exists "in" are moved toward and into suffering creation. By indwelling a corrupted creation, the saved, and the marginal, the Spirit pulls all of creation back to its original freedom before God.[37] The Spirit, too, is *kenotic* at her very core.

The Triune God – Three and One

Constructing the doctrine of the Trinity begins not with metaphysical speculation but ultimately with the divine mystery as it has been revealed in the divine *oikonomia*, in the person of the *kenotic* Christ, the Father of the Son, and the grieved Holy Spirit. The broader Christian tradition has always affirmed that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Spirit, too, is God. It is to the God thrice revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who are equally divine, that Christian theology must turn to configure the trinitarian nature. Christian theology does not have initial recourse to abstract Greek or absolutist metaphysics, but only in a secondary manner to assist in the understanding of the God whose glory is revealed on a cross.[38] God is Trinity, therefore, as three divine Persons who exist eternally in relationship, one to another, and each for the other. The task for trinitarian theology is to delineate how the three revealed Persons are one, but not how the solitary One is three.

The beginning of the answer is found in the revelation of the divine

Persons being "in" and "of" one another. Jesus claims on three separate occasions that "I am in the Father, and the Father is in me" (John 10:38; 14:10, 11). In a similar fashion, the Spirit is "of" the Father (Matt 10:20), and the Spirit is "of" Jesus (Acts 16:7; Phil 1:19). The Spirit in turn fills Jesus and guides his ministry. The divine closeness is also manifest in the sending formulas throughout the Christian Scriptures. The Father sent the Son (John 6:57), the Father sends the Spirit of his Son (Gal 4:6), Jesus participates in the sending of the Spirit, but only in so far as Jesus is "in" the Father (John 15:26; 16:7), and the Spirit of the Father is responsible for the sending and incarnation of the Son (Matt 1:18; Luke 1:35).

To establish the distinct but equal nature of each of the three Persons, the doctrine of *perichoresis* (mutual indwelling) was proposed by John Damascene in the eighth century. The term *perichoresis* is often traced back to an ancient circular dance, and it refers to the eternal and reciprocal interplay of self-giving for the sake of the other within the Godhead. The image is one of three Persons of the Trinity existing eternally in a triune dance of love. Thus the Father gives all of what the Father has and is to the Son and the Spirit, except "Fatherhood"; the Son gives all that the Son has and is, except "Sonship," to the Spirit and the Father; and the Spirit gives all of what the Spirit has and is, except "Spiritation," to the Son and the Father.[39] They exist fully for and in one another, so that one cannot be conceived of correctly without reference to the other divine Persons.

Father, Son, and Spirit exist fully for and in one another, so that one cannot be conceived of correctly without reference to the other divine Persons.

Therefore, the language of the Father begetting the Son and the Father breathing out the Spirit serve not to portray a hierarchy in the Trinity, but to show the eternal dynamism within the Godhead in which each Person lives self-sacrificially in, unto, and for the others. That which connects the three Persons is then not a Platonic *ousia*, but mutual *kenotic* love. *Perichoresis* establishes how the three revealed Persons are one God.[40] The Spirit, Son, and Father are the depth of true *koinonia*, true communion, and as such they interpenetrate each other in love.[41] Thus by nature, "God is love" of the other and not the great divine egotist (1 John 4:26). The Trinity, unlike the societies of the

world which are united by power and the suppression of diversity, is united amidst the divine diversity by *kenotic* love. Triunity arises from this kenotic love which also moves God toward creation in the *missio Dei*. The divine mission begins with the creation and will not cease until the final eschatological kingdom of freedom has come.

The Missionary God – The Paradigm for Church and Mission

The *missio Dei*, the divine mission, stems from the *perichoretic* and *kenotic* nature of trinitarian love. This mission began to work itself out in the original act of creation. The reciprocal *kenotic* love between the Persons of the Godhead provides within the divine nature a legitimate other. The eternal presence of Father, Son, and Spirit in love provides a relational self-sufficiency within the Godhead and eliminates any need for a co-eternal creation, as per process theology. The trinitarian nature is therefore ultimately free for the good and creates without compulsion as an act of overflowing divine love.[42]

Only when God has withdrawn the divine omnipresence and created does the divine love once again overflow back into the created order to work out the divine omnipresence in a new manner.

While creation is an act of intense power, it is also an extreme act of self-limitation, of *kenosis*. The omnipresent God, when creating, must withdraw to allow room for a creation that is not God and give that creation the dignity of freedom, or else be the ultimate cause of sin and evil.[43] Only when God has withdrawn the divine omnipresence and created does the divine love once again overflow back into the created order to work out the divine omnipresence in a new manner.[44] Understood in this way, God is essentially love, desires love, and thus acts in love. Providence is thus interpreted to be God initiating, sustaining, and lovingly guiding creation to a point at which it can truly respond in the freedom of love. To this extent, creation is independent, not for the sake of freedom, but again because God, as the one who is ultimately free for the good, desires the free return of

love, which God alone makes possible. Indeed, it is free humanity that can by God's grace respond to God's love and is thus the bearer of the image of the God who is eternally love (Gen 1:26). The triune God out of self-abasing love creates a free world that is allowed, to a great degree, "to make itself."[45] To allow creation truly to return the divine love requires a *kenosis* within the Godhead of the divine prerogative to overrule creaturely choices *arbitrarily*.

Reciprocal love between humanity and God also entails the chance that the created could turn away from the love of the Creator. Therefore, the Creator, in fashioning a creation that can turn away, empties the divine possibility of remaining eternally apathetic to the fluxes of time and the cries of the oppressed. Creation was and is a self-limiting and suffering for Father, Son, and Spirit. The other-oriented, triune God does not stand aloof from fallen creation but enters into the corrupted creation to contradict its brokenness in the incarnation, Pentecost, and the Spirit's continual activity. The divine pathos has always been visible in God's regret over rebellious creation and the need to respond with punitive decisions (Gen 6:6, 7; Jer 42:10; 1 Sam 15:11; 1 Cor 21:15). The pathos of God is perhaps more definitely demonstrated in Yahweh's willingness to enter into covenant with a people who continually disgrace the *dignum Dei* and carry the divine name into the disgrace of exile.

However, the single strongest piece of evidence for the passionate nature of the triune God is the Passion of Christ. The Passion accounts portray a Son who both was sent and willingly came to creation to proclaim the kingdom of his Abba, the kingdom that frees enslaved humanity for the good by suffering humiliation and death. The revelation of Jesus as the focal point of the kingdom's coming is the tangible actualization of the *missio* in history.[46] In Jesus' passionate condescension to humanity, to our suffering and brokenness, the tri-personal God in a tangible way opens the divine love to rebellious humanity in order to effect the reconciliation of the created order and salvation to humanity trapped in the throes of sin and death. In Jesus, God moves out of God into humanity, and through *perichoresis*, all three Persons suffer for the sake of humanity.

The atoning suffering and death, however, are only part of the divine *kenosis* that seeks to liberate humanity and creation from everything that oppresses and degrades. In the Son's countercultural identification and table fellowship with sinners, tax-collectors, lepers, the ill, the demon-possessed, and even the Pharisees, Jesus shows the Godhead's championing of all humanity, and in so doing, establishes the kingdom of equality, reciprocity, and freedom for love.[47] By opening the divine and liberating love to sinners, outcasts, and even those

in power provided they willingly repent of their worldly rule, the Father, Son, and Spirit begin to call into existence the hoped-for eschatological new heaven and earth. Jesus' life and passion move all of creation toward that end (Eph 1:10), as well as open up via the Spirit the eschatological kingdom and community of freedom where all life is conformed to the other-oriented *kenotic* presence of Father, Son, and Spirit.[48]

The Church in the Trinity – the First Fruits of the Eschatological Newness

The outworking of the *missio Dei* is the eschatological first fruits of the coming kingdom of freedom, the corporate body of the church. The Spirit takes rebellious humanity, awakens it by grace, and renews the God-given ability of response. Those who submit to the call of God's prevenient grace and then become established within the reciprocating divine love become disciples of the crucified Christ and children of his Abba. The Spirit then begins to transform the disciples of Christ by the divine energies into participants in and signs of the divine self-sacrificing community. Those who are re-made "in our image," the image of the *kenotic* other-oriented Trinity, are taken directly into the divine love and mission. The church is not an entity unto itself, nor does it have its own mission; rather, it is an outworking of and continuing participant in the *missio Dei*. The root cause of the great failures of the church is its refusal to recognize the nature of the glory of the triune God and what the church is as it participates in the Trinity.[49]

The church is composed of those who are in the Trinity, who participate in the divine love and energies. The Trinity thus sets the shape, establishes the character, and provides the mission of the church. The Trinity not only provides the eschatological pattern of which the church's life is to be a *prolepsis*, but it also serves as a critical apparatus for the rebuke of false life, false mission, and false doctrine. The self-sacrificing Trinity thus discredits the promotion of the Christian *imperium* and the corresponding denial of the intrinsic worth of the adherents of other religions, as well as the demotion of the value of women and children in participating fully in the divine mission.[50] The church is the authentic foretaste of something tangible, something real, but exists primarily as a *prolepsis* of the shape of the coming kingdom. By the love of Christ and in the power of the Spirit, the church exists to point beyond its historically limited and provisional condition to the fulfilled eschatological community of the triune God. The church is the first fruits of the *kenotic* kingdom that desires all human beings to come to salvation in the crucified Son and to realize their status as beloved before the God who has suffered for them. This

kingdom cannot allow any ideology or hermeneutic that discredits or dissuades from the realness of the coming kingdom of the God who is eternally peace, harmony, equality, and other-orientation.

The disciples' place in Christ, via the power of the Spirit, takes believers into the center of the divine love. They are established as participants in the divine love that suffers for the world and are accordingly, by the Spirit, "transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor 3:18). There is no participation in Christ, or in the Godhead, that does not take the participant directly into the *missio Dei*. The church is only the body of Christ as it lives unto the *kenotic* lordship of Christ. The lordship of Christ, however, is not the lordship of the kingdoms of this world. Christ does not "lord it over" (Luke 22:25) his disciples, but rules from the midst of the anticipated kingdom as the firstborn brother of many sisters and brothers (Rom 8:29). Christ rules the church from its midst as the *kenotic* servant, thereby setting the image of leadership and lifestyle to which the Spirit is conforming the adopted children of the kingdom. Made up of those who are being conformed to the image of Christ, the church exists as a servant of the firstborn and the world to proclaim and participate in the same holistic liberation that includes both salvation and suffering for the oppressed by sin and society.

The church is not an entity unto itself, nor does it have its own mission; rather, it is an outworking of and continuing participant in the missio Dei.

As the church is constituted in Christ and inside the trinitarian love, it has as its image the *kenotic* and *perichoretic* unity amidst diversity and loving passion for the other as its end. The church of today's world must seek to anticipate the future *perichoresis* in its member's love for one another and carrying of one another's weakness and pain. The church's *koinonia*, which is still ontologically future, will be the fulfillment of Jesus' high priestly prayer—"that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us" (John 17:21)—and the promise in Revelation that the renewed creation and the gathered people of God would be the very place where the transcendent God is fully immanent (21:1-4). In the consummated kingdom the redeemed will be at one with each other, with the re-

newed cosmos, and with the trinitarian God, as the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are one.[51]

In its limited historical setting the church exists, not for its own glory, but *kenotically* to point away from itself to the coming kingdom. This is the reality of which the church is the *prolepsis*, a tangible community that is still in the process of becoming what it will be in the end. The equality inherent in the kingdom is why Christ could, contrary to his cultural milieu, have female disciples, why Acts places Priscilla prior to her husband Aquilla (Acts 18:18, 26), and why the Pauline corpus can speak of Phoebe as a deacon (Rom 16:1), Junia as an apostle (Rom 16:7), and can list Euodia and Syntyche as Paul's co-workers (Phil 4:2-3). The equality of the members of the church before their *kenotic* Christ, the indwelling Spirit, and the coming reign of the Father in the kingdom of freedom is also evident in the dismantling of the importance of racial, gender, and socio-political distinctions (Col 3:11). The church is to continue to anticipate in its individual action and corporate life this redemptive line of living as the kingdom continues to come.

The redeemed community is to live as a true *prolepsis* of the still-future kingdom and is called to lay aside its own privilege and prestige and live for the up-building of and service to those who cry out to God for salvation and freedom. The church must again realize that in its corporate life it is the foretaste of something tangible and lay aside any hermeneutic that seeks to claim priority and dominance for any group, be it composed of priest or prophet, male or female, either within or without the *koinonia*. When the church accepts its nature, it, like the Trinity, is unity in diversity without place of preference or place of power for any one group. Once the church remembers its trinitarian nature it is freed from false polity and missiology and can exist as an alternate *polis*, a community that runs contrary to the established kingdoms of the king-become-God. It seeks to anticipate as a foretaste the self-sacrificial eschatological community of *perichoresis*.[52]

As the church empties itself of its members' own cultural, political, economic, and gender preferences in favor of Christ's work, it turns in self-abasing love towards the other and proclaims the salvation and liberation available in Christ through the Spirit. The church offers an invitation into the divine community and, in so doing, serves as a place of refuge from a world that strips individuals of dignity, enforces strict conformity, and opposes the divergent. Salvation is a restoration of the communal divine image of self-offering love.[53]

However, the activities of Christ, culminating in the cross, are the revealed center of the passionate suffering heart of God. Christ's healing, serving, exorcizing activities mandate that the church focus on

more than simply the salvation of souls. Jesus' life and death not only saved individual souls but began the process of liberation of humanity and cosmic reconciliation: "He [the Father] set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up *all things* in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph 1:9-10). The universal scope of reconciliation is expressed in the eschatologically renewed heaven and earth (Rev 21:1) and in the desire of God for the body of Christ to participate in the liberation of and identification with the poor and the oppressed.[54] Christ's ministry, and therefore the entire working of the triune God, is marked with a deep and abiding concern for the welfare of the poor, the oppressed, the orphan, and the widow. Therefore, the church is only the church in so far as it proclaims and manifests eternal liberation in Christ to all those in need.

The church is only the church in so far as it proclaims and manifests eternal liberation in Christ to all those in need. The church, via the love and energies of the Spirit, takes up the mantle of Christ and champions the needs of the outcast throughout the world, but without access to domineering politics or force.

The church, via the love and energies of the Spirit, takes up the mantle of Christ and champions the needs of the outcast throughout the world, but without access to domineering politics or force. To resort to force or domineering politics is to fail to empty the natural prerogatives and instead work from within the kingdom of the universal One, the dictator-become-God. This is the height to which the church rises as it is established in the love of the Son for the Father by the Spirit. However, the people of God are a people in the process of being redeemed; the eschatological reality of the church's identity is not always lived out in believers' life together. In the church's failure, the Trinity serves not as a model but as a critique, begging its people to return to the aims and methods of the kingdom of freedom.[55]

The tri-personal God exists eternally as a *kenotic* community whose glory is found not in unmoved splendor, but in suffering in order to bring that which is other than God into the divine life. The *missio Dei* arises from the divine *kenosis*. It is to this self-abasing life that the church is called, and it is for this purpose that it was created. No mission can accurately be deemed Christian that does not find its basis in the passion of the trinitarian God. Christian missiology, ecclesiology, and theology must see in the face of the crucified Christ, the heart of the triune God and the call to participation in the *kenotic imago Dei*. The Trinity serves to challenge, rebuke, and deconstruct the kingdoms of the world that serve gods whose natures not only support but demand oppression and conformity. The *kenotic* triune life is the paradigm for all true missiology, ecclesiology, and theology.

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Notes

1. Christendom is here used for the "established" church/state society, also labeled Constantinianism, in which the movement that started as a fringe Judaic sect became the driving force used to stabilize the then shaky Roman Empire. Under the auspices of Rome, as the glue used to hold a tenuously large empire, Christianity became "established" and began to perform the old roles of traditional Roman religion. This odd marriage of a bloody empire—the empire that crucified Christ—and the followers of a crucified God led to reinterpretations of the gospel of the suffering and resurrected Christ along Roman lines and the carrying out of mission from a place of power and coercion, instead of one of service and self-giving love.
2. Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 57.
3. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (Cambridge: Harper & Row Publishers, 1981), 131.
4. Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988), 20.
5. Ibid., 21.

