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Why Have You Forsaken Me?

The Story of Christian Missions in Rwanda

JOELL BEAGLE

It has been fifteen years since the end of the genocide in 1994, fifteen years of picking up the pieces and trying to put a broken nation and a broken church back together again. There are no easy answers for how this can be done. There is no easy pathway to reconciliation. It begins with justice. It begins with forgiveness, and it begins with telling people's stories and reminding each other of what we have lost in others and lost within ourselves.

Rwanda's exotic landscape leaves one holding their breath, barely able to believe that a place so beautiful exists. The Land of a Thousand Hills clothes itself with jagged rain forests, extensive coffee fields, and cloud-covered volcanic peaks. Though its scenery can hold one captive, it was the inconceivable brutality of the 1994 genocide that jettisoned Rwanda onto the world scene. Prior to the genocide, most Westerners would not have been able to pinpoint this tiny African country on a map. While Rwanda has only come to the forefront within the last two decades, it has a rich cultural history and a dark missional past. The following paper will trace the history of Christian missions in Rwanda, focusing particularly on the church's role and response to the genocide of 1994.

Early Rwanda & the Colonial Powers

The colonial powers did not discover Rwanda for centuries as it lie nestled deeply in the heart of Africa. Rwanda is the home to the Banyarwanda people, who encompass three groups: Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa. Laurent Mbanda, a native Rwandan and the author of Committed to Conflict: The Destruction of the Church in Rwanda, stresses that these groups are all part of the same nation. Though Westerners made the mistake, and still make the mistake of describing them as distinct "ethnic" or "tribal" groups, Mbanda believes that this branding is a misnomer. In order for researchers to consider a group a "tribal society," they must be able to prove the presence of divisions in language, culture, and geography. Not only do Rwandans share a common language and culture, but many believe that they share a common ancestry. Mbanda writes, "As a child growing up, I heard stories from elders that the first inhabitant of Rwanda had three children. He named them Gahutu. Gatutsi and Gatwa. ('Ga' means 'small' in Kinyarwanda.)" With the knowledge of their common lineage and culture, Rwandans lived in relative peace up until the mid-twentieth century.

Though Rwandans shared a common cultural heritage, divisions emerged due to socioeconomic issues, which eventually brought about the formation of an informal caste system based on occupation. Prior to the arrival of the colonial powers, Tutsis made up a majority of the ruling class: the royal family, nobles, army commanders, chiefs, and cattle owners. In comparison, the Hutus were considered members of the lower class and usually lived as subsistence farmers. The Twas were a distinct minority, functioning mainly as hunters and pottery makers. Since socioeconomic issues rather than tribal identities created these divisions, it was conceivable for an individual to change castes depending on how he or she gained or lost status. It was economics rather than ethnicity that was the key to status in Rwandan society.²

Rwanda's first exposure to European colonialists came in the latter portion of the nineteenth century. In 1879, famed British explorer Henry Morton Stanley began his investigations into the interior of Rwanda. Though Stanley came in 1879, it would be another twenty years before another foreign power would take serious interest in this tiny African country. In 1897, Germany's Count Gustaav-Adolf Von Goetzen entered Rwanda, meeting King Rwabugiri on his travels inland from Tanzania. After the Count's visit, it took a mere two years before Germany took Rwanda as its colony –one that it would control until World War I ³

Christianity Comes to Rwanda & the Marriage of Church & State

When the Germans took control of Rwanda, they chose to govern by a system of indirect rule, exercising their authority through the existing indigenous political system. At the time, Rwanda was under the leadership of a king along with a series of chiefs and sub-chiefs, most of whom were Tutsi.⁴ The first Christian missionaries arrived in Rwanda during the time when it was under this system of indirect rule

Though fathers from the vicariate of Victoria Nyanza visited Rwanda as early as 1889, permanent Christian missions, specifically Roman Catholic missions, were not established until 1900.⁵ The first missionary group to enter Rwanda was The Society of Missionaries of

Our Lady of Africa, also known as the "White Fathers." Founded by Charles Martial A. Lavigerie in 1868, they were instructed "To have the sympathy of the chiefs, in order to convert them first."6 They believed that if they could win the leadership of the nation for Christ, then the people would soon follow. Thus, in 1900, Bishop Hirth and his White Fathers entered Rwanda and headed straight to the king "with a large

After the White Fathers settled the area and formed alliances with the German colonial government, they went to work among the people, a work that began with a fatal error.

troop of Ganda catechists, self-assured crusaders 'like a small army on the move." Upon their arrival, King Yuhi VI Musinga granted the missionaries a plot of land on Mara Hill for their first mission station.

After the White Fathers settled the area and formed alliances with the German colonial government, they went to work among the people, a work that began with a fatal error. While Rwandans understood themselves to be one nation, one culture within a caste system, the Catholic missionaries perceived their divisions to be a matter of tribal conflict, one in which they would take sides. During this period, early anthropologists and missiologists developed the Hamitic myth, the idea that the Tutsis – the ruling class – were the literal descendents of Noah's youngest son, Ham.⁸ As ancestors of Ham, the Tutsis

were a people group of European descent, not Rwandan. Inherent to this myth was the understanding that the Tutsis migrated to their current home with their cattle early in the development of the country. As "Europeans," they naturally rose to be the ruling class because of their enhanced intellect and leadership skills, not to mention their superior physical attributes, including their height. With the development of the Hamitic myth, coupled with their mission directive, the White Fathers were compelled to reach out to the Tutsi population, leaving the Hutus –the subsidiary class –to fend for themselves.

The Catholics began their work among the Tutsi people and were soon joined by other denominational missionaries from around the world. In 1907, the first Protestant mission agency called the Evangelische Missionsgesellschaft fur Ostafrica, a German Lutheran group, migrated from Tanzania and built a mission station immediately upon their arrival. They intended to convert the African people and turn them into "useful Christian citizens of the German colony." The Presbyterians followed the Lutherans, who were subsequently followed by the Danish Baptists, the Seventh-Day Adventists, and ultimately the American Southern Baptists and Swedish Pentecostals.