6. Dayanand Bharati, *Living Water and Indian Bowl: An Analysis of Christian Failings in Communicating Christ to Hindus, with Suggestions towards Improvement* (Kashmere Gate, Delhi: ISPCK, 2001), 7.
7. Martin Luther, "The Heidelberg Disputation," in *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy F. Lull (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 31.
8. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*. IV/1. *The Doctrine of Reconciliation,* ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), 187.
9. Boff, 1.
10. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 1.4.1, in volume 20 of the *Library of Christian Classics*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeil (Lousiville: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 47.
11. Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (Chicago: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 21.
12. The author is quite aware of the problems that are associated with the usage of the terminology of divine "persons." In modern idiom the term tends to assume an individual center of consciousness. Despite this problem, the language of person is still preferable to Barth's *Seinsweisen* (modes of being), which are intractably attached to the language (if not theology) of modalism.
13. Ibid., 22.
14. This is not a denial of the existence of, or the importance of, the immanent Trinity. The economic functions of the Trinity, however, are the basis of all considerations for trinitarian theology. The immanent workings of the inner-trintarian life are not revealed and must be constructed only in so far as we can trace lines of trajectory from the economic outworking of God's divinity.
15. All scriptural citations come from the New Revised Standard Version.
16. By referring to God's or a believer's "freedom," this document does not mean the traditional Western libertine understanding as the ability to choose either good or bad. As Karl Barth realized, godly and Christian freedom has a deeper root in God's continual action for the good. Thus, trinitarian *kenosis* sets the paradigm for freedom: a limiting of the pride, "power," prestige, and preference for the good of the other. Thus, Christians' freedom stems from their participation in the inner-trinitarian love, in their participation in the divine energies, which transforms them into carriers of the self-giving/sacrificing *missio Dei*.
17. LaCugna, 384.
18. See Mary's location at Jesus' feet as the traditional position for the disciple of a teacher.
19. See George F. Vicedom, *The Mission of God: An Introduction to a Theology of Mission* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing, 1965), 23, in which he goes so far as to state that "God's reign and Jesus Christ are one and the same thing." Jesus is the kingdom and the kingdom is Jesus in this work, but whether Jesus' short life was able to show forth the entirety of the kingdom as opposed to its general shape is still debatable. That Jesus did not manifest the full broadness of the kingdom is clear from his interactions with the Gentiles. The gospel's accounts of Jesus' interaction do not seem to necessitate a direct mission to the Gentiles; however, the early church assuredly carried their proclamation of the lordship of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. It may be best to say Jesus' life, teaching, and resurrected

lordship set a hermeneutic of the broadness of the kingdom and the Father's love that the church felt obliged to carry to the ends of the earth.

20. Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 75.
21. Ibid., 88.
22. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1974), 69.
23. Boff, 197.
24. Ibid., 121.
25. Ibid., 123.
26. Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 23.
27. Ibid., 197.
28. LaCugna, 391.
29. Kevin Giles, *The Trinity and Subordinationism: The Doctrine of God and the Contemporary Gender Debate* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 85.
30. John Polkinghorne, "Kenotic Creation and Divine Action" in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. John Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2001), 90.
31. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Source of Life: The Holy Spirit and the Theology of Life* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 19.
32. The Spirit is here written of in predominantly feminine terms. However, the use of "it" for the Spirit has scriptural basis. The use of "it" cannot be avoided, even if we could wish for the use of either masculine or feminine language in order to eliminate the denigration of the Spirit as somehow less personal than the Father and the Son. The use of both "she" and "it" is a methodological choice to stay as close to the language of the biblical account as possible.
33. Ibid., 198.
34. Boff, 189.
35. Ibid., 197.
36. Michael Welker, "Romantic Love, Covenantal Love, Kenotic Love" in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. John Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2001), 134.
37. LaCugna, 21.
38. M. Douglas Meeks, "Trinity, Community, and Power" in *Trinity, Community, and Power: Mapping Trajectories in Wesleyan Theology*, ed. M. Douglas Meeks (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2000), 17.
39. Ibid., 24.
40. *Perichoresis* not only establishes the inner-trinitarian connection and allows for the three to be one in interpenetrating love, but it also offers a solution to the filioque controversy. *Perichoresis* helps us asserts that the Father, and only the Father, is ultimately responsible for sending the Spirit. However, it also allows us to assert that the Son as the Son exists in and with the Father and therefore participates "in" but does not initiate the sending of the Spirit. The Spirit is then only the recipient of one divine sending.

41. Giles, 42.
42. Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Vancouver: Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), 99. Grenz, following the traditional theological line, claims that God was compelled by absolutely nothing to create, and he also asserts that the triune God was not compelled by anything inherent to divinity. Creation in this schema seems to be largely arbitrary. God being love, creates out of love, in order to love. See Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 107-08, for a nuanced argument that God's freedom, being freedom for the "good," necessitates a loving creation, but without any deficiency in the Trinity compelling that creation.
43. The assertion of incompatiblistic creaturely freedom is presented for no other reason than to protect God from accusations of over-involvement in evil and sin. Freedom is proposed, not because God has to grant freedom out of any internal lack, but because God is eternally engendering love that seeks love in return, or else God would appear to be the author and direct cause of sin. Thus the proposal of freedom is an attempt to balance the dialectic proposals of the triune God's goodness and greatness without sacrificing either. The insistence upon the incompatiblistic creaturely freedom is not then for the sake of maintaining an anthropocentric theology, but to defend the glory of God. For a balanced and thorough discussion of the classical Arminian reasons for the discussion and assertion of incompatiblistic creaturely freedom, see Roger E. Olson, *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006).
44. Polkinghorne, 90.
45. Ibid., 94.
46. LaCugna, 25.
47. Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 198.
48. Grenz, 646-47.
49. Meeks, 16.
50. Moltmann, *The Source of Life*, 20.
51. Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 128.
52. J. Philip Wogaman, "The Doctrine of God and Dilemma of Power" in *Trinity, Community, and Power: Mapping Trajectories in Wesleyan Theology*, ed. M. Douglas Meeks (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2000), 37.
53. LaCugna, 292.
54. Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 4.
55. Volf, 199.

"The Kenotic Trinity" . . . **So What?**

Questions for Consideration:

1. Moore asserts that right theology breeds right mission. As Jesus was sent into the world, so are we sent (John 20:21). What is your church's theology of the sending of Christ into the world?

2. "The exact nature of Christ's *kenosis* has been greatly debated..." (26). What do you understand Christ to have given up in coming to earth? How does this affect the way you do mission?

3. What will a commitment to self-emptying based on the *kenotic* nature and action of God look like in your church? In what contexts is your congregation being called to suffer in order to love the world God so loves?

4. How will your church point away from itself and rather to the coming kingdom?

5. Does your church practice racial, gender, and socio-political equality among its members? To what degree is there still separation in the value of a particular voice?

6. How can you be an advocate in your congregation for the voice of the oppressed?

Prepared by Brett Gibson

May God Be Merciful

Understanding the Fate of the Unevangelized

JASON HENTSCHEL

Is the damnation of multitudes of unevangelized people compatible with the all-loving, sovereign God as depicted in the Bible? How should Christians read a book that appears to speak out of both sides of its mouth on this topic, and then never directly? Are there other options besides the extremes—that either all unevangelized are damned or all peoples are universally saved? These questions stand at the heart of the Christian mission.

On the twenty-first of November 1964, Pope John Paul VI issued forth *Lumen Gentium*, a dogmatic constitution expressing certain essential and peripheral beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church. Within *Lumen Gentium*, Vatican II makes a particular declaration concerning the accessibility of salvation for all humankind that, if it did not facilitate the promulgation of inclusivist soteriology, certainly foreshadowed the attractiveness and acceptance of such ideas within both Catholicism and Protestantism. Certain significant remarks within this statement warrant attention:

> Those also can attain to salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience. Nor does Divine Providence deny the helps necessary for salvation to those who, without blame

> on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God and with His grace strive to live a good life.[1]

Vatican II does not promote pluralistic universalism here but instead seeks to weigh two foundational, though apparently paradoxical, biblical themes—God's sovereign, universal love for all humankind and the particularity of salvation through Christ alone. Alister McGrath articulates the problem well when he says that a "responsible Christian theology must be able to accommodate itself within the creative tension that results from the simultaneous New Testament affirmation of the particularity of the person and work of Christ and the universality of the scope of his mission."[2]

Does God's general revelation provide only illumination of a person's corrupt and immoral state, or is general revelation in itself salvific?

The meeting of Vatican II in the mid-1960s did not begin this argument, though it may have initiated a new series of dialogues that have characterized the last fifty years of a debate that has stretched for nearly two millennia. Church history has evidenced many times the virtual impossibility of any consensus on numerous theological topics such as the Trinity, the sacraments, and the incarnation, to name a slight few. The doctrine of the fate of the unevangelized is no exception here, and for good reason. As is common with many issues within systematic theology, the Bible does not speak in a direct manner to this topic. Yet, such "silence" does not deem this soteriological question unanswerable, or worse, unnecessary. On the contrary, the "question of the saving potential of other faiths is anything but an academic exercise. It is the central existential question concerning the Christian vocation...."[3] Who, then, can be saved? Is the damnation of multitudes of unevangelized peoples who never had a chance to hear the gospel compatible with the all-loving, sovereign God as depicted in the Bible? How should Christians read a faith- and mission-shaping book when it appears to speak out of both sides of its mouth on this topic, and even then never directly? Are there other options besides the extremes—that either all unevangelized are damned or all peoples are universally saved? These questions stand at the heart of the Christian mission and as such necessitate an understanding of a broad range of other pertinent theological issues.

Preliminary Theological Considerations

Before entering directly into a delineation of the preliminary theological considerations necessary for our discussion, we must first follow Terrance Tiessen's lead in ascertaining "who *needs* to be saved before we can say how such people *can* be saved."[4] The issues with which most theologians typically begin when striving to answer this question are original sin and original guilt. Though virtually all Christians believe that all persons begin life alienated from God because of the sin of Adam and are thus corrupt (original sin), there remains little consensus on whether this initial corruption entails a participation in Adam's sin (original guilt).

The implications that stem from either stance seriously color how we view the salvation of those who conceivably never know "how to refuse the evil and choose the good" (Isa 7:15)[5]—viz. those who die in infancy and those who are mentally handicapped. If all people stand guilty before God because of their participation in Adam's sin and are thus condemned, then many pertinent questions arise concerning the apparent theological and ethical implications of this for infants and the mentally handicapped.

However, the situation for the unevangelized is different than for those who might never have the mental *capability* of understanding and accepting God's redemptive gift. The breadth and scope of this paper thus requires that we focus on only those who have been or are mentally capable of understanding the good news of redemption through Christ. With these parameters set, we can narrow our discussion to two particular groups of people: 1) those living before the incarnation of Jesus Christ, and 2) those living during Christ's ministry and after his resurrection who never had a chance to hear the gospel message in any comprehensible manner.[6]

God's Method of Atonement and the "Scandal of Particularity"

Though we can technically bypass the original sin/original guilt debate, our discussion must build off of one of its broader points. The Bible pointedly and consistently tells of the universal sinfulness of humanity (Ps 14:3; Rom 3:10-12, 23) and humanity's inability to redeem itself of its fallen state (Matt 19:23-26; Eph 2:8-9). God, in great love and mercy toward creation, did not desire that humanity remain damned but rather earnestly sought to draw us back into a relationship with himself (Isa 63:8-9; Luke 15:11-32). However, the holiness of God required that atonement be made for his creatures because of their sin (Lev 16).[7] The final and eternally redemptive atoning sacrifice came through the incarnation and subsequent death of Jesus

Christ upon the cross (Heb 9:11-15). God had provided a way for fallen humanity to enter once again into a relationship with its creator by giving up his own Son as the atoning sacrifice for sin.

The implication that this method of God's atonement for sin has upon soteriology is scandalous. Though contrary to any plea for pluralism, a true biblical reading cannot deny the particularity of salvation through Christ. McGrath explains this biblical Christocentrism well in saying that the "New Testament...does not merely regard Jesus Christ as *expressive* of a divine salvation that may be made available in others forms. He is clearly understood as *constitutive* of that salvation."[8] This "scandal of particularity" thus rejects any pluralistic argument as both unchristian and unbiblical. Only outside of Christian circles can a pluralistic universalism, including the "normative religious pluralism" espoused by John Hick, gain any credence and acceptable footing for argument.[9] Therefore, the views explicated within this paper will all affirm the particularity of salvation through Christ alone.

God's Universal Love and Desire to Save

Having established the biblical theme of the particularity of Christ's atoning work, we now turn to the second ingredient in the theological bedrock of our question concerning who can be saved: God's universal love for all humanity. As mentioned above, the Bible paints a picture of a God whose "steadfast love...extends to the heavens" (Ps 36:5). So loving is this God that he willingly sacrificed his one and only Son to redeem sinful humanity, and this for the whole world (John 3:16). Yet, the Bible does not stop here. It proclaims that God desires all people to find the truth of salvation (1 Tim 2:4) because he does not want "any to perish, but all to come to repentance" (2 Pet 3:9).

Though the implications of juxtaposing these two biblical axioms—particular atonement and universal love—may not stand out as overtly obvious, they are by no means unimportant. If we follow Sanders in expanding this discussion, we discover that a good number of biblical texts slide to opposing ends of the "universal-particular" spectrum—some toward exclusivism and some toward inclusivism (defined in its broadest sense). For example, in Acts 10:34, Peter speaks of the impartiality of a God who accepts anyone who fears him; while in Matthew, Jesus warns his listeners to "enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction" (7:13).[10] Interestingly, even within the same gospel, John informs his readers that the "true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world" (1:9), whereas Jesus claims that no one comes to salvation but through him (14:6). How various theologians in the past

and present have wrestled with and understood this tension—and, hopefully, how we are to do the same—is the main focus of this inquiry into the question of who can be saved.

God's Self-Revelation

Stanley J. Grenz correctly asserts that "God remains hidden unless and until he takes the initiative in disclosing himself to us."[11] How God reveals himself and his plan for salvation consistently forms the pinnacle of the debate between inclusivists and exclusivists. As mentioned above, humans cannot redeem themselves from their own sinful state and thus cannot save themselves from their justly deserved damnation. The Bible makes no room for a Pelagian understanding of sin. God must graciously save sinful humanity by his own act. The question that theologians battle with is not necessarily *how* God saves, for that points toward his forgiveness, nor is it by what *means* he saves, for the Bible makes clear that God effects his salvation through the atoning death of his Son. Instead, the question is by what *medium* God reveals his existence and saving will. Does God's general revelation provide only illumination of a person's corrupt and immoral state, or is general revelation in itself salvific? In other words, does the Bible allow for natural theology? Can humanity find the necessary saving knowledge only in special revelation such as the Bible and personal testimony, or does God provide another way? Alongside these questions stands another question just as troubling: What exactly entails a saving faith? How we understand the salvific aspects (or lack thereof) of general and special revelation, as well as the necessary content of saving faith, will usually push, if not require, a specific stance of either exclusivism or inclusivism.

The Current Debate

Universalism

Universalists, as their name suggests, believe that "all human beings, without exception, will eventually attain salvation."[12] The major weight of their argument rests on the character of a completely loving and sovereign God who desires to save all humanity and has provided the means by which to accomplish that desire in the unlimited atoning sacrifice of his Son. We have already evidenced above that the Bible does clearly express God as possessing a love for all humanity. Each view expressed here will not deny such a claim. However, when weighing God's universal love with the particularity of Christ's redeeming work, each of the three views differs.

According to Grenz, universalists will argue from two positions:

either from the sovereignty of the loving God or from his persistency.[13] However, such a distinction is unnecessary and at times confusing because the two actually flow into and support one other. Because the all-loving God is sovereign, he will be persistent and ultimately effective in bringing sinners to repentance. Whether God determines their decisions or allows for free choice matters not when trying to understand the character of God on this issue. For universalists, this character of God is their central driving point.

According to universalists, because the all-loving God is sovereign, he will be persistent and ultimately effective in bringing sinners to repentance. Whether God determines their decisions or allows for free choice matters not when trying to understand the character of God on this issue.

Universalists, in arguing on account of God's sovereign persistency, are not without biblical support. Paul, in his first letter to Timothy, speaks of God as one "who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2:4) and as the "Savior of all people, especially of those who believe" (4:10). If a sovereign God so desires all humanity to come to salvation and none to perish, then he will see that such salvation occurs, no matter the length of time it takes to bring about that salvation, because he has promised as much (2 Pet 3:9).

The first epistle of John speaks to how a just God could allow for such universal forgiveness of sins. Jesus "is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world" (2:2). Paul's letter to Titus speaks even more clearly, saying that "the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all" (2:11). God delights in reconciling to himself all his creation (Col 1:20), for though "all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ" (1 Cor 15:22; cf. Rom 5:12-19).