Try as they may, neither Catholics nor Protestants could gain an audience of Tutsi followers; instead, the Tutsis were often resentful and suspicious of these foreigners. One of the most tenacious missionaries was Ernst Johanssen of the Lutheran Bethel Mission, a man who attempted to reach the king himself, believing that "if this tribe [the Tutsi] were won for Christianity, the whole country would be open to the Gospel." In his meetings with Musinga, Johanssen brought Bible pictures which he explained using his rapidly improving Rwandan tongue. Between biblical pictures, he alternated those of Western technology, such as the plough, the steam engine, and the windmill. While the literacy and technology of this Western missionary sparked the imagination of the king, Musinga was not about to give in to this foreign faith, and neither would the rest of the ruling Tutsi class.

After being virtually stonewalled by the Tutsis, the missionaries were forced to turn to the Hutus, a rather disappointing prospect to say the least. The majority of Europeans in Rwanda believed the Hutus were "cute little followers' and excellent farmers, while the Tutsis were said to be born leaders." Though the Hutus were not considered of the same caliber as their brothers, the Tutsis, the missionaries found them to be accommodating and responsive to the gospel message. Thus, the missionaries shifted their focus from the Tutsis to the Hutus, providing them with medical care, an education, social assistance, and most importantly, the gospel.

For more than twenty years, the Tutsis kept their distance while

Hutus experienced conversions in great numbers.¹³ As they were brought to faith, the Hutus were also brought to live at the mission stations, having been cast out of their communities as traitors or, at best, fools.¹⁴ While these Rwandan converts were in residence at the mission station, the missionaries took it upon themselves to train these new believers in the Scriptures, to protect them from harmful outside forces, and to prepare them to bring others to the faith. This training, however, failed to distinguish Western ideals from Christianity, an issue only intensified by the missionaries' low view of Rwandan culture. Thus, "training" consisted of some theological training, but more commonly of instruction on how a "good" Christian looks and acts. Rwandan believers were given last names, for which there was no cultural precedent or meaning, and were asked to change how they dressed, switching from traditional dress to suits and ties, shaving their heads, and burning their beads. If these personal modifications were not enough, Hutu churches were based on Western models, utilizing the same order of worship and even the same instruments. Western culture and Christianity became so muddled that, in the eyes of the Rwandans, they became almost indistinguishable.¹⁵

The staggering number of Hutus that were converting to the Christian faith caught the attention of the Tutsi ruling class. Though some Tutsis saw the sociopolitical implications of these mass Hutu conversions and began to soften their hearts to the missionaries' message, King Musinga became increasingly suspicious. He opposed this new religion, believing it would not only replace the traditional reli-

gions, but would also cause a shift in power and authority from the Tutsis to the Hutus and their colonial supporters. As his suspicions grew, "missionaries were perceived less as gospel preachers and church planters than as European colonialists whose goal and objectives were to conquer the country and assume leadership." 16

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King Musinga began to resent the hold the colonial missionaries had on his subjects, viewing it as a form of Christian imperialism. The missionaries were blind to this assessment; thus, when new believers were faced with pubic humiliations and personal conflicts, the mis-

sionaries saw these hardships merely as the type of persecution often faced by believers, material which was worth sharing in "prayer letters" sent back home.

Tensions continued to mount between the missionaries and the Tutsi king until eventually he was deemed a man of weak character, a person obstinately opposed to the Christianization and modernization of Rwanda. King Musinga began to lose his subjects; thus, when the Belgians, who were particularly in favor of Roman Catholicism, took over Rwanda after World War I, he was deposed and replaced by his son, Mutara III Rudahigwa, a more promising convert.¹⁷ The removal of the king was just the first of many changes brought about by the new Belgian administration.

As the Belgians came into their role as the reigning colonial power, they chose to use the "divide-and-rule" method, first organizing an official census that classified all Rwandans as either Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa. As soon as individuals were identified, they were issued an identity card which specified their "ethnicity." ¹⁸ Following the issuance of the identity cards, the new Belgian administration specifically sought out Tutsis for various government positions, believing they were more educated, competent, and reliable than the Hutus who had previously held various positions in public office. Ian Linden, author of Church and Revolution in Rwanda, states that "what had once been a fluid ethnic boundary between two socio-economic groups hardened under Belgian rule into an unchangeable barrier between Hutu and Tutsi defining access to the political class."19 Under Belgian rule, excessive privileges were given to the Tutsi elite, which inflated the Tutsi cultural ego and crushed Hutu feelings "until they coalesced into an aggressively resentful inferiority complex."20

In 1943, the Tutsi king, Rudahigwa, was baptized in the presence of fifty Catholic chiefs with the Belgian governor general serving as his godfather. The king's baptism marked a new era in Christian missions in Rwanda as it brought about waves of conversion among the Tutsi elite. Up until this point, the church had largely consisted of Hutus, but within the next couple of years the church would triple in size, an increase due mostly to the flood of new Tutsi converts. The church leadership reacted in an overwhelmingly positive manner to these new converts: "Many priests were delighted to see the country's elite suddenly flock to them rather than the social outcasts who used to be their clientele." With the increasing number of Rwandan Christians and the apparent co-dependent relationship between church and state, it seemed only natural for King Mutara III Rudahigwa to consecrate the country of Rwanda to the Lord on October 27, 1946. ²³

In 1955, the Roman Catholic Church began to feel the birth pangs of a new movement, a shift within the body toward a focus on social justice and defense of the poor and weak in society. Thus, when young colonial agents and missionaries started to arrive in Rwanda, they were immediately turned off by the domineering and somewhat abusive Tutsi ruling class. The missionaries' distrust of the present nobility was not helped by the fact that the king and his high council were beginning to seek independence, an action which was obviously opposed by both the church and the Belgian government. Around this time, Grégoire Kayibanda, the founder of the Parmehutu, released the *Hutu Manifesto*, a document that requested an opportunity for the Hutus to rule within their own country, but did not ask for independence.²⁴ The colonialists and the missionaries began to question whether or not the Tutsis should remain in power, as the Hutus appeared to be more amenable to their goals.