The power of these verses for universalism, however, rests on the faulty assumption that no distinction exists between God's objective

and subjective reconciliation. In other words, universalists "do not make the distinction implicit in the assertion that although Calvary was for all, salvation is only for believers."[14] They confuse the universal *availability* of salvation—that God does not distinguish between race or position or gender (Gal 3:25-29)—with the universal salvation of all. Likewise, those verses which universalists use to point to God's saving will only truly address the fact that God desires to save all. Universalists tend to read beyond what the text warrants and thus "fail to take seriously the limitation God has imposed on himself in creating humankind"—a failure that denies the biblical view of a personal and passable God who does desire that all people find salvation but so as through a personal act of faith.[15] The final implication of universalism is, therefore, that humankind has no true freedom to refuse God.[16]

Yet, how do we deal with Paul's Adam-Christ typology which seemingly parallels the damnation of all in Adam with the salvation of all in Christ? True parallelisms require that both sides of the semantic equation match up exactly or, by definition, they are not parallel. If 1 Cor 15:22 is a true parallelism, then since all humanity has fallen into sin (Rom 3:23) and has died in Adam, all humanity will likewise be made alive in Christ. However, has Paul formed here a true theological parallelism? It would appear that he has not.

Throughout 1 Cor 15, Paul does not concern himself with the *general* resurrection of the dead. The representative of all people, Adam, brought about sin and its consequence—death—so that all people *en to Adam* will die. Likewise, all people *en to Christo* will be raised. The double *pantes* in v. 22 are not fully paralleled theologically. Context reveals Paul's theological emphasis here; therefore, we must return to v. 18 for the explanation. Here Paul asserts that "the ones who fell asleep in Christ" (*hoi koimethentes en Christo*) would perish if there were no resurrection of the dead.[17] This portion of his argument thus refers only to those in Christ, or believers. The same applies to vv. 20-28, as affirmed by Paul's use of the word *ton kekoimemenon* in v. 20 in reference to v. 18. According to Gordon Fee, the "present Adam-Christ analogy is thus a further attempt to show how Christ's resurrection makes inevitable the resurrection of those who have fallen asleep *in Christ*."[18] Adam and Christ both serve as representatives of groups of people.

The final implication of universalism is that humankind has no true freedom to refuse God.

All people are united with Adam, and thus all people die. Since only Christians are unified with Christ, only Christians will be resurrected from the dead.[19]

Exclusivism

Though universalism falters and fails under close biblical scrutiny, we cannot blindly assume that the opposite position, exclusivism, remains true and faultless. There may exist a middle ground between these two extremes. An examination of the arguments for exclusivism is thus necessary.[20]

According to exclusivists, saving faith involves direct knowledge of biblical propositions or special revelation.

Exclusivists highlight certain biblical texts that heavily express the exclusiveness of Christ, a person's hopelessness without him, and the importance of hearing the gospel message for salvation.[21] According to exclusivists, the Bible teaches that salvation comes only through a certain epistemological knowledge of Christ, "for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). They will likewise assert that no salvation exists apart from knowing Christ because only the one who "has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:12). This claim is further substantiated by an exclusivist reading of Rom 1-4. As mentioned above, how we read this passage will likely decide whether we stand with the exclusivists or inclusivists theologically. Consequently, a fuller, more adequate treatment will be given to this passage later. For our purposes here, however, it is sufficient to say that exclusivists deny that Paul proposes a natural theology in this text. Instead, they claim that Paul clearly focuses on the fact that all humanity is "without excuse; for though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened" (1:20-21). Without Christ, humankind has no hope (Eph 2:12).

Exclusivists also point to biblical texts that seem to require a hearing and understanding of the gospel. In Mark, Jesus himself called people to "repent, and believe in the good news" (1:15). The one who believes in the good news "will be saved; but the one who does not

believe will be condemned" (16:16). Paul, in his letter to the Romans, proclaims that if "you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (10:9). Paul goes on to ask how people could believe in Christ if they never heard of him, concluding that "faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ" (10:17). For exclusivists, these texts clearly explain that each person must have knowledge of the gospel message: that Christ died for the sins of all in order that humankind might find salvation by believing in the truth of his mission and work. In other words, saving faith involves direct knowledge of biblical propositions or special revelation.[22]

Critics find two essential faults within the reasoning utilized by exclusivists. First, these critics accuse exclusivists of failing to distinguish between an ontological necessity for salvation and an epistemological necessity for salvation. The issue thus revolves around how each side understands saving faith. Exclusivists will argue that the Bible, as shown above, explains saving faith as entailing direct knowledge of Christ's work. Inclusivists, on the other hand, will point to passages such as Heb 11:6,which explain saving faith as a belief that God "exists and that he rewards those who seek him." This undoubtedly produces a very sticky situation. Inclusivism will point to the salvation of those who existed before the incarnation and subsequent resurrection of Christ, saying that the exclusivist understanding of saving faith implies that those prior to Christ would have to have had explicit knowledge of Christ for salvation. The inclusivist finds this highly improbable, offering instead the suggestion that those saved prior to Christ looked to God the Father for their salvation, whether they knew of his intent to send a savior or not. This leads Smith to conclude that "the measure of salvation is the measure of one's faith, not the measure of one's knowledge."[23] Here inclusivists will draw a connection from the pre-Christ believers to the post-Christ unevangelized.[24] Sanders explains this connection, saying that "[n]either group possessed the complete revelation of God in Jesus, but God was reaching out to both groups

Critics accuse exclusivists of failing to distinguish between an ontological necessity for salvation and an epistemological necessity for salvation.

through the varieties of divine revelation, seeking a faith response to the Spirit's initiatives."[25]

In order that we might understand saving faith, we must look then to "how much revelation, and precisely *what* revelation, was needed for someone before Jesus to be saved."[26] If general revelation is salvific apart from special revelation, then we can deduce that explicit knowledge about Christ's work and mission is unnecessary for salvation. This leads to the second fault that critics of exclusivism find in exclusivist thought: the character of general revelation as solely condemnatory. However, an examination of the basic premises of inclusivism is necessary before venturing into a discussion of the saving potential of general revelation.

Inclusivism

Inclusivism could be called the *via media* in the debate over the salvation of the unevangelized. Not holding to a universal salvation of all humankind, inclusivists maintain that some will deny Christ and suffer their resulting condemnation. However, inclusivists do not believe that explicit epistemological knowledge of the mission and work of Christ is necessary for salvation, preferring instead to claim that the biblical tension concerning God's universal love and the particularity of salvation through Christ alone finds its resolution in natural theology.[27]

To support their beliefs, inclusivists point to two groupings of biblical texts: those that reveal God's desire to save all believers and those that reveal how God relates to people outside of his covenant with Israel. We have already discussed the former in our discussion on universalism. Inclusivists argue that God does indeed desire that all humanity come to repentance, but they do not argue that God will see a restoration of all creation to himself. They, therefore, deny the doctrine of *apokatastasis* but affirm the all-loving character of God, who seeks reconciliation with all humanity (2 Pet 3:9). A belief in a universally accessible salvation through general revelation that must be appropriated by individual human faith undergirds this affirmation.[28]

The latter grouping of texts revolves around individuals whom inclusivists understand to have obtained saving faith outside of any specific covenant with Israel. Inclusivists generally argue that this saving faith came from general revelation and, therefore, that it gives reliable biblical precedence for the salvation of the unevangelized outside of specific knowledge of Christ. In this way, some may be believers but not Christians.[29] Inclusivists will emphasize the universal and unilateral aspects of the pre-Mosaic covenants to support their view that "God did not cut off his gracious activity among the nations

just because he elected Israel for a special task."[30] This agrees with the rest of the Bible. In Amos 9:7, God informs Israel that they are not the only nation for which he had provided a type of exodus.

The Bible also stands replete with stories of Gentiles outside of God's special covenant with Israel who were saved (e.g. Job, Jethro, Ruth, Melchizedek, and Ebed-Melech).[31] Yet, Tiessen makes a necessary observation here: most of these Gentiles received a certain form of special revelation, whether in a more personal revelatory experience with God or by contact with or knowledge of the Israelites' faith.[32] Only Melchizedek seems to have no clear biblical evidence that places him in contact with any form of special revelation.[33] Don Richardson argues that Melchizedek stood as a "figurehead or type of God's *general* revelation to mankind, and that Abraham correspondingly represented God's covenant-based, canon-recorded *special* revelation to mankind."[34] However, Richardson precariously argues from silence. Such a method of argumentation can hardly be exclusive, allowing us to argue with just as much certainty that Melchizedek had indeed received special revelation of his own.[35] The Bible does not allow for any certainty on the matter, and thus any argument for general revelation that uses Melchizedek for evidential support is speculative and ultimately unprovable.

Inclusivists do not believe that explicit epistemological knowledge of the mission and work of Christ is necessary for salvation, preferring instead to claim that the biblical tension concerning God's universal love and the particularity of salvation through Christ alone finds its resolution in natural theology.

Inclusivists, however, also point to a New Testament example of the salvation of Gentiles outside of God's covenant with Israel. Luke, in Acts 10, tells the story of a Gentile named Cornelius who was "a devout man that feared God with all his household" (v. 2). When Peter

came to Cornelius, he proclaimed that "in every nation anyone who fears [God] and does what is right is acceptable to him" (v. 35). The story of Cornelius thus raises the question of whether he would have been saved if he had died before Peter arrived. Exclusivists will answer "yes," citing the command of the angel in Acts 11:14 that Cornelius call for Peter.[36] According to this verse, Peter would bring to Cornelius "a message by which you and your entire household will be saved." Inclusivists will point back to the fact that Cornelius, a God-fearer who had undoubtedly come in contact with Judaism, was already worshiping God before Peter arrived. To deny that Cornelius was saved prior to Peter's coming would logically mean that all the worshipers of God prior to Christ would be damned to hell. On the contrary, Cornelius was a *believer* before Peter arrived and became a *Christian* after hearing the full gospel message.[37] Despite these arguments, we must remember that the focus of this story is not on Cornelius as an individual, but on the fact that "God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life" (11:18).[38] It is plausible that Luke's theology at this point took precedence over his chronology. Ultimately, it seems best that we live with the tension provided in this one story and turn our discussion toward the common inclusivist focus on natural theology and the possible saving potential of general revelation.

What kind of God would give humans enough information to condemn them but not enough to save them?

General Revelation

The primary text concerning general revelation is arguably Rom 1:18-22.[39] According to Paul, knowledge of God is plain to all because he has revealed it to all through his creation. Thus "they are without excuse" (1:19-20). Paul continues saying that though these people did in fact know God, they rejected him and "exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images" (1:21-23). Inclusivists argue that this passage points to the salvific potential of general revelation because it does not indicate that everyone will ultimately and finally reject the general revelation that stands universally available to them.[40] Even though such may rarely occur, one could conceivably choose to wor-

ship the God revealed in creation. Furthermore, because God is a saving God, all revelation—general included—is saving revelation.[41] The issue, therefore, seems to boil down to a question of the character of God: What kind of God would give humans enough information to condemn them but not enough to save them?[42]

Critics of the inclusivist understanding of salvific general revelation argue that Paul here has no intention of establishing "a natural theology; nor does he create one unintentionally."[43] Instead, Paul's main, if not sole, purpose is to argue that *all humanity* stands without excuse because of its rejection of God. Douglas Moo thus correctly states that "this foolish and culpable rejection of the knowledge of God is repeated in every generation, by every individual."[44] Oden and Moo both rightly agree that "the truth of general revelation, while clearly given, has become suppressed amid the history of sin."[45] God does not deny humanity the salvific aspects of general revelation; humanity's own sin brought about such a consequence. Theologians throughout history have tended to hold similar views, claiming that general revelation entails enough knowledge to reveal the universal guilt of people but not enough to save them.[46]

Nevertheless, how do we answer the inclusivist argument from the character of God? Is it not logical that an all-loving God who desires all to come to salvation would provide the way for this salvation universally? I would have to agree that the all-loving, sovereign God revealed in the Bible would logically provide such a way; in fact, I hope as much. However, the Bible seems to disagree with this logical conclusion.

Sometimes our logical arguments for biblical truth, though apparently without any logical fallacy, run counter to the biblical text itself. In any logical argument, the *content* of the argument—viz. its premises—determines the conclusion of the argument. The conclusion thus stands or falls on account of its premises. If the premises are in any way perceived faultily, then it stands that they will most likely be applied faultily. Neither exclusivists nor inclusivists will claim that the Bible is an exhaustive compendium of the character, purpose, and knowledge of God. God did not and still does not intend for the Bible to be understood as such. What the Bible does reveal is truth, though it does not include *all* the truth available.

To remain faithful then to the Bible—which we know to be true—we must be wary of postulating logical arguments that go contrary to an honest and thorough exegesis of a text that reveals a solid particularity for salvation. We cannot and should not deny such a reading. On the contrary, we should live within the tension provided us by the Bible. In light of the logical possibilities and God's sovereign love, we

should hope for a "wideness in God's mercy," all the while giving priority to the revelation that we do have through that same Bible—that God does save and will save those who "believe on the Lord Jesus" (Acts 16:31) and call "on the name of the Lord" (Rom 10:13).

Conclusion

Positive Agnosticism

So, where does this leave us on the question of who can be saved? Is there any hope for the unevangelized? To the second question, we must answer "yes." Though we must agree on exegetical grounds that God only saves via special revelation, we cannot restrict God's saving activity to human preaching but should allow for the Holy Spirit's work in the world: "The Creator is not dependent on his creation in achieving his purposes."[47] Though we may not have all the answers to God's plan for the unevangelized, we know that we can depend on God to be just and ask as Abraham did in Gen 18:25 concerning the imminent destruction of Sodom: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?"

Though we must agree on exegetical grounds that God only saves via special revelation, we cannot restrict God's saving activity to human preaching but should allow for the Holy Spirit's work in the world.

This leads us to the conclusion that the Bible does not provide a systematic treatment on the unevangelized. We must remain agnostic concerning what God's sovereign will is for those who never hear about Christ. The Bible "does not often focus speculatively on what might be the possible destiny of those who never have had such an opportunity."[48] But this by no means forces us to deny that we can know anything about who can be saved. On the contrary, though we see that God does save those who believe in Christ, we cannot deny that God has the power and authority to bestow mercy or destruction upon all whom he wishes (Rom 9:22-23). I would name such a view "positive agnosticism." Ultimately, positive agnosticism is grounded

upon a humility toward our ability to comprehend God's universal plans, and it maintains that the Bible cannot, nor was it meant to, give us all the answers. Instead, the Bible concerns itself not so much with bestowing certain pieces of information, but with telling us what to do. In this sense, it is much more existential than epistemological.

Theological Implications for the Unevangelized

This has certain implications for how we should understand the fate of the unevangelized. As Christians, we are called to make disciples of all the nations by going, teaching, and baptizing (Matt 28:19-20). Though we are God's light to the world and the salt of the earth (Matt 5:13-16), God is the sole provider of salvation. Still, we are God's messengers to the unevangelized, and we bring the knowledge of Christ's work and mission. The Bible clearly says that an understanding and belief in this gracious work of atonement will produce salvation (Acts 16:31; Eph 2:8-9). For *our* purposes today, saving faith thus entails epistemological knowledge of Christ's redeeming work. However, for *God's* purposes, we know he has worked salvation for those before Christ who had no knowledge of Christ's future redemptive work, and so we cannot deny that God could work similarly today, though only through some form of special revelation. In the end, the tension provided above must remain. However, we can in full honesty and openness join with Barth "to hope and pray cautiously and yet distinctly that, in spite of everything which may seem quite conclusively to proclaim the opposite, His compassion should not fail, and that in accordance with His mercy which is 'new every morning' He 'will not cast off for ever'" (Lam 3:22-23, 31).[49]

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Notes

1. "Lumen Gentium," The Holy See, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html, accessed 14 November 2004; see in particular chapter 2, paragraph 16.
2. Alister McGrath, "A Particularist View: A Post Enlightenment Approach," in *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, eds. Dennis Okholm and Timothy Phillips (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 177.
3. Henry Smith, "Salvation in the Face of Many Faiths: Toward a Hermeneutic of Optimism," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 35, no. 2 (1993): 26. I would extend this question to include all of the unevangelized, whether or not within a certain faith.
4. Terrance L. Tiessen, *Who Can Be Saved?: Reassessing Salvation in Christ and World Religions* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 12.
5. All biblical references are taken from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted.
6. Tiessen, 12-13. These two categories are adopted from Tiessen's list of five that covers what he deems as all the categories of the unevangelized. Though he argues that any discussion upon the doctrine of salvation must "account for all categories of the unevangelized," for our purposes such a broad scope is not only impractical but also unnecessary. The "starting position" for the mentally incapable is different, as we will see, from that of those with the mental capability to understand God's saving revelation, and our discussion about these two groups will not be adversely affected by an absence of a complete discussion upon Tiessen's other three categories.
7. Andrew H. Trotter, Jr., "Atonement," in *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Walter Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 42-44.
8. McGrath, 170; italics his.
9. See John Hick, "A Pluralistic View," in *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, eds. Dennis Okholm and Timothy Phillips (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 29-59; cf. Carl Braaten, "The Problem of the Absoluteness of Christianity," *Interpretation* 40 (October 1986), 341-53. This is not to say that Christians cannot participate in insightful and helpful arguments with pluralism. We, as responsible Christians, should understand and be able to counter this pluralism

in any dialogues or debates we may enter into with it. However, if we hold to the particularity of salvation through Christ alone which the Bible clearly expresses, by definition we cannot find salvation from sins and reconciliation with God anywhere else, whether such a path be ethical or not.