After King Rudahigwa's mysterious death in Bujumbura, Burundi, an event which most Rwandans believe had some ties to the colonial government, the Hutus erupted into a violent peasant revolt, an act which the Belgians supported. Of this time period, Laurent Mbanda writes:

Many Tutsis found refuge in parishes, others were protected by church mission station staff and especially European priests. Still, there were reports among Rwandans of certain church leaders' roles in the killings by pointing fingers at victims. I have not heard of priests who killed, but it is painfully clear that many of them observed the killing and said nothing.²⁵

Mbanda went on to say that church attendees who confessed to killing Tutsis, either to a Hutu or European priest, were often told that "God had given them up for death" or they were sent home with these words: "Kwica umututsi si icyaha," (Go my son, killing a Tutsi is not sin).²⁶ At the end of the peasant revolt, nearly 20,000 Tutsis were dead and thousands more in exile; those who remained lived in "political and social non-existence."²⁷

In 1961, the Rwandans voted and, with the support of the Belgian colonial government, decided to abolish the traditional monarchy and form the Republic of Rwanda. Within a year, Kayibanda was declared the first president. The following year, a new wave of Tutsi killings, similar to those in 1959, broke out and the church once again remained silent. This time, however, Tutsi exiles, now known to the Hutus

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as *inyenzi* (cockroaches), fought back, only contributing more to the deepening ethnic tensions within Rwanda.²⁸ Though the Tutsis retaliated, their efforts were too little and to no avail; more Tutsis were killed and even more were forced into exile. By the mid-1960s, nearly half the Tutsi population lived outside the borders of Rwanda.²⁹

With each passing year, the tensions between Hutus and Tutsis continued to mount until they exploded once again in 1973. This time, Hutu extremists targeted schools in specific areas of the country where larger Tutsi populations had survived the killings of 1959 and 1963. During the same year, Major-General Juvénal Habyarimana took control of the nation in a *coup d'etat* and formed the Second Republic of Rwanda.³⁰ The Tutsis hoped that the coming of this new president would bring about social and political reform, but such was not to be the case. Instead, Habyarimana not only freed himself from the control of the church, he also reinforced the policy of marginalizing the Tutsis, removing them from public universities, limiting their access to public service jobs, and eventually requesting that Rwandan refugee host-countries offer Tutsis refugees naturalization or permanent residency rather than allowing them to re-enter their native Rwanda.³¹

What was the church's response to these racially discriminatory actions of the president? "Suffice it to say that the Church was perfectly at ease within this system and defended it without scruple."³² This accusation can be easily supported simply by the fact that the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Rwanda, Thaddée Nsengiyumva, was placed on the Central Committee of the ruling party of Habyarimana's government, serving as a stamp of approval for his discriminatory politics and policies.³³

The Genocide of 1994

By the early 1990s, the relationship between Hutu and Tutsi had all but disintegrated. The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), which was organized in Uganda in 1988, invaded Rwanda, demanding massive political reforms and the right to resettle thousands of Tutsi refugees who were exiled in earlier conflicts. The Rwandan government forces repelled the RPF, which was just the beginning of the battles to come. By 1991, the Hutu-dominated Rwandan government formed and began training a civilian militia force known as the *interahamwe*, "those who work together." Though skirmishes would continue between the RPF and the Rwandan government, a brief hiatus occurred after the signing of the Arusha Peace Accords of 1993, an event organized by the United States, France, and the Organization of African Unity.

On April 6, 1994, however, the plane carrying Rwandan President

Habyarimana and Burundian President Cyprien Ntariyamira was shot down as it approached the Kigali airport, an event that continues to serve as a source of debate. At the time, the Hutus claimed that the plane had been shot down by the RPF, while others, especially Tutsi leadership, claimed that militant Hutus had the plane shot down in order to elevate the anti-Tutsi sentiment and seize power. To this day, no one has claimed responsibility for the death of President Habyarimana.

Within less than an hour after his death, Radio Télevision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM), a Hutu extremist radio station, called for the

militia to "finish the job" and to "cut down the tall trees," a phrase which harkened back to the missionaries' Hamitic myth and the supposedly abnormal height of the Tutsi people. "Lists of Tutsis living in Kigali had been made: some had already been matched with people who would kill them if and when the plan was carried out."35 During these dark hours, Hutus gathered

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In previous massacres, Tutsis were offered a place of refuge within the church, but in 1994, "the Church became a slaughterhouse for thousands of people." ³⁶ In Ntarama, thousands took shelter in a little church and its surrounding outbuildings located in a rural Kigali province. Instead of removing individuals from the sanctuary, the militia smashed holes through the walls and threw grenades into the building, killing those hidden inside. In 2004, the bodies of the victims were still inside, decomposing where they were killed.

In the diocese of Kibungo, the church at Nyarubuye became the final resting ground for thousands of Tutsis. "For several weeks the dead and rotting bodies, terribly twisted, lay where they fell, their skulls smashed, their arms and legs severed, their faces frozen in the last terrible expression of violent death." Among these bodies was that of Flora Mukampore, a Tutsi woman who had fled to the church for sanctuary. In the midst of the killing spree, Flora was covered

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with the blood and bodies of the dead; using this to her advantage, she pretended to be dead. The ruse worked and the killers left, but Flora remained, choosing to sleep among the dead for weeks on end in order to escape the roving Hutu bands. "Can you imagine? People died on the 15th of April and I lived among them until the 15th of May?"³⁸

Unlike previous massacres, the genocide of 1994 lasted for three months, driven by the call of the Hutu extremists to "kill more Tutsis, the graves aren't full enough."³⁹ During the process, the killings became competitive and militia men began to brag over the numbers of people they had killed. Three weeks after the massacre started, Philippe Gaillard, a member of the International Red Cross, said:

BBC London called us in Kigali and asked us for our estimate of the number of people killed. We said at least 250,000. One week later, they called again. We said at least 500,000. The following week, we told them: 'After half a million, we stopped counting.' We were never asked the same question again.⁴⁰

The 1994 genocide in Rwanda eventually took the lives of anywhere between 750,000 to 1,000,000 Tutsis and Hutu moderates, before it was brought to a close by the brute force and determination of the RPF. In the end, "The dead of Rwanda accumulated at nearly three times the rate of Jewish dead during the Holocaust. It was the most efficient mass killing since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki." ⁴¹

The Church's Role & Response to the Genocide

Michael Budde wrote that the genocide in Rwanda was "one of this century's most recent, world-class failures of Christianity." ⁴² At the time of the genocide, Rwanda was *the* most Christianized nation in Africa, boasting of a population that was almost ninety-percent Christian, sixty-percent of those being Catholic. Thus, the story of Rwanda is not only a story of "tribal warfare" but one of brother against brother.