10. John Sanders, *No Other Name: An Investigation into the Destiny of the Unevangelized* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 28.

11. Stanley Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 393; see also Nigel M. de S. Cameron, "Revelation, Idea of," in *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Walter Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 680.

12. N.T. Wright, "Universalism," in *New Dictionary of Theology*, eds. Sinclair Ferguson and David Wright (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988), 702.

13. Grenz, 635.

14. Sanders, *No Other Name*, 107.

15. Grenz, 637.

16. McGrath, 177. This remains true even when universalists point back to God's sovereign persistency. True and complete freedom of choice must allow for the possibility that someone might actually reject God throughout all eternity. A denial of this would nullify any system based upon indeterministic free choice.

17. My translation.

18. Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 750-51; italics his. Paul again establishes the resurrection of only Christians in v. 23. This does not require that Paul denies a resurrection of non-believers, but only that such a resurrection does not concern him here. See also Joost Holleman, *Resurrection and Parousia: A Traditio-Historical Study of Paul's Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15*, Supp. Nov. T. 84 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 53; A. C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1229; cf. L. J. Kreitzer, "Resurrection," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald Hawthorne and Ralph Martin (Leichester: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 811-12.

19. Holleman, 53.

20. It should be noted that most of the debate about who can be saved occurs between exclusivists, inclusivists, and various modifications of these two. Therefore, the rest of this paper will, by necessity, reflect this emphasis upon exclusivism and inclusivism at the expense of universalism. See Gabriel Fackre, Ronald Nash, and John Sanders, *What About Those Who Have Never Heard: Three Views on the Destiny of the Unevangelized*, ed. John Sanders (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995) which does not even include universalism as one of its primary views, choosing instead to focus on inclusivism, exclusivism, and divine perseverance.

21. Here I follow Sanders, *No Other Name*, 38-41.

22. Sanders, *No Other Name*, 42-45. Exclusivists understand the implications that this stance has upon those existing before the incarnation of Christ. Since the Bible (particularly the Old Testament and Hebrews) clearly indicates that many found salvation through faith prior to a knowledge of Christ and his work, exclusivists will hold that the content of faith required prior to Christ changed after his incarnation and subsequent death.

23. Smith, 30.

24. Sanders, *What About Those Who Have Never Heard?*, 141-43.
25. Ibid., 142.
26. Ibid; italics his.
27. Sanders, *No Other Name*, 215-16.
28. Ibid., 215-18.
29. Ibid., 224-32.
30. Ibid., 218.
31. For a fuller list of those saved outside of God's covenant people, see Tiessen, 170.
32. Tiessen, 170-71.
33. Tiessen, 171, includes Jethro here, but it is highly uncertain whether Jethro's priesthood, prior to his contact with Moses after the exodus, was a priesthood of Yahweh or not. With reference to Exodus 18:9-12, it seems unlikely that such would be the case because only then does it seem that Jethro witnessed that the "Lord is greater than all gods" (18:11). Tiessen appears to concede this point later in the chapter (174).
34. Don Richardson, *Eternity in Their Hearts* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1984), 31; italics his.
35. Tiessen, 171, stands in agreement that Richardson's Abraham–Melchizedek "parallelism is neat, but the concept is hard to ground in the biblical text." Tiessen instead favors seeing Melchizedek as receiving his own special revelation.
36. Ibid., 175.
37. Sanders, *No Other Name*, 65-66.
38. Ibid., 66.
39. Thomas Oden, "Without Excuse: Classic Christian Exegesis of General Revelation," in *JETS* 41, no. 1 (March 1998): 55.
40. Tiessen, 141.
41. Sanders, *No Other Name*, 233-35.
42. Ibid., 68.
43. C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (London: A. & C. Black, 1962), 35. C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), 116, follows Barrett on this point.
44. Douglas Moo, *Romans 1-8*, The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 93.
45. Oden, "Without Excuse," 66; Moo, 103, 122; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 1.5.14, goes on to say that "we have no eyes to perceive [God's attributes in general revelation] until they are enlightened through faith by internal revelation from God."
46. Oden, "Without Excuse," 68; see also McGrath, 164; Oden, 63, writing specifically on classical Christian exegesis of Romans 1:18-22, states that "there is no pretense or expectation in patristic exegesis that the natural knowledge of God in and through general revelation is of itself a saving knowledge."
47. McGrath, 179.

48. Thomas Oden, *Systematic Theology* (Peabody, MA: Prince, 1992), 3:448.
49. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 4/3/1, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1962), 478.

"May God Be Merciful" . . . **So What?**

Questions for Consideration:

1. Why is it helpful to be reminded that salvation is part of the mystery of the merciful God?

2. Is it possible to will agnosticsm? Is it possible not to lean one direction or another?

3. How would this view of the salvation of the unevanglized shape the church's and individual's participation in the *missio Dei*?

4. What is the general view of your church regarding the fate of the unevangelized? How does this affect your church's attitude toward missions?

5. What differences in approach to evangelism do you think would exist between an inclusivist and a "positive agnostic," by Hentschel's definition?

Prepared by Chris Moore and Kathryn Seay

Contextualization Abroad and at Home

Worship in Missions

MICAH STEWART

"In certain parts of the world... there are peoples who have their own musical traditions, and these play a great part in their religious and social life. For this reason due importance is to be attached to their music and a suitable place is to be given to it."[1]

IN THE MISSION FIELDS OF THE nineteenth century, the above statement would not have been accepted by many missionaries. Rather, European and North American missionaries of the nineteenth century saw themselves as going to the "lost" nations and cultures, bringing with them the Christian culture, which they generally identified with a version of their own. Oftentimes this would lead to the eradication of all "pagan" customs and the importation of a foreign culture, without regard for how the transplanted culture would be interpreted by the indigenous people.[2] Andrés Tapia writes:

> Missionaries often burned traditional instruments in public and banned traditional tunes from church services because they were felt to be too associated with the culture's pagan beliefs...they were in effect communicating: "Your culture has no value."[3]

Fortunately, this attitude is no longer held by most missionaries, but the question of how to deal with a culture's musical tradition still remains. After addressing music's important role in Christianity, this paper will explore the goal of ethnomusicology in Christian missions in conjunction with the contextualization of worship in the mission field and in churches in the United States.

Music and Christianity

When the word "church" is mentioned, many people immediately think of an organized worship serve. Whether in a large cathedral with an organ and a split chancel, a small country church with an out-of-tune piano and no microphones, or a rented movie theater with a trap set, a bass guitar, an electric guitar, an acoustic guitar, and several vocalists, the idea is the same. "Church" is often associated with worship and worship with music. This is an association of which T. W. Hunt speaks very highly. He writes, "Throughout its history, Christianity has been a singing religion." He adds, "Christianity without music is unthinkable." Hunt sees music as characterizing every advance of Christianity that has ever occurred.[4]

Such statements may seem a little extreme at first. However, when taking a brief survey of Christianity, the sense of extremity disappears. The roots of the Christian faith are found in the Hebrew religion of the Old Testament, of which the longest book is Psalms—a collection of poetry and songs. Additionally, worship at Jewish synagogues was often full of musical expression. In several of his letters, Paul exhorted the early Christian church to sing "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs." Ambrose wrote several of his hymns to bring peace to those under siege in his basilica as they were being attacked by heretics.[5] The Reformation is full of countless musical battles between the Reformers and the Catholics, each writing songs and adapting melodies to fit their purposes. Shortly after the Reformation, the Psalms quickly became the center of Christian worship, especially in those traditions that trace their roots to Calvin.

"Our choice, if we are to be effective missionaries, is not <u>whether</u> we will use music in our work. Our choice is <u>how</u> we will use it: effectively, efficiently, spiritually, or slovenly and carelessly."

As settlers came to America, the first book printed in North America was the *Massachusetts Bay Psalm Book* (1640). As America grew, it began producing its own hymns. Music education, under the leadership of Lowell Mason, became popular, and soon churches began holding singing schools. Itinerant singing teachers would travel from

church to church and town to town teaching people how to read music and how to sing. Of course today, music is central in the devotional lives of many Christians, not to mention the "worship wars" experienced by many North American churches.

When we see what an integral role music has played in the Christian faith, it should not surprise us that music has continued to play an important role in missions. In an unpublished survey by T. W. Hunt, several missionaries responded to the question of music's importance in their ministry:

> Many unconverted come to church because of music....
>
> I think that music can open doors that hardly anything else can open. I believe this is true because it is a language of the heart. This is the reason it should be used by Christians more than any other group....
>
> Many people enter church to hear music.
>
> Music is such a vital part of African daily life that the church could not exist without it.
>
> Where we have any type of a music program, we also have a good group of young people and the church is more alive.
>
> Music has a great appeal to the non-Christian. In fact, they identify music with Christianity.[6]

In an effort to explain why music has held such importance for Christianity, Hunt characterizes the function of music using four categories: (1) music's natural functions which are inherent in itself; (2) music's function within various social groups; (3) music's function in missionary activity; and (4) music's function in Christian life.[7] Within each of these categories, Hunt lists numerous specific functions of music. For our purposes, we will focus on his third category, music's function in missionary activity.

Hunt begins by stating that musical skills are indispensable tools in the missionary task. He also states that music is a useful medium for teaching theological concepts. Music can break down barriers, attract otherwise uninterested segments of the population, and provide appeal and incentive. He also points out that in some countries musical literacy is more important than normal education. This creates a direct avenue of connection with people, without the need for written material. Hunt closes the section by writing:

> Our choice, if we are to be effective missionaries, is not

> *whether* we will use music in our work. Our choice is *how* we will use it: effectively, efficiently, spiritually, or slovenly and carelessly. [8]

Thus, if music is so central to Christianity and if music can play such an important role in missions, how are we to implement it properly on the mission field without falling into the traps of the nineteenth-century missionaries?

Music and Ethnomusicology

> Imagine if someone from a more advanced culture came into your place of worship and said, "The organ is of the Devil, your four-part harmony sounds like animals, and the way everyone sits still holding a book has to go. Here, take this gourd rattle with feathers and this nose flute. Stand up, shake your shoulders, and sing this song about how God is like a ferocious puma. We'll teach *you* how to worship God.[9]

The above description is analogous to what happened to many of the newly evangelized people groups in the nineteenth century; one need simply switch the objects used for worship. Many people would cringe at the thought of having to go through the above scenario. Likewise, many would have the same reaction to seeing such a scenario inflicted upon other people. Fortunately, today, with the application of ethnomusicology and the benefit of hindsight, the above scenario is happening less and less.[10]

In the Christian realm, the goal of ethnomusicology is "to help all peoples worship God using the music they can identify with most deeply—and similarly to help them use their music to create new Scripture songs for evangelism, church planting, and discipleship."[11] However, ethnomusicology did not begin as a Christian study, but rather as an academic pursuit. First, we will examine some of the principles of ethnomusicology. Then we will see how it has been applied successfully to the mission field.

In general, ethnomusicology is the study of a culture's expression of music. However, ethnomusicology is such a broad discipline that there are many possible definitions. Helen Myers lists several definitions in her "Introduction" to *Ethnomusicology: Historical and Regional Studies*, including "the study of music as culture," "the comparative study of musical cultures," and "the hermeneutical science of human musical behaviour."[12] Ethnomusicologists often study both anthropology and musicology in preparation for their careers. They use anthropology to understand how the culture is operating and what the music is being used to express. They use musicology to discern the

musical aspects—notes, scales, harmonies (or lack thereof), melodies, notation, etc. Of particular interest for our purposes is the cultural aspect of ethnomusicology.

Delbert Rice offers four steps to understanding a culture's music. The first step is living within that culture and objectively evaluating its practices. Second, Rice writes that it is necessary to know whether the songs are performed as solos or by groups of men or women or both. Third, the observer should analyze the technical aspects of the music—pitch center, meter, and so on. Finally, it is necessary to determine in what cultural setting the music is used.[13]

In the Christian realm, the goal of ethnomusicology is "to help all peoples worship God using the music they can identify with most deeply and similarly to help them use their music to create new Scripture songs for evangelism, church planting, and discipleship."

Mary K. Oyer also offers several suggestions for understanding a culture's music.[14] First, she says that the observer must become an active participant in the music making of the culture. Second, one must talk to a native of the culture or a person familiar with the culture. Third, she recommends reading the literature of the culture—novels, poetry, and so on. Finally, she recommends studying what anthropologists, ethnomusicologists, and linguists have said about that culture.[15]

Each of these approaches is obviously not a two-week program. The process of understanding a culture's music and a culture's language is a very slow one. This is because music and language are full of symbolism and nuance. In order to begin to grasp even a tiny bit of the nuances, a familiarity with the culture is required. For example, what do certain instruments represent? In Africa, drums are often named according to the god for whose ritual they are used. Is it possible to divorce the meaning of the drums' original use from their new Christian use?

Another possible question is, are there universals in music? Vida Chenoweth, an experienced ethnomusicologist, addressed the issue of

universals in music in the April 1999 issue of *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*. After a lifetime of studying over seventy-six musical systems from various groups around the world, she came to several conclusions. First, she decided that music is a common expression worldwide. All people groups have developed some form of music that they identify with and call their own. Second, all melodies have a tonal plan that gravitates towards a tonal—or bi-tonal—center. Granted it may sound foreign or chaotic to a Western ear, but Chenoweth insists that all melodies have a tonal plan, each tone relating to another, pulling, in one manner or other, to a tonal center. Lastly, Chenoweth claims that it is possible for rhythmic tempos to be universal in music. Chenoweth claims that since tempos and rhythm are so closely related to biological events within the human body, they can communicate the same thing across cultures. Fast tempos can usually indicate excitement and so on. However, these are the only three cross-cultural similarities she offers, and it is likely that many scholars would not agree with all three of these traits.[16]

"When...the text sounds archaic, just plain awkward, or mismatches textual and musical accents...one wonders what part of the Christian message, if any, is being transmitted."

However, music is not the only portion of this formula that presents challenges. There are obvious difficulties in communicating across cultures. Language is full of nuance. For example, consider the word "smell." This word can function as a verb or a noun. For now, we will consider its function as a noun. In the thesaurus, there are several other words for "smell." There is stench, odor, aroma, fragrance, and scent. However, to a native English speaker, each of these words carries a different connotation. A writer would be wrong to describe a sweet-smelling perfume as a stench. Such a perfume would more likely be an aroma or a fragrance. Likewise, few would refer to the smell of a skunk as a fragrance. In this instance, the word odor or stench would be more appropriate. Thus, connotations are an important factor in language; they are a factor that takes time and familiarity to understand.

Therefore, only after language and music have been closely examined and learned can one begin to try to translate hymns into the vernacular. And yet, this too is often not the best approach. If the music is left alone and the text is altered, very awkward results can occur. Gerhard Cartford, in describing a situation in which German chorales were translated into Spanish, remarks, "When...the text sounds archaic, just plain awkward, or mismatches textual and musical accents...one wonders what part of the Christian message, if any, is being transmitted."[17] Additionally, when missionaries attempt to carry hymns across cultural lines, Oyer warns that the hymnody breaks down quickly because music is not a universal language and texts lose meaning in translation.[18] Both of these points have been illustrated above. So, instead of simply transplanting an English hymn into another culture, there is the option of developing an indigenous hymnody.

"New hymns tend to rise out of felt needs."[19] When the need arises in a group for its own expression of worship, hymns will emerge. Oyer adds that hymnody grows out of a group's response and perception of God and the good news of Christ. When a cultural group produces a hymn, that group's own perception of God is evident and expressed through the group's choice of themes, metaphors, language, and so on.[20]

So, let a group create its own music. Sounds simple enough. And yet, the discussion cannot end there. As mentioned above, music is a very powerful tool full of nuance and symbolism. Many times, when an instrument, such as the African drum mentioned above, or a musical setting, such as one previously used for a ritual to another god, is incorporated into Christian worship, it can be hard to lose previous connotations and symbols. For evaluating such elements, Paul Hiebert offers a model of critical contextualization.

Critical Contextualization

Ethnomusicologist Nathan J. Corbitt defines contextualization as "the process of placing the message into the frame of reference of the receiver."[21] Paul Hiebert, a missions professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, identifies three approaches missionaries have taken over the years when trying to establish a context for Christian worship in an unreached culture. The first method, used most often by nineteenth-century missionaries, as cited above, was to reject everything old. In this option, the native culture is completely rejected and a Christian culture, typically European or American, is dropped into the gaps.

There are many flaws with this option, including that it is often, as Hiebert observes, rooted in ethnocentrism. The native culture is

squashed by what is perceived to be the superior culture. This approach is also based upon the idea that "the cultural forms of western Christians are themselves Christian."[22] Furthermore, rejecting the old culture creates a vacuum that needs to be filled by new customs. Hiebert cites an incident in which this was incorrectly done by well-meaning missionaries who demanded Hindus eliminate the custom of Hindu brides wearing red saris. They replaced this custom with having brides wear white saris instead, not knowing that while red had stood for fertility and life, white stood for barrenness and death. Hiebert observes that even when attempts are made to suppress the old culture entirely, the old culture is usually simply driven underground. Once underground, the suppressed custom may resurface and combine with orthodox beliefs, forming a syncretism of pagan and Christian customs that Hiebert labels "Christopaganism."[23]

Once underground, the supressed custom may resurface and combine with orthodox beliefs, forming a syncretism of pagan and Christian customs that Hiebert labels "Christopaganism."

Another approach Hiebert observes missionaries taking is simply to accept the old customs. In this choice, pagan customs are "accept[ed] uncritically into the church."[24] While this method may derive from a desire to respect the culture, there are some obvious flaws in this approach. This method usually results in incorporating pagan practices and inevitably leads to syncretism. Hiebert asserts that "relativism in the end destroys all authority."[25] By allowing everything in, the church quickly loses its power to stop other things from entering into church practice or the lives of its members. Additionally Hiebert comments that this approach tends to take away anything objectionable in the Gospels, thus failing to carry with it the call for people to repent and change their ways.

As an alternative to the above two options, Hiebert recommends and clearly outlines a plan for contextualization. The first step in the process is allowing the church to become aware of "the need to deal with some area of its life...for failure to deal with the culture in which the church finds itself often allows sub-Christian practices to enter

the Christian community unnoticed."[26] The important point here is for the church herself to realize the need for reform. Throughout his approach, Hiebert continues to insist that the indigenous people be allowed to make the final decisions and judgments on their own beliefs and practices. While allowing the missionary room for commenting and leadership, in the end Hiebert emphatically states that the people must be given the final say.

After the need has been realized, the pastor is encouraged to lead local believers in an examination and analysis of current cultural practices and customs. As the people evaluate their old ways, they will see which ones conflict with their new Christian faith, and they will be allowed and directed to take initiative in reforming these old customs. The missionary's role here is to lead the people in Bible studies and discussions about how these customs fit within the framework of biblical theology.

Once again, involving the indigenous people in this step is critical, for it is they who understand the full meaning behind each cultural practice and tradition. They must be trusted to evaluate their own culture, for they know it better than the missionary. Hiebert admits that this leaves room for error. However, he claims that the errors made will soon be detected by the people under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the lessons learned from these errors will be invaluable. Once this evaluation has occurred the congregation will either keep many of its old practices because members find them biblically compatible, completely reject some old customs as they will not line up with the Bible, or create new symbols and rites to be performed with new Christian meanings.[27]

Is one tune or text so intricately bound with traditional religious practices that it will not be appropriate for the Christian service?

Rice offers another alternative for evaluating Christian worship practices that seek to incorporate elements from the indigenous culture. He suggests three questions in evaluating a new worship service: (1) "What types of music, if any, can be utilized to express Christian concepts?"; (2) "Can original tunes be used for a new poetic setting?"; and (3) "Will connotations from the previous poems interfere with the effectiveness of a Christian poem if set to the same tune?"[28] In other

words, are there religious connotations with the music that cannot be ignored? Was one style of music previously used in a pagan ritual, and is that association too powerful to be ignored? Is one tune or text so intricately bound with traditional religious practices that it will not be appropriate for the Christian service?

The problem with Rice's questions is that they seem to be directed to the wrong group of people. Whereas Hiebert placed much of the decision making on the shoulders of the indigenous people, it seems that Rice is posing the questions to the missionaries and ministers. In the latter case, there is a chance that the missionaries might not understand all the concepts involved. Additionally, giving local believers ownership in the decisions regarding their faith makes the faith more of their own and less that of the foreigners who have brought it to them. Thus, Hiebert's model seems more fitting in order to foster a truly indigenous Christian faith and hymnody.

Contextualization will also allow each people group to express its Christian faith...as a unique member of the worldwide body of Christ. Yes, it might be foreign to visitors from other countries, but it will be undoubtedly authentic and meaningful to the local people.

Following a model such as this will result in a worship service that is couched in the culture of the people. It will help eliminate Western customs or traditions that might not make any sense in the native culture or that might carry meanings that are completely different from the ones intended. It will eliminate the cultural elitism that persisted in some missionary circles in the nineteenth century and even up until today. Contextualization will also allow each people group to express its Christian faith in a unique manner, as a unique member of the worldwide body of Christ. Yes, it might be foreign to visitors from other countries, but it will be undoubtedly authentic and meaningful to the local people.

In his article "Noted Ministry," Paul Neeley offers the testimony

of several recent converts and pastors who had just heard, for the first time, music of their native style being used to praise God. One man, a member of the Vagla tribe, stated:

> When I started hearing these new songs, tears came to my eyes. For many years, we could have used our music to worship God and reach our people. Instead, the music has been used by the devil.

Another pastor commented:

> When Christianity first came to our area of Ghana, we thought that using our own music was not appropriate to praise God. But now we see that if our church had started with this kind of indigenous music that our people like, by now we would be making headway in reaching the Dagomba communities.[29]

Several other articles that cite testimony from indigenous believers who first heard music praising God in their native tongue and style describe equal enthusiasm and excitement over the event. It is also interesting to note that each time music was introduced in the vernacular style, it began attracting more people automatically. We saw this earlier in the quotes from Hunt's survey. Congregations grew and people were being saved. People everywhere respond to and are drawn to music—especially the music of their culture.[30]

In America Today

The process of contextualization and adaptation of music to fit certain people groups is not all that foreign to American society today. There are several instances in which we can find this occurring in the United States today, though it is often not described as such. One example is the creation of the "contemporary worship service." Countless churches have implemented a contemporary service in which the musical instruments, moods, and presentations are completely different from those of the "traditional service." These services incorporate new and more modern songs in addition to or in place of traditional hymns. For what purpose are these services being designed? Some churches are simply jumping on the bandwagon and trying to imitate the successful mega-churches. However, some churches are creating this service out of genuine concern for their communities.

In the same way that the contextualization on the international mission field is about finding ways to create music that fits the culture, some churches closer to home are adapting their worship services to attract a different audience. These churches have decided

that the answer to reaching new groups of people in North America is to modify the worship music in order to attract and include them.[31] This also sends new believers the message that God redeems us, not *out* of our cultures, but *in the midst of* and *for* our cultures. Thus, contextualization is being used in our own backyard as some churches seek to reach the mission fields in their own neighborhoods.

So, where does the balance lie between trying to create an indigenous hymnody, in America or abroad, and in maintaining a unique language of the faith?

Contextualization also appears in the form of the Contemporary Christian Music genre. Some artists compose original music in popular music styles, and others draw on existing music and rework it. Many individual artists and bands have come out with their own versions of the same worship songs. For example, several artists have recently capitalized on a resurgence of the popularity of hymns. In 2004, Passion, a prominent group in the contemporary Christian worship movement, came out with an album entitled *Hymns Ancient & Modern*. On this album several contemporary artists—Matt Redman, Charlie Hall, Chris Tomlin, etc.—reinterpreted popular hymns, including "O Worship the King," "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee," "How Great Thou Art," and "All Creatures of Our God and King." Most of the artists re-voiced the songs to include electric, acoustic, and bass guitars, as well as drums and several other instruments. In this manner, the same text was kept, but the musical setting was adapted to fit a different audience. Often the rhythms were redone and a chorus was added. In 2005, the band Jars of Clay came out with an album entitled *Redemption Songs*, which followed the model of the Passion artists. They reworked several hymns by changing the instruments, rhythms, and occasionally the melody. These are only two examples of the numerous Christian artists who have done the same thing.

However, hymns are not the only genre to receive attention from the Contemporary Christian music business. "Praise and worship music" has been treated in the same manner. Groups such as Sonic Flood, the Insyderz, the David Crowder Band, Third Day and individual art-

ists such as Michael W. Smith, Charlie Hall, and Matt Redman have taken the same sets of praise and worship songs and reworked them in a manner that fits the individual artist's style.

Why is it that each of these artists is able to sell the same song over and over again? It is because different musical styles appeal to different people. In each of these examples, the words are left unchanged from the original song. Yet, something about how each group reworks the music has given it the ability to sell to an audience that another group does not reach.[32] The same principle is at work in trying to create an indigenous hymnody. Missionaries are trying to find music that fits the particular heart-song of their people.

A Few Warnings

Despite the popularity of such endeavors, not everyone is so readily accepting of the various changes going on in America's churches, and this hesitance often comes with good reason. Many times the contextualization that takes place results in poor theology or shallow congregations. Several authors offer warnings regarding the issue at hand. Marva Dawn writes, "If we conform worship too much to the prevailing culture, it is difficult for participants to learn the unique 'language' of faith, to be formed by the community and the Word to be followers of Christ."[33] So, where does the balance lie between trying to create an indigenous hymnody, in America or abroad, and in maintaining a unique language of the faith?

For the church to be about and for God, it must recognize the importance of missions to God. Understanding that importance, it cannot divorce worship from missions or missions from worship.

While such a question is too broad and important to be written off and answered simply in one sentence or two, it is possible that Robin Leaver has come closest in formulating a good answer: "The Christian cultus is something that should develop from within a particular culture and find new expressions of worship."[34] If the expressions of worship have sprung out of the local culture, can they not constitute both a unique "language

of faith" and a heart-song? Can a song not point to the glory and the splendor of God and still be nestled in the midst of cultural nuance and subtlety that only add to the splendor? Yes, it is a fine line to walk, but it is one worthy of our attention.

Dawn also warns that we be careful not to mistakenly address false needs of the congregations while overlooking "*genuine* needs" of the community.[35] Our goal in producing indigenous songs is not entertainment or the comfort of worshippers, but the encounter between the community and God that happens in genuine worship. This is a warning we should definitely heed, lest in our efforts to produce vernacular music we cater to the needs of consumerism and narcissism.

Terry York offers another warning to worship planners that is likewise worthy of our attention. He warns against situations that produce "worship and ____," where anything in the blank becomes idolatry. For the scope of our present topic, one might consider inserting "missions" or "evangelism" in the blank. Genuine worship may have the effect of drawing people into the church or causing them to consider the gospel, but worship is about the relationship between a believer and God, not about witnessing and evangelism. How can we seek to contextualize worship and not enter the realm of "worship and missions/evangelism?"[36]

Rather than one bland voice being raised to the heavens, each culture is having its opportunity to raise its own voice, resulting in a kaleidoscope of praise and creating a mosaic called the body of Christ, the church.

J.G. Davies offers an interesting insight on the issue. In *Worship and Mission*, he seeks to dismantle the dichotomy that exists between worship and missions. He claims that the two are not opposites or different categories at all. Rather, they are each an essential part of the church. When one overtakes the other, various errors can occur. Davies begins by citing Karl Barth in dismantling the idea of a sacred versus a secular world. From here he claims that we have acquired our Western concept of seeing all things in opposing categories. Davies asserts that since Christ came to the world in a secular form and

experienced secular things, he in turn sanctified these things. Thus, nothing is now inherently secular. It is all under the reality of redemption in God.[37]

Additionally, Davies claims that we should view worship as "interpreted theologically within the total context of the Church's life in the world, and this conclusion demonstrates the falsity of placing worship and missions in separate compartments."[38] Using the example of God through Christ, we can see that God is a missionary God, a God of sending. He sent his Son to earth. Thus, for the church to be about and for God, it must recognize the importance of missions to God. Understanding that importance, it cannot divorce worship from missions or missions from worship.

Rather, Davies argues that worship and missions are needed to balance out the effects of one another. A church over-emphasizing worship often results in an inwardly turned congregation. Conversely, a church overly concerned with missions can become self-assertive or self-aggrandizing. Therefore, each element is needed in equal parts, for, as Davies sees it, "authentic worship combines vertical and horizontal...communication with a transcendent God and mission in the world."[39]

Worship in the New Testament, according to Davies, is made up of "unified aspects of God's relation with man."[40] He even goes so far as to say:

> Worship is not something that happens between the Church and God but between the world and God, the Church being no more than an instrument...the Church worships on behalf of the world.[41]

Thus Davies does not see a need to distinguish clearly between the church's mission work and its worship. Much of Davies's discussion of worship and mission resonates with Harold Best's ideas in *Unceasing Worship*.[42] In it he defines the concept of worship as an unceasing act. As human beings, we are always in a state of worship. That fact does not change. What changes is the object of our worship, not the act of worship.

In clarifying this definition, Best tries to encourage humans to eliminate their ideas of categorizing life in terms of worship. Worship is not attended on Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and occasionally Wednesday nights, only to be left behind while the congregants return to the rest of their lives. Instead, worship is a part of all of life.

The correlation to Davies is clear. If we accept Best's notion that worship is an unceasing act, then mission work must take place in the context of worship. Mission work actually *is* an act of worship. Thus,

there is no longer a dichotomy: worship and missions exist side by side. There is no "worship and." The two are inseparable.

Conclusion

This paper began with a look at how the philosophy of missions has changed over the last century. Missions has moved from a mind-set of saving a lost people out of their pagan cultures to encountering "the ever-present Christ" who is already within their cultures, waiting to be discovered.[43] In making this move, missions has begun to build upon the diversity of the body of Christ. Rather than one bland voice being raised to the heavens, each culture is having its opportunity to raise its own voice, resulting in a kaleidoscope of praise and creating a mosaic called the body of Christ, the church.

However, such a move has not happened on the home fronts of most American churches. Oftentimes, churches in the United States adopt a mentality like that of Israel in the Old Testament. The Chosen One, the designated people of God, was to attract people to herself as her worship and practices demonstrated the glory of God. There was no sending out.[44] Many churches today seem to operate under the same philosophy when it comes to worship and missions. Rather than being actively involved in encountering the culture, they have turned inward and said, "Come look at us and how we worship. We will show you the glory of God through our actions. We need not change."

This philosophy is not completely wrong; it is incomplete. It does not fit with the God who sent his Son to the world, clothed in the flesh of the world to live among the people of the world. The church should be about encountering the people who surround it, whether these people are rappers or Appalachian singers or gospel enthusiasts or polka fans. Worship must never become about the people, but it must be accessible to the people. If there is a disconnect between the people and worship, then the life of the church will perish. As Dom David Nicholson wisely writes, "If the church [is] unable to meet the needs of its people, a period of stagnation [will] follow."[45]

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Notes

1. "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Guild Press, 1966), 172, as quoted in "Developing an Indigenous Hymnody," Delbert Rice, *Practical Anthropology* 18 (May-June 1971), 97.
2. Robin Leaver, "Theological Dimensions of Mission Hymnody: The Counterpoint of Cult and Culture," in T*he Hymnology Annual: An International Forum on the Hymn and Worship*, vol. 1, ed. Vernon Wicker (Benton Harbor, MI: Patterson Printing, 1991), 40-42.
3. Andrés T. Tapia, "Musicianaries," *Christianity Today* 40 (July 1996): 52.
4. T. W. Hunt, *Music in Missions: Discipling through Music* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 11.
5. Harry Eskew and Hugh T. McElrath, *Sing with Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Hymnology*, 2nd ed., rev. and exp. (Nashville: Church Street Press, 1995), 86.
6. Mario Fred Ellerbe, "The Music Missionary of the Southern Baptist Convention: His Preparation and His Work" (D.M.A. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1970), 5.
7. Hunt, *Music in Missions*, 13.
8. Ibid., 18-33.
9. Tapia, 52. Italics mine.
10. The missionaries of the nineteenth century were well meaning. It is likely that their intentions were not to stamp out individual cultures. As noted in the opening, they were simply trying to save lost people. They feared that, once allowed to resume their old cultural ways, they would slip back into paganism and become lost again. Thus, they took what they thought was the only logical option. We should not be too quick to judge them.
11. Paul Neeley, "Noted Ministry," E*vangelical Missions Quarterly* 35 (April 1999): 156.
12. Helen Myers, "Introduction," in *Ethnomusicology: Historical and Regional Studies*, ed. Helen Myers, The Norton/Grove Handbooks in Music Series (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993), 3.
13. Delbert Rice, "Developing an Indigenous Hymnody," *Practical Anthropology* 18 (May-June 1971): 98.