How could such a thing have happened? How could a predominately Christian people have descended into genocide? There are no easy answers to such questions, though two contributing factors may be brought to the forefront: 1) the intricately intertwined church-state

relationship and 2) the failure to disciple believers once they entered the faith.

From the arrival of Christian missionaries, the church was wed with the colonial powers, each providing mutual support for the other's agenda. In serving the state, the church not only helped to

develop the division between Hutu and Tutsi, they reinforced it at every turn. Instead of serving as a source of reconciliation, the church made deliberate decisions "first to ignore the Tutsis and turn toward the Hutus, then to overvalue the Tutsis at the expense of the Hutus, and finally to totally exclude the Tut-

In serving the state, the church not only helped to develop the division between Hutu and Tutsi, they reinforced it at every turn.

sis from Rwandan society." ⁴³ These decisions would later fuel the hatred leading to the subsequent massacres. When it came time for the church to protest the genocide carried out against the Tutsis, their prophetic voice had been drowned out by their muddled political actions. Michael Budde states it best:

Among other things, Rwanda should remind Christians everywhere that every blending of cross and flag today – no matter how innocuous or benign – serves as an installment payment on a future war in which the church sins as a guilty participant or an impotent but complicit bystander. 44

Alongside the issue of the marriage of church and state is that of discipleship within the Rwandan Church. For years, the church of Rwanda grew by leaps and bounds, bringing in waves of Hutu and Tutsi believers. Though it grew exponentially, the genocide of 1994 is proof that the church itself lacked spiritual depth. Bishop Nsengiyumva said, "The Christian message is not being heard. After a century of evangelism we have to begin again because the best catechists, those who filled our churches on Sundays, were the first to go out with machetes in their hands." Budde describes Rwanda as "the most recent example of what can happen *in extremis* when Christian formation is shallow and weak, easily bent to the purposes of groups who worship secular power instead of Yahweh." The Church of Rwanda is

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an example of what can happen when the Gospel is diluted in order to draw the masses; "...it is a sharp reminder that mere growth in numbers, without a quality of costly discipleship, is empty and powerless to confront the pressures of evil." The church in Rwanda crumpled under the weight of hatred and propaganda because it lacked the foundation of the teachings of the kingdom of God, lessons that remind believers of what it means to "come and die," to sacrifice all for the calling of Christ and for the life of another.

It has been fifteen years since the end of the genocide in 1994, fifteen years of picking up the pieces and trying to put a broken nation and a broken church back together again. There are no easy answers for how this can be done. There is no easy pathway to reconciliation. It begins with justice. It begins with forgiveness, and it begins with telling people's stories and reminding each other of what we have lost in others and lost within ourselves.



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"Why Have You Forsaken Me" So What?

Ouestions for Consideration:

- 1. The author states the church sought converts over disciples. If this is true, how can we apply this lesson today in our own religious culture which pressures churches to grow as big and as fast as possible?
- 2. How can a church, which is made up of people who are part of a culture, guard against conformity to the norms of that culture? What is required for the church to be a critique of society while still have a relevant voice within that society?
- 3. How can an American Christian learn from the tragedy in Rwanda without vilifying those involved? How do we claim this story, as tragic as it is, as part of our own and seek redemption?
- 4. What does it mean that one can be considered a Christian but not a disciple? Is this a true biblical option?
- 5. In an area where conflict is being experienced, how can Christians better discern if the conflict is a result of their own poor actions, or is genuine persecution?

Prepared by Travis Sills

Christian Missions and the Struggle for Power

A Response to Joell Beagle

REBECCA KENNEDY

In Joell Beagle's article, "Why Have You Forsaken Me: The Story of Christian Missions in Rwanda," we are once again reminded of the age old obsession with and struggle for power; man against man, sister against sister, Christian against Christian.

Our world history is littered with stories of individuals or groups whose desire to "baptize all nations" has resulted in a costly end. The Crusades. The Holocaust. The Spanish Inquisition. Just to name a few.

The brutal Rwandan genocide of 1994 begs the question, "Why can we not learn from our mistakes?" As Beagle points out, the road to Christianity in Rwanda has been a tricky, treacherous one: it is lined with power struggles, loss of identity and a gross misplacement of Western culture within the gospel. Where is the line between fulfilling the Great Commission and forcing the Good News to be viewed through a particular worldview?

Having visited this seemingly peaceful land, I, like Beagle, cannot comprehend the brutality of the 1994 massacre of an estimated 800,000 Tutsis and Hutu sympathizers. As I have broken bread with Rwandan brothers and sisters, as I have walked the fertile lands, as I have briefly lived in and learned about their rich culture, I cannot help but wonder if some evil did not temporarily take up residence much like the colonial powers who desired to control it.

Ms. Beagle points out two contributing factors leading up to the horrific event of 1994 – lack of discipleship and the blurred boundary between church and state. As she recounts the history of Christian

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mission in Rwanda, it certainly seems as if quantity won out over quality as church leaders and clergy became enamored with winning the crown to Christ. Yet, even with a perhaps shallow faith foundation, would this cause pastors to sell out their flock? Relatives to stand by and watch their own be murdered? Would a lack of discipleship have made grown men viciously kill innocent children while held in their parent's embrace? Maybe.