14. Her list is actually about understanding a culture's hymnody, but the principles still apply.
15. Mary K. Oyer, "Hymnody in the Context of World Missions," in *The Hymnology Annual: An International Forum on the Hymn and Worship*, vol. 1, ed. Vernon Wicker (Benton Harbor, MI: Patterson Printing, 1991), 52-53.
16. Vida Chenoweth, "Do Universals in Music Exist?" *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 35 (April 1999): 163.
17. Gerhard Cartford, "Words and Music in Cross-cultural Hymnody, an Aspect and a New Song," in *The Hymnology Annual: An International Forum on the Hymn and Worship*, vol. 1, ed. Vernon Wicker (Benton Harbor, MI: Patterson Printing, 1991), 79.
18. Oyer, 52.
19. Cartford, 80.
20. Oyer, 52.
21. Nathan J. Corbitt, *The Sound of the Harvest: Music's Mission in the Church and Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 123.
22. Paul G. Hiebert, "Critical Contextualization," *Missiology* 12, no. 3 (July 1984): 288.
23. Ibid., 288-89.
24. Ibid., 289.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., 290.
27. Ibid., 290-91.
28. Rice, 109-10.
29. Paul Neeley, 156-57, 159.
30. A story of Muslims attracted to a Christian worship service via the music is available in Neeley's article on pages 158-59.

31 This attraction of music is one of the inherent qualities of music listed by several of the authors who were cited in this paper. Music has the ability to break down barriers and reach an otherwise inhospitable people group. For an extensive discussion of this subject see Corbitt, 81-139. Corbitt also deals with the transmission of music across cultural lines throughout his book.

32. Granted, there should be a clear distinction made between worship and the Contemporary Christian music business—the distinction being that one is a business and the other is not. However, the principles of altering a musical style to fit an audience are still the same—business or not.
33. Marva Dawn, *A Royal "Waste" of Time: The Splendor of Worshiping God and Being Church for the World* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 181.
34. Leaver, 46.
35. Dawn, 62.
36. All references to Terry York's "Worship and" concept are derived from class notes taken during his Christian Worship class at George W. Truett Theological Seminary in the Fall of 2005.
37. J. G. Davies, *Worship and Mission* (London: SCM Press, 1966), 12-14.

38. Ibid., 16.
39. Ibid., 17-18. Davies cites Matt 5:23 as support for this view.
40. Ibid., 21.
41. Ibid., 19.
42. Harold Best, *Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and the Arts* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003). This theme runs throughout the first half of Best's book. Thus, a direct citation to pages is not given.
43. Ibid., 30.
44. Ibid., 22.
45. Dom David Nicholson, *Vernacular and Music in Missions* (Cincinnati: World Library of Sacred Music, 1962), 7.

"Contextualization Abroad and at Home" . . . **So What?**

Questions for Consideration:

1. As clergy or a lay minister, how well do you know the "culture" of your fellow congregants? Is your church doing its best to minister effectively within that culture?

2. In his discussion of an indigenous hymnody, Stewart points out that a culture will produce its own hymnody when the need arises for it to express its own worship. This has much import for today's "Traditional versus Contemporary" worship debate. Can the influx of contemporary praise songs and the decline of traditional hymns be representative of a new "culture" producing its own distinct hymnody? If so, can realizing this bring any peace to our present worship wars?

3. Stewart warns that contextualization should not fall ill to the trap of "consumerism and narcissism" (80)—we should not mistake genuine needs for the desire to be entertained. How, if at all, have our churches substituted congregational comfort for genuine worship , and what can we do about it?

4. What message does your church send to the community by the way it worships?

Prepared by Jason Hentschel and Kathryn Seay

Mother India, Father God

The Story of How a Grown-Up Grew Up in India

CELINA VARELA

Last summer, a group of twelve Truett students traveled to India with professor Michael W. Stroope. The trip was part of a course that focused on a study of the church and culture of India. The students traveled throughout the country to meet with various missionaries who serve in India and to participate in other ministerial opportunities.

As I sat on the airplane in Dallas preparing to leave for my journey to India, I had no idea what was about to take place. The plane had not yet begun its acceleration down the runway for flight, but my heart was already soaring in anticipation of the journey I was beginning. The excitement produced bubbles of thoughts—airy, weightless, floating thoughts—that threatened to disobey the lit seat belt sign and were foolish enough to believe that they had some weight to fight off the deeper questions and concerns that were lurking in the back of my mind. For a moment, I let myself be carried off by them, only to arrive finally in India with the loud thud of a questionable landing and a hot bus ride to claim my luggage.

By the time our traveling team of thirteen arrived in Hyderabad, I found myself in a country so unlike my own in its use of contemporary design, I began daydreaming about time-travel. I imagined that my fellow travelers and I were secretly transported to the past, victims of a team of scientists who selected us for their experiment. We were being studied as we experienced for the first time an example of the airports of old, before the days of air-conditioned vehicles and fancy computer graphics. Then we walked out into the city where I was reminded of the volume and madness produced by modernity. Riding

as a passenger in the autorickshaws through the streets of India was like being inside a video game with no controllers. I heard the repeated racket of horns honking, saw the constant movement of people on every spot, and watched the driver as he attempted to get to the hotel as quickly as possible, with as little damage as possible.

She was the least of these, and I did not know how to respond. She was the real pearl, and I did not know what to give in exchange.

My focus on the hectic ride made me unaware of the life that was being lived outside the tiny vehicle in which I traveled. With my first walk through the streets of India, the chaos was minimized. As I dodged the motorbikes and played a stressful game of follow-the-leader with my eyes stuck to the person in front of me, bumping elbows with other people and traveling at a slower pace caused me to consider the lives of those among whom I would be living for the next four weeks. I saw women with their children buying fabric for their saris. I encountered men throwing mirrored bangles and wooden elephants in my face, asking me to look and buy. I walked by men, women, and children lying on the ground, seeking rest and refuge from the heat. I hoped my faith in Christ would provide me with something onto which I could cling as I encountered the harsh living conditions of those walking the streets of India. I was a child, not yet realizing that the big bubbles I perfected by blowing through the wand, the ones I loved to watch fly through the air, eventually had to land and burst.

It was decided that the group would use part of our time in Hyderabad to purchase traditional Indian clothing. Since Hyderabad is known for its pearls, our hosts decided it would also be worthwhile to visit a pearl shop. As we were walking to the pearl shop, I passed a young girl with big brown eyes and a yellow shawl draped around her shoulders. She appeared to be seven or eight years old. There was desperation in her voice as she spoke with her hands cupped out, directed up toward me. Despite the warnings and advice I received from others who had visited India before me, I discovered that in the excitement of arriving I had failed to think about my response to those on the street who would ask me for money or food. My first reaction was to look at her and smile. I did not have any coins; I did not speak her language. I touched her head and silently uttered a prayer for her. I kept walking.

The little girl followed and continued to plead, "Rupee please, madam, please." She came very close to me and grabbed my arm. I was shocked and saddened by my inadequate response. What more could I do? I touched her hand and acknowledged her plea: "I'm sorry. I have no coins," I said. The despair in my voice almost matched her own. The young girl then kneeled down to cling to my legs, making it difficult for me to continue walking. I stepped over her arms, nearly tripping. I was ashamed as I felt myself wanting to escape the situation, to be rid of her. She stayed on the ground, walking on her knees, attempting to touch my feet as I walked. I quickened my pace, hoping no one would see my guilt, my shame, my confusion, my frustration, my pain, and my sadness.

I walked into the shop that was lined with glass cases full of pearls. Chairs with red padding awaited customers who sat, adored the jewels, and gave rupees in exchange for the ones they wanted. I told myself not to cry. I told myself that no one wanted to see a silly American woman weep in a pearl shop. At the same time, I could still hear the voice of the girl. I saw her yellow shawl. I felt her hands on my feet. I thought, *This is the voice, clothes, and hands of the poor, the helpless, the weak, the hungry, the thirsty, the imprisoned.* She was the least of these, and I did not know how to respond. She was the real pearl, and I did not know what to give in exchange. I did not know practically how to bring the good news of the kingdom. I wondered how I could rightly be the representation of Christ to her in that moment, and I did not know the answer. I came to India to encourage other Christians and participate in the church. I wondered how that was going to happen. I longed to see the body of Christ in India. What did the church look like? Where was the church? How was the church to speak out and act against the injustice she saw in India? I prayed that I would see how the church survived and worked to be the action of God. I prayed that my own time in the country would teach me how to express obediently and completely the love of God to others. I sat down on a red cushion and wept.

"Isn't this what you came to India for? To buy pearls?" my professor asked with a hint of sarcasm in his voice. There was a gentle look of understanding in his glance. His question brought me out of my thoughts and back into reality. I could not speak, so I shook my head. He spoke for me: "This is the last place you want to be."

The next morning I sat in my newly purchased clothing and wrote in my journal: *In my Indian dress. Yellow with white embroidered flowers. Simple. Reminds me of the sheets mom put on our beds when we were small—the ones with yellow daffodils....* This was to be the first of many reminders of my childhood. Walking through the Banjara villages, the smell of hay and

goats made me feel like a child roaming the garden of my grandpa's land as I picked tomatoes off the vine and listened to the goats bleat. The tinsel around the yellow, orange, and red flowers on the garlands that adorned our necks became the tinsel I would place between my teeth as a child and blow, watching it fly and reflect light. The Banjara woman who embraced me the moment I jumped off the oxcart and became my guide through the village had my mother's name—Maria. The small boy running barefoot in the dusty street with a kite became the picture of my dad when he was a boy. There were also many similarities between the streets of India and the streets of Mexico. The walk from the internet café to the hotel became the walk with my grandpa from my great-grandmother's house to the ice cream vendor in Juarez. I would later begin to understand that these reminders were necessary not only for me to see how much I had changed, but also for me to be significantly transformed.

My childlike vulnerability was comforted when I began to think of India as a breeding, nurturing mother who was conceiving a new part of me as she groaned and cried out, who was taking my faith under her care with a warm embrace.

The reminders of childhood caused me to feel like a child, and many of the frustrations of being in a foreign country diminished. I was learning to walk in a new way by studying the movements of the people I met. The pace was quick, but cautious. People did not hesitate to walk across the street but were always aware of the cars approaching. I was learning to speak a new language, pointing and asking questions about everything I saw. I was learning to think differently, constantly converting things in my head: 20 rupees? Double the number, move the decimal over, add a little more; that comes out to about 45 cents. The same type of dialogue took place for the conversion of Celsius to Fahrenheit and kilometers to miles. My behavior was changing, but my childlike vulnerability was comforted when I began to think of India as a breeding, nurturing mother who was conceiving a new part of me

as she groaned and cried out, who was taking my faith under her care with a warm embrace.

After Hyderabad, we spent three days in the city of Chennai. For day two in Chennai, we were to play the role of tourists, riding on a hot, sticky bus with seats that faced opposite the direction of movement. The bumpy ride and awkward seating made me sick. One of our destinations was an obscure Hindu temple that our driver could not find. As he drove, he smiled, shrugged his shoulders, and spoke words I did not understand. I was annoyed. We circled streets and made jolting stops until we finally arrived. Our walk to the entrance of the temple revealed locked doors and signs that announced the appropriate hours of visitation. I was angry. The lunch hour had passed. I was hungry. We were a dismal team of tourists.

I was wallowing in my misery, closing my eyes, and refusing to speak, when my friend next to me imparted his response to the horrible situation. "I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart," he sang. The rolling of my closed eyes was not noticeable to anyone. Why did he want to mask the wretchedness of the moment? I wondered why anyone would want to sing at such a time. I heard the snickers of others. Then, someone asked the question I dreaded hearing—"Where?"—and the reply—"Down in my heart!" I refused to join in the singing. With each stop, complaints entered my mind. They invaded every space and soon became eager to escape and be heard. They wanted to tell everyone that I was in the blistering sun, breathing in the smell of trash decomposing in the streets, drinking hot water, and attempting to stop myself from vomiting. They did not want to tell the story in song.

Another tourist stop required a steep climb up a hill to see the main attraction. As I walked down alone, I silently complained about the heat and looked to find and curse the bus in which I would soon be a passenger again. There, written across the top of the windshield in bright green letters was the bus's name—Maria. I stared at the name in disbelief and anger. I was confronted with the embarrassment of how quickly my mood could be changed by a situation. I could not believe how fickle I was. I was disappointed in myself for being someone who easily forgot the previous lessons learned from challenging situations. I was angry that I was the type of person who could love the streets of India one day and hate them as soon as I experienced a slight discomfort, who called India my mother one day and cursed her the next. I stared at the name as though it were a mirror and allowed it to reflect other scenes from my time in India that revealed my own humanity and sinfulness.

I saw the women of India trudging through the dusty streets in

their saris, displaying their bellies and the dirt in the creases of their arms and feet. My own culture taught me that an excess of flesh should be covered; flesh should only be displayed if on an exemplar of the human body. I spent money, time, and effort to make myself as presentable as possible to my society, spending more for the pants that made me appear thinner, using portions of my income to purchase cosmetics to better the appearance of my face and hair. I could picture myself in front of my mirror in Waco, using hair product to reduce frizz, ensuring that every hair would stay down. Considering the time and resources I put into my looks made me grossly aware of my own vanity. I longed to rid myself of the type of living I was accustomed to in America. My vanity revealed itself in my excessive spending and wasteful lifestyle. Many of the women I encountered in India lived on meager incomes. Why should I not do the same? These women were beautiful. They added to the color of India as they walked wrapped in hues of green, red, purple, and blue, ornamented with nose rings, toe rings, and bangles. I began considering what steps I could take in order to live as simply and as beautifully as they did.

I was angry that I was the type of person who could love the streets of India one day and hate them as soon as I experienced a slight discomfort, who called India my mother one day and cursed her the next.

I saw the face of a man named Rajendran, whom we met in Hyderabad. He spoke about the need to increase Christian work among the middle and upper classes with so much vigor and passion that it seemed to exclude the poor. At the time, I felt justified in dismissing what he said, but as I fixed my eyes on my mother's name and reflected on this past scene, I was aware only of my quick judgmental eyes and ears that stopped listening when I disagreed. In allowing my own agenda and thoughts of living in solidarity with the poor to be the correct way of Christian living, I failed to recognize the limitations of my own viewpoint. I did not allow Rajendran's convictions to sharpen my own. He was my brother, working as faithfully and obediently as he

could in response to God's calling. I pondered over what it meant to be a part of the same body as Rajendran and longed to find a way to cultivate ears of compassion that listen to those whose eyes see things differently and offer new perspective.

I saw the twelve people with whom I traveled and realized that they were not exempt from my judgment. I deemed many of their habits annoying and dreaded listening to their complaints. Yet, I expected them to understand my own irritating behaviors and sought their consolation when I wanted to whine. I became aware of my failure to love them as completely and perfectly as I desired. They were my greatest discoveries in the country; they knew me best during those days and became the sweetest portions of my memories. The amount of time we spent with one another, praying for one another, seeing one another's faults, and forgiving one another was an example of the type of community I desired to find in the church. In Waco, the necessity of working long hours and leading busy lives kept us from committing to one another as deeply as we could in India. I hoped to find a church community through which I could live in a way that was starkly different from the life of independence and ease I had cultivated in America. My companions gave me hope that such a community was possible.

It was the miracle of grace that allowed these initial visions and critiques to be changed into something beautiful. My glances of humanity became examinations of God's redeeming, creative power in the world, and I was reminded of Christ's action in my life and in the lives of others. The reminder compelled me to ask God to change the things about me that were lacking and required me to love others with the same love I had been given.

It was the miracle of grace that allowed these initial visions and critiques to be changed into something beautiful.

The thoughts that began in Chennai traveled with me into the next city, Cochin. By the time we left Cochin, my reflections regarding my experiences with and responses to the people I encountered led me to write the following in my journal: *There's an inexplicable event that occurs when I allow myself to love with the same scandalous grace with which Christ loves. In touching dirty hands, I realize that there is dirt beneath my own fingernails. In embracing or passing someone who smells as if they have not showered in days, I am aware of my own stench. In extending grace to my neighbor, I am made aware of the great grace I*

have been given. And still, it is sometimes difficult for me to do. Sometimes my response is to turn away, to move away, to roll my eyes in frustration.... I concluded the entry in the same way I had attempted to end every entry—with a prayer for the team: *O Lord, may we remember that our definition of success cannot be the measure of how greatly we have loved. Please remind us that we have loved greatly when we act despite the risk of failure, when we touch in spite of the fear, and when we are changed to see you and ourselves in the faces of those we love. Amen.* The answer to the prayer began in Kolkata.