In what seemed to be a refusal to follow Christ, perhaps King Musinga, in his wisdom, was protecting his followers from an enigmatic religion. If the accounts of the church-state approach to evangelism in Rwanda are accurate, then I can understand his skepticism. Over the years, we have witnessed numerous collapses of this approach – the European church, Communism and, in my opinion, the Religious Right's marriage to the Republican Party.

When Jesus sent out his disciples, he instructed them to enter a house and demonstrate peace. If peace was received, then the bearer of the Good News was to stay and be part of the household for a time. If the house or town was not receptive to peace, Jesus was very clear to leave immediately and "shake the dust from your feet." (Matt.10:14).

As I think about the spread of the gospel in Rwanda I often reflect back on this passage. I interpret Jesus saying, "Don't be forceful as you share the Good News. Be peaceful, loving and grateful toward

your host. If you are met with hostility high tail it out of there and don't look back. There will be another chance." Is it conceivable that many of our converts have received Christ out of fear? If so, does that make us, the Church, any less guilty of using any means possible to become the powerful majority? One would hope that we have moved beyond violence, but I wonder if our means have just gotten

Is it conceivable that many of our converts have received Christ out of fear? If so, does that make us, the Church, any less guilty of using any means possible to become the powerful majority?

more sophisticated and covert. In our culture, any time we attempt to legislate our faith to control others, are we motivated any differently? Outside of the courtroom, do we often allow our own prejudices and

ignorance to manifest a violent response toward those with whom we disagree?

Honestly, I don't think we will ever fully understand why the Rwandan genocide happened. What occurred in Rwanda is much more complex: it is equally complex in Sudan, Kenya, Croatia, as in India and Pakistan Much of what happens in our world is complex and perplexing.

I recently read an article by Frank Bures, an award-winning journalist who frequently writes about Africa. In this particular article, *Finding Peace in Africa*, he traveled to Uganda to interview those who had witnessed war firsthand to try and make sense of the continued fighting. One of his theories made perfect sense to me. He writes,

A nation is a group you are born into or feel you belong to. A state is a government based more or less around that nation. Together, these institutions can build an almost impenetrable solidarity. Most governments in the West are of this kind, where being a citizen creates a strong sense of belonging. In the 60 years since Africa was decolonized, the roots of national identities haven't gone very deep.²

According to Bures, part of the ongoing conflict that has plagued Africa is their lack of national identity. Many Africans still don't see themselves as Rwandans, Kenyans, Ugandans, etc., but as tribes that happen to live within European-imposed borders. It takes time to build a national identity among a people group who sees no reason to be a group, and there can be many pitfalls on the way to nationhood. After all, nearly ninety years after a ragtag band of rebellious colonies fought off the motherland for freedom we found ourselves in our own civil war. If Mr. Bures is indeed on to something, then I have hope for Africa.

This brings me back to my initial comment; it's all about power. Sadly, the strive to "one-up" another seems to be embedded in our human DNA. Cain and Able. Jacob and Esau. Tom and Jerry. I learned as a young girl that if I wanted to be "king (or queen) of the mountain" I had to overpower the person on top of the heap. Usually, it was one of my three older brothers that stood in my way of that title, and I didn't have a chance. Nevertheless, I kept charging up the hill with enthusiastic gusto in hopes of overthrowing the current crown holder.

These childhood games took place before I understood Jesus' response to the question, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind

and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:28-31). I'm, in no way, attempting to compare backyard skirmishes with the tragedy of warfare. I am suggesting that we all, on some level, have the capacity to fight for power and control. Jesus knew this all too well. Perhaps his response to "love your neighbor" was his attempt to instill within us the discipline of caring for one another. If Jesus is indeed on to something, then I have hope for us all.



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Notes

- 1. New American Standard Bible. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995.
- Bures, Frank. "Finding Peace in Africa." World Ark Nov./Dec. 2008: 10-19
- New International Version. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984.

Peace Amidst the Desolation

A Response to Joell Beagle

RYAN RICHARDSON

Rwanda is geographically placed within a continent that seems to be trapped in a cycle of corruption, genocide and death. But, Rwanda is also proving that a country can still find peace and reconciliation amidst that cycle.

Joell Beagle has provided a brief but thorough explanation of the history of the Rwandan nation as it relates to the issue of Christian faith. It is obvious to this reader that the issue carries much personal conviction for Beagle as emotion seems to be evident throughout the piece. This serves the subject well by providing this crime against humanity the grief, anger and bitterness that it requires. Even as I journeyed through the years in my mind, tears welled up on several occasions causing me to stop and consider the crimes of my fellow humans. No people are immune to the devastation that can be born out of pride, greed, or an unquenchable thirst for power.

We began with a description of Rwanda's missional past being considered "dark." Darkness seems to denote evil or mal-intent. While one can certainly agree that the history of mission in Rwanda can easily be described as sordid, I am not prepared to label the early Catholic missionaries as people of deceit. Many of us do what we think we ought for the cause of Christ. Unfortunately, our lens is limited to our experience, our research and our quest for spiritual guidance. The early Europeans, in this case, brought their context, their goals for conversion and their particular view of God to Rwanda. While mistakes were made throughout, one cannot assume that the overall intent of the original messengers was faulty or deceitful. There-

fore, while seeking wisdom from the mistakes of our predecessors, we must proceed with great humility and meekness. Without a constant eye on the Holy Spirit, we, too, can be persuaded to follow a path that leads to despair and destruction. We, too, can cause others great pain and harm for what we believe to be a worthwhile and righteous effort. And, most importantly, we, too, can dismiss such instances as "persecution" or holy living that is inevitably counter-cultural.

Beagle has delivered an important message for the church today. In her words, "There is no easy pathway to reconciliation. It begins with justice. It begins with forgiveness...." This reader would like to take this idea a step further and propose that reconciliation may, in fact, start with forgiveness of ourselves. Maybe it starts when we

find an identity in Christ which transcends our own labels and expectations. The Hamitic myth seems an ideal vehicle through which to discuss the origins of identity and our perceptions of ourselves. The Tutsi's believed themselves to be of great value and stature mostly due to what they believed was their heritage, their bloodline, their ancestry. Likewise, the Hutus be-

Without a constant eye on the Holy Spirit, we, too, can be persuaded to follow a path that leads to despair and destruction.

lieved themselves to be a "lesser" class based upon their place of birth, heritage and ancestry. It seems that a point of application may be that the Hamitic myth can be used to one's advantage. No matter one's history, bloodline or ancestry, all people can place their faith in a God who transcends our labels and the expectations we place upon ourselves.

My own experience in Rwanda continues to haunt me. I remember the stench of death on the churches that were built to be a place of refuge and safety. I remember the conversations about tribal affiliations during which present-day Rwandans would avoid sharing their tribe at all costs, mainly because they remember what this affiliation did cost. I remember the pride on the faces of Rwandans who are now rebuilding their once broken country. They are seeing hope restored as people discover the freedom that comes with just being Rwandan. We should all learn from Rwanda. Not just the obvious lessons on the dangers of labels and ethnic prejudice. We must learn that we can

Peace Amidst the Desolation Jon Singletary

rise above our situation. Just because I was born into a cycle does not mean that I am doomed to repeat it. Rwanda is geographically placed within a continent that seems to be trapped in a cycle of corruption, genocide and death. But, Rwanda is also proving that a country can still find peace and reconciliation amidst that cycle.



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Reconciliation

A Response to Joell Beagle

JON SINGLETARY

There is no notion of self-sufficiency in Rwanda. In a land where the bonds of relationships matter most, living life after the violence and hatred of war means learning to live again in community.

'Reconciliation' is no small word in the practical theology of the longdivided people groups of Rwanda. Here in the United States, the theology of the civil rights movement found great hope in the face of deep pain using a theology of reconciliation. In light of the horrors of Jim Crow, segregation, and slavery where the unity of Christ's teachings were blatantly denied, Martin Luther King, Jr. and John Perkins, in particular, taught that reconciliation is where brothers and sisters in Christ join together to reconcile the past and create beloved community.

The word is even more fraught with meaning in light of the dangerous memory of the recent Rwandan genocide and civil war. You can hardly read a history of the years since the horrific, deadly events that does not include a reference to the amazing efforts of the Rwandese working together in their reconciliation process.

From Laura Waters Hinson's film that documents Rwandan healing through confession and forgiveness, entitled "As We Forgive," to the global PEACE plan offered by megachurch pastor Rick Warren with its first principle of promoting reconciliation, we have seen a host of faith-based efforts that have reconciliation at their core. While these efforts include the role of outsiders, most efforts at reconciliation in Rwanda are indigenous. I believe these efforts point to a contemporary expression of people working together to overcome evil with good as a part of the mission of God.

One example of local leaders engaging in God's mission is the native Rwandan system of community-based justice, gacaca. This ap-

proach to reconciliation includes weekly hearings where perpetrators confess their crimes and are reintegrated back into community. This system of restorative justice incorporates forgiveness as the foundation of an array of faith-based reconciliation projects that are supported and initiated by local and national leaders.

In 2008, Baylor students and staff visited the Rwanda Women Network, an agency formed by Church World Service and now led by Rwandese women, where women stood up and told stories of forgiving one another and loving their neighbors in need. Many of the women we met had experienced rape as a weapon of war and had husbands and sons killed in the genocide. The economic poverty and geographic

For the women of Rwanda, putting life together post-genocide is as much about putting life together in community as it is putting one's own life together.

proximity that kept these women in community led to their participation in gacaca meetings. Women whose husband's survived the war as perpetrators have been sentenced to prison sentences which take them away for life or the men fled to neighboring countries in exile. The women, left behind with young children and a shred of dignity, have found a way to put together a way of life that

is sustainable and meaningful. For the women of Rwanda, putting life together post-genocide is as much about putting life together in community as it is putting one's own life together. There is no notion of self-sufficiency in Rwanda. In a land where the bonds of relationships matter most, living life after the violence and hatred of war means learning to live again in community. Reconciliation is no small feat, but it is not optional.

A part of the challenge of recreating reconciled community in Rwanda is that the very people who are learning to love each other again are the ones whose families were killing and being killed just a decade ago; they are people whose families are still fighting in neighboring Congo. Reconciliation is deep in their hearts, but they cannot get war out of their minds.

While I am seeking to learn about the nature of reconciliation, I am trying to make sense of it in light of the way churches were en-

gaged in the war. And, this is a history that is not easy to overcome. Joell Beagle begins her research by taking us beyond the indigenous

bonds of community to the years where Christians taught more about division. The history of Christian engagement in mission in Rwanda could have been a period of learning about a reconciling, beloved community from a remote and beautiful people group in the lavish highlands of Central Africa. Yet, what Chris-

What Christians offered was an all too typical missionary imperialism that created division, destruction, and death.

tians offered was an all too typical missionary imperialism that created division, destruction, and death.

Beagle does a remarkable job of presenting these details. She engages the research of Octave Ugirashebuja in a text by Rittner, Roth, and Whitworth:

From the arrival of Christian missionaries, the church was wed with the colonial powers, each providing mutual support for the other's agenda. In serving the state, the church not only helped to develop the division between Hutu and Tutsi, they reinforced it at every turn. Instead of serving as a source of reconciliation, the church made deliberate decisions "first to ignore the Tutsis and turn toward the Hutus, then to overvalue the Tutsis at the expense of the Hutus, and finally to totally exclude the Tutsis from Rwandan society." These decisions would later fuel the hatred leading to the subsequent massacres. When it came time for the church to protest the genocide carried out against the Tutsis, their prophetic voice had been drowned out by their muddled political actions.

Beagle reminds us that "the 1994 genocide in Rwanda eventually took the lives of anywhere between 750,000 to 1,000,000 Tutsis and Hutu moderates, before it was brought to a close...." She quotes Michael Budde and Robert Brimlow, stating that the genocide in Rwanda was "one of this century's most recent, world-class failures of Christianity." At the time of the genocide, Rwanda was *the* most Christianized nation in Africa, boasting of a population that was almost ninety-percent Christian, sixty-percent of those being Catholic.