When we reached Kolkata, I had become slightly accustomed to the fast rhythm of walking on the streets of India; however, this city held some unpleasant surprises. On the taxi from the airport to the hotel, I sat—partially on the seat, partially on the lap of the person next to me—in the back seat with my bag on my lap. There were six people in the vehicle, and we were going faster than anything I had experienced in India. The traffic was heavy, and the windows were down. The wind came in violently, drying out my contacts and stinging my eyes. It hit my ears with a loud roar. I closed my eyes, put my hands over my ears, and bowed my head. My friend Katie, who sat to my left, tapped my arm to get my attention. "Are you O.K.?" she asked with a level of concern in her voice that astounded me. I could not admit aloud that I thought we might die in this car ride. I assured her that everything was fine and silently prayed that we would arrive safely. Two stops and one offer of marijuana later, we arrived at Hotel Krystal.

Our welcome was no air conditioning, no towels, stains on the sheets, ants crawling on the bed and carpet, water straining to come out of the sink, and a toilet to be used with caution. I was not prepared for the conditions. Walks in Kolkata resulted in clothes that were soaked in sweat after a block. The humidity and heat were insufferable, making it difficult to sleep. Any sleep obtained was interrupted by the need to leave the hotel at extremely early hours. But for every unpleasant surprise, there was a gift of unlikely joy given, like Katie's gentle touch and genuine concern in the taxi. When I was not able to fall asleep, laughter and good conversation with my roommate Meagan allowed time to pass quickly. Every walk eventually ended in the cool coffee shop, Barista, our haven. And then I was given one experience that I would not exchange for a lifetime of air-conditioned nights at the Hilton.

On my second morning in Kolkata, I found myself in a taxi on the way to the Mother House to worship with the Missionaries of Charity. Sleepy eyes and a cloudy head added to the dreamlike feeling of the moment. Katie and I were going to volunteer at Kalighat, the home for the dying started by Mother Theresa. I was going to walk where

Mother Theresa once walked. When I entered, I expected the place to be frantic with movement and crowded with people. Instead, Katie and I walked into a simple, serene building. There was a small open area with a platform that had cabinets for medical supplies, lotions, body oils, etc. To the left, there was a room for the men and to the right, a room for the women. In the middle, a doorway led into a room with concrete floors and sinks everywhere, methodically arranged for dish washing and laundry. There were stairs outside the doorway that led to the roof, where all volunteers were to take a break at 10:30.

Frederic, a gracious, good-natured young man from Sweden whom we had followed as our guide said to us, "You can grab an apron here. The men will go this way; women, that way. There will be a break at 10:30 upstairs. I'll see you then." He left. Katie and I looked at one another with visible anxiety in our hearts and proceeded to put on the aprons. Soon, Frederic returned. "Oh!" he said, "I forgot to say, the sisters are very quiet. Sometimes they will not tell you what to do, so you must ask what you can do to help. Don't be afraid to ask."

Katie and I were given metallic plates of breakfast for the women. We walked into a room that was shaped like an L. As we entered, we saw cabinets to the left that held clothes and rags for washing. To the right, there were cabinets, which we later discovered held the volunteers' belongings. There were two rows of blue plastic cots, and upon each a woman sat, dressed in one of three different dresses: a yellow dress with red flowers, a navy dress with stripes, or a light blue dress with a flower print. Some of the dresses were left untied in the back for easy use of the restroom. None of the women appeared to be wearing undergarments. At Kalighat, Katie and I spent time with women who were suffering more than I have ever known. I was complaining about the condition of the toilet and absence of air conditioning in the hotel room. The women I met were smiling as they lay immovable on their cots, dying.

"Please remind us that we have loved greatly when we act despite the risk of failure, when we touch in spite of the fear, and when we are changed to see you and ourselves in the faces of those we love."

We handed them the shiny plates that held a piece of bread and a

banana. Once everyone had food, I noticed women who were not eating. Some of them could not feed themselves. As I walked, I caught the eye of a woman who motioned for me to sit by her. I sat on her bed, and seeing that she had the use of only one arm, began to help her eat. I cut up the bread and handed it to her in pieces. When she motioned that she wanted some of the banana, I gave it to her in bite-sized portions. When she finished eating, I handed her a cup of water. Next to me, Katie was mashing up bananas and bread for a frail, emaciated woman who could not sit up on her own. The woman held onto Katie, forcing their two bodies to collide and embrace. I will never forget the look on Katie's face as she fed the toothless woman. There was a genuine love and compassion in her smile and a sweet tenderness in her eyes as she held on to the woman to feed her. Katie said she had walked into the room praying that she would experience a real encounter with God. Whether or not she saw God in the face of the toothless woman is her story to tell, but I believe her prayer was answered. As I looked at Katie's face, I imagined I was seeing what the disciples saw as Christ ministered, loved, and touched those whom others turned away.

What I saw caused me to ponder if it meant that in the face of suffering, in the knowledge of approaching death, one can be reminded of the worth of the life that is passing and the joy of the new life approaching....

I spent the majority of the next hour wringing out laundry until the water caused the wrinkles on my hands to multiply and I thought I would develop blisters. Still, I felt content as I helped wash the yellow, navy, and light blue dresses thrown among the pants and shirts worn by the men. Then, I noticed something yellow on the pants I was wringing out and quickly realized it was human feces. To my amazement, I did not hesitate, but continued to wash the soil from the pants and wring them out. As I washed, two young ladies from France sang French hymns that they had learned as children. I felt as though I were in a large cathedral where two voices reverberated, harmonizing. I was touching excrement and helping to remove it in a holy place. It was

to be the first event that caused me to realize that Kalighat is full of moments where the dingy meets the pristine. It was a place where the profane and the sacred seemed to touch.

After helping with laundry, I went back into the room where the women slept. I noticed a doctor cutting gauze to cover the wounds of a young woman who groaned as she lay on her back. The doctor was working alone. It was 10:30, and everyone else was taking a break upstairs. Seeing her struggle to keep the woman in place while adjusting the gauze, I asked the doctor if she needed any help. I was quickly put in charge of taking off the old coverings from the young woman's wounds. I asked about the woman's condition and discovered that she had been raped and stabbed several times. Her femur was broken. After new dressings had been put on the visible wounds, the doctor asked if I would help move the patient while she held the leg in place to relieve some of the pain the move would cause. As we moved her, we noticed that there was a large gash under her broken leg. In an attempt to stop the bleeding, someone had stuffed the wound with gauze. The wound was now infected, and pus was pouring out onto the blue plastic cot. I was given a new assignment: to clean up after the doctor who began pulling out the gauze from the wound. I took the bloody rags to the trash and cleaned the bed. My look must have revealed my feelings for the stench and sight of what was happening because the doctor continuously asked me if I was okay. By the grace of God, I was, so I continued cleaning. When there was nothing for me to clean, I stayed and caressed the forehead of the lady. I prayed for her and implored God to grant her endurance, comfort, and healing.

This particular woman's story is not unlike the stories of the many women at Kalighat who have endured horrible things. They bear the proof of a very profane world and the consequences of sinful, harmful choices made by others; yet, they were now receiving love and hope and prayers for comfort. In the midst of that horrible situation, there was a beautiful reminder of the kingdom come. My own prayer before coming to Kalighat was that I would understand and see what it meant to suffer and "die with dignity," a phrase I always heard connected with Mother Theresa. What I saw caused me to ponder if it meant that in the face of suffering, in the knowledge of approach-

I am convinced that I can love only because of God's love in me, changing me, teaching me how to love.

ing death, one can be reminded of the worth of the life that is passing and the joy of the new life approaching, while knowing that one is not alone but loved, even by a complete stranger. The suffering did not end—these women were in very real pain—but there was love given in the midst of the hurt by countless volunteers from all over the world.

I was surprised by my responses to my experiences at Kalighat. Though I spent the first part of the trip remembering my past and becoming aware of the person I am, at Kalighat I was shown the person I am becoming. I was amazed by how much I could love the women. I wanted to sit with them all day long. I wanted to rub their heads if it made them feel better. I wanted to listen to their stories for hours and pretend like I understood them. I wanted to continue rubbing lotion on the dry spots of their missing limbs and peeling skin. I kept wondering, *Who is this person who does not mind wiping the pus of an infected, stinky wound from the bed*? I thought I knew myself well; I am aware of my fears and live with my own faults. And yet, at Kalighat I could love without even thinking about the fact that I could get an infection; I could extend my hand without judging something as too repulsive to touch. I knew that it was only because of the grace of God that I was able to endure two days at Kalighat. In a miraculous way, God continued to transform me into someone learning to love the way God loves.

Most times my shortcomings are painfully obvious, but then there are small moments when I am surprised by how much love I can have for a complete stranger. I am convinced that I can love only because of God's love in me, changing me, teaching me how to love. I understood what led Paul to say, "This is not me anymore, this is Christ in me." I found myself overwhelmed with gratitude for this grace. It is a wonderful thing to serve a God whom I understood more as I poured water into the mouth of a woman who was dying, who could not move, could not open her eyes, could not feed herself, but could open her mouth and swallow the flowing water.

On my last day at Kalighat, I sat and massaged one woman's hands and head for about fifteen minutes. During the end of our time together, she grabbed my hands suddenly, kissed them, and put them to her head. I did the same to her hands. As I left, I pressed my palms together in front of my chest, bowed my head, and said, "Namaste"—I see God in you. She shook her head and closed her eyes, as if she felt the greeting was not deserved, as if I were mistaken by saying this to her. "Yes!" I said and repeated, "Namaste. Namaste." I took her hands in mine one last time and kissed them.

I wept the next morning when I woke up on a train in Varanasi and not in Kolkata. I descended the train with my fellow travelers and walked into a sea of people who sat with their hands cupped out, di-

rected up toward me. My time in India had shown me what I was to do. My experiences had led me to places where the body of Christ was active. I knew that there were believers in India who gave to the poor out of their own poverty, who provided aid to the helpless and an arm for the weak despite their own fatigue, who fed the hungry and gave water to the thirsty, incited by their own cravings for righteousness. I knew that I was to act in the same way. Yet, despite this knowledge, I continued walking briskly, keeping up with those in front of me, fighting back the tears, and hurrying to get to cars that were waiting for us.

Once we reached our destination, my friend whose heart is filled with an unbelievable amount of compassion came to hug me and inquire about my condition. "Celina, what's wrong, sweetie?" Katie asked. I was choking on tears and could only whisper, "I don't want to be here. I want to be in Kolkata. I want to be at Kalighat." *Why did we leave*? I asked myself. When I was there, I could feed the ones who were hungry. I could touch them, I could massage their heads and hands, I could wash their dirty clothes. I could do something. Here, I just passed rows and rows of people with their hands open, held up to us, and even though I knew what I should do, it was necessary to continue walking to meet our hosts.

I knew the questions were pointing to apprehensions beyond the moment. I was upset by the fact that I could not respond the way I desired, but my uneasiness was multiplied by the fact that our time in India was quickly approaching its end. Soon, I would be back in Waco and decisions concerning my plans beyond graduation would be meeting me like eager children back from recess awaiting detailed instructions from the teacher. How could I respond most faithfully to the lessons I had learned in India? What actions could I take to live a simpler lifestyle and to help me further develop the changes that were occurring in me? I wondered, *Would I be able to respond correctly or would my life be spent with activities that made it necessary not to stop but continue walking*?

He sat on the floor with his body wrapped in saffron-colored clothing. A saffron turban covered his head, but his thick, uncut beard revealed that the hair underneath had also been allowed to grow. He told us it was part of his vow to God. My fellow traveling companions and I sat on the floor of a small house in Varanasi, listening the story of this man. After years of struggling with what it meant to be Hindu and follow Christ, this man, whom we called Swami G (a Hindu title that identifies the bearer as a learner of religious and spiritual matters), spoke to us about how his calling led him to make choices that eventually exiled him from both Hindu and Christian communities. He made lifestyle choices that many Christians in India could not endorse: he

refused to eat meat as proof of his faith in Christ; he continued to wear the traditional clothing of his culture; he would not marry and would not cut his hair. He lived simply and humbly, believing all his decisions to be guided by his relationship with God. Those within his own culture did not understand his devotion to a God who was embraced by those in the West. His exclusivity did not allow full participation in their worship acts to their gods. He was a renouncer within the Hindu tradition, but he did he not embrace the Hindu gods.

Swami G spoke and I began to see that the products of his labor were not the vows and decisions that he had made, but the happiness and satisfaction of knowing that he was in God's will. Though he was an enigma to many in his country, he was being used by God to make known the love and salvation of Christ. There was excitement in my spirit as I listened to Swami G. I empathized with his struggle. The joy that underlined his story encouraged me to pursue similar lifestyle changes. My choices to continue to be a vegetarian, to begin the purging of my possessions, to live more simply, to buy less, and to find an intentional Christian community in which to live were made prayerfully and deliberately in response to the convictions confirmed by my experiences in India. But these changes are not the defining yields of my relationship with Christ. They are only my markings, my delights, my attempts to move beyond this world and into life in the kingdom come. They are the changes I am making to answer the question I wrote in my journal a few days before I left for my trip: *What must I change for my life to be in complete submission? Not to society, not to tradition, not to family, not to norms, but to God's calling in my life?* They are choices I make to ensure that I will not be tempted simply to walk by the rows of people Christ commands me to love.

CELINA VARELA
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Set Free

Love and Liberation in a Homeless Shelter

KEVIN AVERY

A student shares his experiences as a Bible study leader for homeless men and women in Waco.

"Calcuttas are everywhere if only you have the eyes to see."
Mother Teresa

I couldn't help but smile. It wasn't that I had accomplished some great feat, and it wasn't that the night was festive and carefree. We were still at war in Iraq, I still had an endless to-do list, and my homeless friends would still be homeless the following morning. In fact, I'm not sure if my smile was even visible.

Nevertheless, I couldn't help but smile because I had encountered life—deep, messy life. Whether we mean to or not, we often reduce the good news to a bandage, an easy fix, or a false presumption. But on that Friday night last April, several people in my Bible study felt safe enough to expose their deep wounds. Four of the homeless men expressed their struggles with suicidal thoughts: one had tried to commit suicide the previous week, and another had recently been released from a mental institution. A woman indicated that Christ was good even though she had recently been beaten up in the park, and another woman finally opened up about her overwhelming depression. She had hit bottom. Ever since a loved one had tragically died, she had been grasping at anything to numb the pain.

To some in the homeless shelter, I am their priest. To others, I am their pastor, or simply their friend. Still to others, I am the foolish young man who keeps coming back on Friday nights, teaching that God is not only real, he is dangerously loving. Officially, I am only their Bible study leader, but sometimes it can be overwhelming to consider how critical my role is in their lives. After all, though I am a pastor, I

do not have a doctorate in psychology or years of experience in a mental ward or rehab center. Of even greater concern is the fact that I am to represent Christ to these wonderful, but hurting, people. Thankfully, the fact that I care and that I listen often overshadows my lack of credentials. Still, there are moments when I must speak into their lives.

In such moments, I find strength and joy in knowing that God will give me the words to say, whether it be Scripture, a prayer, or even silence. By surrendering, "Here I am, Lord," I know that God will be with my mouth and will teach me what to say. Indeed, these days God has been teaching me that people can be in so much bondage and addiction that they are unable to hear and then say "yes" to Christ and follow him. God sent Moses and Aaron to Pharoah with this message: "Let my people go so that they may worship me"(Exod 5:1). There was no promise that the children of Israel would actually worship and serve God, but God provided liberation so that they could choose whether or not they would worship. In a similar vein, 2 Cor 4:3-4 makes it clear that for those perishing, the gospel is veiled because "the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving."

In his simple but profound way, he said, "Jesus, I want your life."

In previous experiences at the homeless shelter, I had already witnessed an unveiling. After praying with a man about his depression, I sensed he was completely empty inside. When I asked him if he had a personal relationship with Christ, he said no. Before I even had the chance to say another word, he surprised me, saying, "I always wanted to. But I can't." His eyes exposed his deep sorrow and anguish, so I asked him why he couldn't. He looked away, shaking his head, "I just can't. I can't say the name of _____."

"Jesus?"