What we learn from her research, and from the others writing of Rwandan history, is that reconciliation seems utterly improbable, even among Christians, and truly impossible without a Spirit of Hope in the remote but not lost history of community that is inherent in the people of Rwanda. I believe there is a richness in the culture of Rwanda that will keep that nation strong. My prayer is that Christians inside and out might see the ways God is at work in the culture and community of Rwanda even as they live with violence in their recent memories.

Beagle seems to agree as she concludes with these words: "It has been nearly fifteen years since the end of the genocide in 1994, fifteen years of picking up the pieces and trying to put a broken nation and a broken church back together again. There are no easy answers for how this can be done. There is no easy pathway to reconciliation. It begins with justice. It begins with forgiveness, and it begins with telling people's stories and reminding each other of what we have lost in others and lost within ourselves."

Reconciliation is not easy in Rwanda. But I believe it is possible. Even in the dark, but poignant history that Beagle presents, I believe she agrees that it is possible as well. May these be the words that guide us as we look to the future of a global Christianity in the nation of Rwanda. May the efforts underway in Rwanda today not make the mistakes of the all too recent past. And, may the humility of Christ teach us all to be learners in Rwanda as we take next steps together on mission with God in this place.



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Notes

- Octave Ugirashebuja, "The Church and the Genocide in Rwanda," in Genocide in Rwanda: Complicity of the Churches?, ed. Carol Rittner, John K. Roth, and Wendy Whitworth (St. Paul: Paragon, 2004), 57.
- 2. Michael L. Budde and Robert W. Brimlow, ed., *The Church as Counterculture* (New York: State Univ., 2000), 215.

Missions in Northeast England

A Biblical and Theological Foundation for Training
Mission Teams

DAVID W. ROGERS

Being able to navigate life as faithful Christ-followers is a trait of one who no longer suffers from immaturity. Such was the goal of the NE-1 Training Guide implemented by the USA teams who prepared to serve in Northeast England in July 2006.

Over the past seven years, a group called UK/USA Ministry Partnership has formed between churches, ministries, and school administrations in the United Kingdom and churches and ministries in the United States. The primary reason for the UK/USA Ministry Partnership is to develop relationships for the purpose of evangelism. That primary reason, coupled with the leadership of the Holy Spirit, was the catalyst that gave birth to the vision of a strategically coordinated outreach, social action, and evangelism effort in Northeast England called NE-1.

During the last week of July 2006, approximately one thousand United Kingdom student-missionary and adult-missionary volunteers partnered with approximately one hundred fifty USA student-missionary and adult-missionary volunteers from various churches and ministries from across the state of Texas. These volunteers worked together with an additional two thousand people from local churches, ministries, and city councils to engage in over one hundred social action ministry projects that were located in four main regions of Northeast England which include Tees Valley, County Durham, Wearside, and Tyneside/Northumberland.

NE-1 was privileged to have Dr. Tom Wright, Bishop of Durham,

as its patron. Dr. Wright had this to say in response to the importance of NE-1 in his home community and current ministry base in the Northeast of England:

NE-1 was a very significant event for our region. I was passionate about it because it demonstrated the Gospel in word and deed. I do not believe you can separate the Jesus Christ who died and rose again for us from the Jesus Christ who went about doing good. I was also delighted that so many churches from a variety of denominations and streams were part of the project. New partnership links between churches and a range of private, public and community sector organizations were established and will continue to bear fruit [...] I don't believe NE-1 ended when the tents were taken down and the people went home. It has left a lasting legacy of goodwill and unity which we are continuing to build upon.¹

Many of the USA team members had never traveled to the UK or participated in missions and evangelism efforts in Northeast England; as a result, facilitating a training strategy for all of the USA teams who participated in NE-1 was necessary. I wrote and developed the train-

These teenagers hungered for formal and accountable spiritual formation on both personal and corporate levels.

ing guidelines used by the USA teams after a period of five years of trial and error of leading teams of students to this area of England on mission trips. The initial team of students I trained in the spring of 2001 was a group of approximately thirty high school students ages sixteen to eighteen. These

students were part of a leadership group from our church's student ministry who wanted to grow deeper in their relationship with God and be challenged in their leadership development. These teenagers hungered for formal and accountable spiritual formation on both personal and corporate levels.

None of the students preparing for the initial trip to England had traveled overseas or experienced foreign missions in the context that was before them. Thus, I took the opportunity to act as a spiritual formation director while preparing them for spiritual leadership roles both at home and abroad. The results of the team from a devel-

opmental perspective were highly successful based on the debriefing that took place with the English leadership with whom our team partnered. The success of the spiritual development and growth also was affirmed by the students themselves as well as their parents both during the training and after the trip was completed.

Over the years that followed, the training process continued to evolve as I made notes and tried new and different methods that would potentially lead to a readiness for the opportunities before these teams of students. Such opportunities included leading religious education class discussions and lectures in the public schools in England, engaging in interviews among their peers concerning their beliefs while in school assemblies, serving in social action service projects alongside English people in various communities, and learning how to be gracious and conversational guests while being housed and looked after by English hosts.

After multiple years of leading successful teams to the UK, the English leadership asked if a standardized training process could be written down for others to model and use in their own preparation for similar mission trips. Thus, after five years of preparing students for the mission field in the UK, I developed the training guides for wide-spread usage by teams across Texas preparing to serve at NE-1. The following is the biblical and theological rationale that informed how the training for this cross-cultural missions and evangelism experience was created.

Passages for Rationale

Several passages throughout the Bible speak to the transformation of both individuals and communities. Instead of giving attention to all related texts, only three passages from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament will require exploration; Proverbs 1:1-7 and Ephesians 4:11-16 are the primary of these four texts. Deuteronomy 6 and Daniel 1-6 are the two additional texts used to provide support and biblical illustrations for the overall thesis of the project.

The book of Proverbs is a collection of wisdom literature that conveys the initiative for people to discipline themselves in order to gain wisdom, yielding life transformation. The primary audience of this book of virtues is young people.² Although the wisdom from Proverbs benefits all ages, the first nine chapters aim at those who have not yet reached adulthood.³ Chapters 1-7 specifically call for sons to heed the instruction of their parents; children and those still developing their lives are summoned to gain wisdom through learning, discipline, and teaching in chapters 8 and 9.