In screaming silence, I waited, praying. I could literally see a battle raging inside this man. His bondage and pain were serving as a wall between us. "Henry (not his real name)," I said quietly but with the confidence God was giving me, "I am going to pray for you. Whatever it is that has you captive, I am going to pray for your release. I am going to pray that your tongue be freed, and then you can pray to receive Jesus as your life."

I prayed just that, and then I said, "Okay, Henry, you can pray now." In his simple but profound way, he said, "Jesus, I want your life."

I knew at that moment, my smile was obvious. It was the first time in his life he was able to say the name of Jesus without using it as a curse word. By April, it had been a month since Henry had been set free. He was still dealing with "ups and downs" as he put it, and the confusion and depression that had consumed him for years had not vanished. Nevertheless, things had changed. Prior to that night, he was not experiencing any "ups," and he was unable to praise the name of Jesus.

When listening to the others that April night, I cannot say there was as much rejoicing. In fact, one man got up and left while I was praying for him. Apparently, it was too much for him. However, the very fact that the group trusted me enough to open up and confess their thoughts and actions was a huge step—a step that had taken months of trust building to reach. In the case of the woman who had lost a loved one, she was able to smile for the first time in days. She realized she was not alone and that God still loved her, even after she had been turning away from him. And in terms of our friendship, she used to introduce me as the preacher. But for the first time, she referred to me as her pastor. She had hope when she said, "I know you will be praying for me." If that doesn't make a minister of the gospel smile, I don't know what would!

On such Friday nights, I can only thank God for allowing me to serve and worship him, for allowing me to be his presence in that shelter. Being able to get my hands messy for Christ is why I can continue doing what God has called me to do. It is how I avoid burnout in ministry, and it is why I can't help but smile. I receive the joy that while I may not have turned the world upside down, I sure gave it a nudge.

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Poetry

Surely Not I

WAYNE DOWNS

Lord if I, sat with you at your table
And shared, with you the wine and bread
Lord would I have been the one who betrayed you
Or would I, have turned to you and said

"Surely not I, Lord
Because I walk with you each day."
"Surely not I, Lord
Because I will follow you to the grave."
"Surely not I, Lord
Because I am with you at this table."
"Surely not I, Lord
Surely I'm not able."

As you said, "One will dip his bread with mine."
I grew sad, and no longer felt quite whole
And you said, "The Son of Man must die."
Then I saw, my hand with yours in the bowl

Surely not I, Lord
Why do I have to fail you
Surely not I, Lord
I shouldn't be this way
Surely not I, Lord
How can you ever forgive me
Surely not I, Lord
What will be made of me

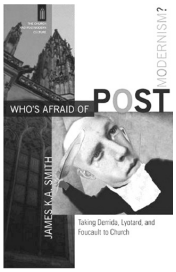
Yet while I, crumbled like the bread before me
You gave thanks, and offered me bread and wine
And you said, "This is my blood and my body.
This, this is how I will make you mine

Surely not I, Lord
I don't deserve to be made new
Surely not I, Lord
I know what I've done to you
Surely not I, Lord
I don't deserve to be made new
Surely not I, Lord
I know what I've done to you

Truly but you, Lord
You brought me to this table
Truly but you, Lord
Truly you are able

WAYNE DOWNS
is a second year student at Truett Seminary. After graduation in August 2007, he plans to pursue a Ph.D. in Moral Philosophy with aspirations to teach theology and philosophy at a small college. He completed his undergraduate degree at Campbellsville University in Campbellsville, KY. His wife Amy is working on the M.Div./M.S.W. dual degree program with future plans for Ph.D. work as well. Wayne may be reached at Wayne_Downs@baylor.edu.

Book Reviews



Smith, James K. A. Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?: Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006. 160 pgs.

At this time when many are wondering what the future of the church will look like, James Smith offers some insightful perspectives in his book *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism*? He addresses an audience of students and clergy who now find themselves trying to live out Christianity and navigate the mysterious waters of "postmodernism." What is postmodernism? Smith avoids giving a strict definition to characterize this concept. Instead, he explores the arguments of three specific philosophers—Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard, and Michel Foucault—and gives implications for the church. Throughout the book, Smith is laying the foundation for what he proposes is a "Radical Orthodoxy"—a postmodern recovery of what has been lost in modernity and a return to historic, traditional Christianity.

First, Smith explores Derrida's claim that "there is nothing outside the text." Smith quickly points out that this phrase and the catchphrases of the other philosophers have been misunderstood and provides context for clarification. Derrida intends to correct a Rousseauean misconception by proposing that there is nothing that comes to humans without interpretation, and consequently nothing is without context. Smith then applies this proposition to the gospel—a terrifying scenario to some who fear the possibilities of complete subjectivity.

Instead, Smith believes that acknowledging that the gospel is an interpretation from a certain perspective would be a liberating concept. For him, the gospel is the right interpretation. The responsibility of the Christian then becomes to proclaim the gospel and allow the Holy Spirit to work in the lives of those who hear in order that they

might also come to the right interpretation. Smith and Derrida both overcome the complications that could arise from individual subjectivity by placing interpretation within the bounds of a community. The Christian community is the church—the believing community where the Holy Spirit works to ensure a good interpretation. Believers are then to use Scripture as the interpretation medium through which they see the world.

Smith then moves to Lyotard and his definition of "postmodernism as incredulity towards metanarratives." Again, this claim taken out of context is a threat to Christianity, which bases its belief on revelation through narrative—particularly the narrative that begins with creation and ends with the *eschaton*. Smith settles this conflict by explaining Lyotard in context. It is not all narratives that Lyotard rejects—only those that are a product of modernity and seek to qualify their stories through science or rational proof. These he rejects because they fail to recognize their place among narratives, instead posing as the ultimate form of truth and disregarding everything else. For Lyotard, all truth is communicated through narrative, the metanarrative being no exception.

Smith proposes that postmodernism create room for the proclamation of the Christian narrative which has been plagued by the metanarrative criteria for all of modernity. Instead of having to try to validate this ancient story with rational proof, Christians can be free to proclaim and give people a chance to believe. Smith challenges the postmodern church to tell the story of Christianity as it is—an ancient tale beginning with creation, leading up to present, and carrying on to the future. He is adamant about recovering the "timelessness" of the faith and not being tempted to rework the faith, message, or worship to make it attractive to our contemporaries. Smith believes there is power in the mystery of ancient Christianity—something unique that is found nowhere else.

The last thinker Smith explains is Foucault. Foucault's observation is that in modernity, "power is knowledge." Through a series of case studies, Foucault exposes modern society as a machine that shapes humanity to the values of society. In this process, the outsiders are those who refuse to adhere to these values. These unfortunate ones are "violently" rehabilitated and fixed through various systems in place in the societal machine to assure universal conformity. What or who is in power decides knowledge—thus power is knowledge.

Smith struggles with why Foucault presents this machine. The two possibilities are either just to describe the way the word is or expose an injustice that must be corrected. Smith eventually questions whether the power of this machine is intrinsically evil. He decides

that evil is not inherent to the machine; instead, the machine is to be judged by what it is shaping humans to be. Modern society shapes humans to be docile producers/consumers. Smith proposes that postmodern Christians utilize this machine for the shaping of humans into what God has created them to be: creatures made in his image. The challenge for the postmodern church is to form a community that shapes itself through worship and discipleship to reflect the values of Christianity.

Smith concludes his book with his own thoughts—a forecast of sorts. In this he identifies what he feels are some essentials to the future of the Christian church. The consistent message of his forecast is that the main thing the postmodern church should do is to reincorporate various elements of tradition. First, he believes that Christians should once again be a confessional people—the primacy of "I believe" over "I know." Next, he finds various ways of affirming a church that incorporates tradition, whether it be through the arts or sacraments. For Smith, it is important that Christians acknowledge the historicity of Christianity, including the past two millennia of the church. Christianity is not a set of universal principles; instead, it is the story of God working in the lives of people through time. Because of this, the church should embrace a tradition that recognizes the catholicity of Christianity. The church is not one Christian sect that triumphs over all others, but a group of people called out who share in common the Savior Christ. Smith repeatedly affirms a sacramental theology and a church that operates on a parish structure. He concludes with his vision of what a postmodern worship service should be.

The book as a whole raises some interesting issues and spotlights areas of Christianity that may have been either forgotten or neglected in modern Christianity. Smith's exploration of how Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault created space for some constructive conversation offers hope for the church. However, his "forecast" fails to take advantage of this created space. The last chapter reveals his own Reformed biases that were only subtle in the first four chapters. It is obvious that Smith wants a return to a more sacramental and "traditioned" form of Christianity. He repeatedly identifies all forms of contemporary evangelicalism (with the exception of the emergent church) with modernity and throughout the book insinuates that modernity has failed. While Smith makes many good points and offers enriching advice, the chapter viewed in its entirety is too tainted with his personal biases.

For one thing, modernity as a whole cannot be equated with failure. There are many ways in which modernity has enriched human life, and the practices of the modern church have edified Christianity. In looking to the future of the Christian church, it is more appropriate to

speak in terms of reforming (identifying baggage) rather than replacing the modern church with a more pre-modern one. It is not possible to "undo" modernity.

The space Smith created by exploring the thoughts of Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault he left largely unoccupied. After discussing context and perspective with Derrida and then the value of narrative with Lyotard, he did relatively little with the proclamation of the gospel. There is an opportunity to take Scripture out from under the microscope of the Enlightenment and let it stand by itself—as the story of a particular point in time when God became human and opened the door for salvation. If there is once again value in narrative and if postmodern Christians have the freedom from "objective truth," then why did Smith not elaborate more on the role of evangelism in the postmodern church? For all his references to postmodern Christianity being more biblical, he fails to elaborate more on the importance of the proclamation of the gospel in his personal forecast. Surely evangelism is biblical.

Furthermore, Foucault's image of the machine is perfect for recovering the lost biblical principle of discipleship. He does mention this in the chapter on Foucault, but Smith could have written his entire final chapter on the importance of discipleship. It is important that postmodern Christians understand the transforming work of the Holy Spirit and the role of discipleship in this process. As Christianity is increasingly marginalized, discipleship becomes even more important because Christ-followers must be forged in this new and unique identity. They must take on the perspective and ways of Christ and know the story of God's redemptive work in order not to be dissolved by secular society. Smith's final chapter should have been on the importance of evangelism and discipleship in postmodern Christianity.

Although the final chapter could have been stronger, Smith's work as a whole is valuable to students and clergy looking to the future of Christianity. Identifying these prominent philosophers and their ideas will be helpful to ministers seeking to engage with society. Men and women cannot possibly be adequately equipped for Christian service today without understanding postmodernism and its relationship with the church.

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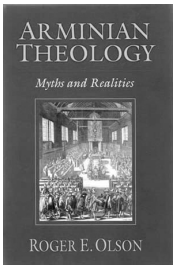
M.Div., Missions and World Christianity



Olson, Roger E. Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006. 250 pgs.

In his most recent work, *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities*, Roger Olson lays to rest many of the most common misconceptions surrounding this oft-misunderstood theological system. Arminian theology has come under fire from a number of popular evangelical corners in the last few years, with much confusion as to what exactly it is and is not. Thus, Olson presents this work as a lucid explanation meant to lay to rest many of the myths and half-truths surrounding Arminian theology.

Arminian theology derives its core tenets and name from its original expositor, Jacob Arminius (1560-1609), a Dutch theologian writing in the post-Reformation period. Born out of the Reformed tradition, it shares many tenets with what later became known as Calvinism. Assessing which variety is the more faithful interpretation of Reformed theology becomes part of the problem in understanding Arminianism: if Arminianism is from the same theological family tree as Calvinism—commonly assumed to be the polar opposite of Arminianism—what differences can there be? Olson, recognizing the confusion, adopts a myth-busting strategy in order to set the record straight. This work does a great service for two kinds of people: "those who do not know Arminian theology but want to, and those who think they know about Arminianism but really don't."[1] To that end, the work spends equal time correcting recent scholarly assessments of Arminianism and elucidating the core tenets of the theory.

The first two sections deal with the historical origins of the movement. Placing Arminius within his own historical context highlights two things: (1) Arminianism has deep historical roots within the Christian tradition and must not be confused with functional Pelagianism, Semi-Pelagianism, or folk religion and (2) Calvinism and Arminianism are siblings in the family tree of Reformed theology. Once one understands the historical roots of the movement, it becomes more evident why the movement has come under such fire in

recent years from high-profile defenders of Calvinist Reformed theology who see Arminianism as a false form of Reformed theology.

Arminian theology holds, with the Reformed tradition, to a covenantal theology of grace and to the primacy of God's glory.[2] Additionally, it holds, with Calvinism, that there is prevenient, sustaining grace by which God upholds the world. But when the discussion turns to questions of how this grace operates in the economy of salvation, and what role freedom plays in salvation, Calvinism and Arminianism part ways. In this way, Arminianism is understood not as an historical anomaly, but as part of a robust theological tradition.

Having established its historical roots, Olson then examines a more recent move within evangelicalism to eliminate Arminianism as a truly evangelical option. Despite Arminianism's deep inroads into Methodism and holiness traditions, high-profile evangelical voices, such as Robert A. Peterson and Michael D. Williams in their *Why I Am Not an Arminian*, have argued for the incommensurability of evangelical faith and Arminianism. Central to their complaints is the claim that Arminianism is a works-righteousness faith, depending upon human effort for salvation. Olson walks through the Christology of Arminius at this point and refutes this common misunderstanding, showing at every turn the commonality between Reformed orthodoxy and Arminian writings.[3]

Having shown the confusion that exists even on the scholarly level, Olson turns to the popular level, examining well-meaning attempts to draw Arminianism and Calvinism together. As Olson notes, attempts to synthesize the two into a hybrid of what he calls "Calminianism" fails to understand the vast differences between the two systems, despite their common foundation in the sovereignty of God and in a covenantal theology of grace.[4] With regards to the issue of atonement, for example, Calvinism holds that the atoning work of Christ is limited to those elected to be saved, with all of humanity otherwise under the curse of original sin. Arminianism, on the other hand, holds to a double form of redemption: Christ's death on the cross removes original sin, opening the possibility of salvation to all people.

Similarly, Calvinism and Arminianism find themselves at odds on the question of predestination. In Calvinism, Olson explains, predestination is understood as an eternal decree without regards to human response. With Arminianism, predestination takes into account the free belief of the responder. Thus, God predestines those who would believe to salvation. Issues surrounding freedom of the will cause any attempt at a "Calminianism" to break down similarly: Calvinists tend towards monergism—that God, as the cause of all that is, is the cause of salvation, with human will playing no role in election; Arminians,

on the other hand, tend toward synergism—that salvation involves both the will of God and the responding will of humanity.

Central to Arminianism is the grace of God, which lavishly frees all of humanity from the fall of Adam and offers to humanity the salvation which comes from God in Christ alone. No less a theology of grace than Calvinism, Olson maintains that Arminianism emerges as a corrective to what it perceives as a misstep by Calvinism: an overemphasis on the sovereignty of God at the expense of the goodness of God. While Arminianism confesses that God is the sovereign creator of the world, it does not maintain that God causes all that is in the world, but instead grants the gift of human freedom which plays a role in the process of salvation itself, as well as an important part in all of human existence.

With this foundation, one of the common critiques of Arminianism is that it is simply a new version of Pelagianism—salvation as a human effort. Rather, Olson argues, Arminianism finds its lifeblood in the character of God as loving and just, as one who offers salvation to all humanity and invites humanity to participate in its own salvation, without accruing merit. Tracing the historical contours of this critique, he shows how Arminianism has gone to great lengths to defend itself from this charge, often to little avail. Far from being an optimistic theology, Arminius and those following him confessed to the classical Reformed doctrines of the depravity of humanity and the bondage of the will, but saw them in light of the grace of God which overcomes both of these states.[5] Far from being optimistic about human potential, Arminianism sees the human condition as dire and in need of the grace of God. It is Arminianism's declaration that Christ's work has overcome the original disaster of Adamic sin and restored the freedom of response that has created suspicion within the Calvinist ranks as to Arminian orthodoxy.

Olson has done a great service to the academy and to the church in clearing the smoke from this often misunderstood aspect of the Christian tradition. In laying out the historical backgrounds in order to explain contemporary struggles over the heritage of Reformed theology, he has written an accessible and erudite volume which should receive attention from those struggling to understand both the past and the future of evangelicalism. Clear and concise, the work proceeds with appropriate footnoting for further reading, without bogging down the lay reader in too many sub-arguments. It is this reviewer's hope that the work will be taken seriously as a plea for a wider understanding of what it means to be both faithful and orthodox.

Notes

1. Roger E. Olson, *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 11.
2. Ibid., 49.
3. Ibid., 88-93.
4. Ibid., 68.
5. Ibid., 141.

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M.Div., Theology '03

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