Although Proverbs is filled with valuable insight that leads to-

wards a healthy path of spiritual transformation and often practical insights, 1:1-7 makes up the focal point for approaching the biblical and theological rationale of this project. In fact, scholars suggest the beginning section of the book of Proverbs introduces the overall thesis for this collection of wisdom writings.

- 1:1 The Proverbs of Solomon, Son of David, King of Israel
- 1:2 To appropriate wisdom and instruction; to understand insightful sayings;
- 1:3 To acquire effective instruction, righteousness, justice, and equity.
- 1:4 To teach the immature prudence, and the young knowledge in discretion.
- 1:5 Let the wise (also) attend and gain erudition, and the discerning acquire skill (in counseling).
- 1:6 To understand a proverb, a figure, words of the wise, and their enigmas.
- 1:7 The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.⁴

The litany of values portrayed in this passage leads to a combination that, when fully embraced and practiced, will yield a type of

Adhering to seasons of spiritual disciplines produces young men and women who possess wisdom, maturity, and godly character with a readiness to be lived out regardless of the cultural environment.

person ready to humbly approach with holy fear whatever tasks God may call him or her to invest in both individually and collectively. Young people who pursue and acquire the characteristics of Proverbs 1:1-7 find themselves in the midst of a healthy life transformation Deuteronomy 6 likewise calls for such a process as the old teach the young how to fear the Lord and grow into a life transformed from immaturity to maturity. Adhering to seasons of

spiritual disciplines produces young men and women who possess

wisdom, maturity, and godly character with a readiness to be lived out regardless of the cultural environment. Biblical examples of such young people are seen in the stories of Daniel 1-6.

Proverbs 1:1-7 with Illustrative Support from Deuteronomy 6

The prologue to Proverbs begins the groundwork for a life lived holistically and with wisdom. Life is to be lived in one holistic sphere of understanding rather than separated into various categories such as sacred and secular. To separate life into the divided classes of sacred and secular could mean to approach life from a perspective that may be considered foreign to some biblical worldviews.⁵ Scripture sees all of life from the vantage point of a non-segmented whole rather than from many segments coming together to form a larger picture or mosaic called life. All of life is sacred and to be lived as an act of worship unto the Lord regardless of the time, place, or culture.

Proverbs 1:1-7 begins a book that conveys parental advice being passed on to children, specifically, a father speaking to a son. A willing desire for humble obedience by the child is a call for all who desire to hold to the teachings and approach endorsed from Prov-

erbs. As this process of life transformation begins, "the father adheres to the belief that allegiance precedes knowledge, so that habitual conduct eventually creates its own ethos in which such behavior becomes natural, like breathing."6

A theme of transformation from naïve,

All of life is sacred and to be lived as an act of worship unto the Lord regardless of the time, place, or culture.

youthful immaturity into wise, seasoned maturity surfaces in Proverbs. The ideas of the immature youth being instructed and disciplined in love with consistency will over time yield a by-product of wise people whose lives have been transformed not merely for the personal gain of the individual, but more so for the benefit of the community. Even if the community is indeed made up of individuals who profit from choosing to develop into mature men and women full of wisdom and sound instruction, the target pushes the book of Proverbs beyond the individual boundaries towards the community at large.

As the mature lead the immature toward the goal of adhering to the direction found in Proverbs 1:1-7, seven virtues worth attaining are specifically mentioned: effective instruction, righteousness, justice,

equity, prudence, discretion, and skill. Gerhard von Rad believes that the totality of these terms targets something much larger in their combination than merely acquiring various individual attributes with no connection between them.⁷ The intent here is to drive the youth to the development of wisdom as a learner who assimilates the virtues into a mature value system for holy living before God and the community. Such integration leads the learner away from a compartmentalized philosophy of living and toward a more holistic approach.⁸

The first of these virtues, effective instruction (*musar haskel*), has a wide range of meaning. Usually this virtue is translated "wise dealing" and can be associated with everything from dealing with property wisely to living in such a way that the result is a good reputation accompanied by good sense. This class of virtue is produced from repetition and experience.⁹

The next virtues -righteousness, justice, and equity-- can be viewed as a set of three since they all deal with social relations among

The person whose heart beats with these values is one who echoes the heart of God toward the poor, marginalized, ostracized, and those taken advantage of within the biblical culture.

the community. Righteousness (sedeq), justice (mispat), and equity (mesarim) are characteristics of the wise person whose heart is disturbed by that which is crooked in society. The person whose heart beats with these values is one who echoes the heart of God toward the poor, marginalized, ostracized, and those taken advantage of within the biblical culture. Thus, it is not enough for a person demonstrating the values of sedeg, mis*pat*, and *mesarim* to merely

feel for those in the above mentioned categories. Rather, they must help facilitate such change.¹⁰

The twin virtues of prudence (*orma*) and discretion (*mezimma*) are the derivatives of the immature passing into the stage of wisdom. Prudence has been defined as a thoughtful, critical capacity which makes wise discriminations by weighing consequences before taking action. Likewise, possessing discretion means having the ability to survey the surroundings and formulate reasonable, well-coordinated plans

of action in a timely manner.¹² Passing on wisdom to youth is itself a challenge and a timely endeavor; for the immature to grow to a point where prudence is an attribute of their life is even more challenging.

The word describing "immature" in verse 4 portrays one who is open to various influences and instruction. This characteristic of openness speaks of living in a state of immaturity which does not regularly discern wisely between good and bad. Thus, openness here conveys a negative characteristic of those who are naïve and immature in their decision-making process. As a result, the book of Proverbs is about the task of maturing the young and immature into prudent people who not only have greater knowledge, but also have acquired skill for more upright and wise living.¹³

Developing skills for living well and navigating through life with wisdom is the final virtue mentioned. Within Proverbs as a whole, moral prudence is designed to result in skillful holy living rather than the simple acquisition of intellectual knowledge that never becomes incarnate in a person's life.¹⁴ The term for skill (*tahbulot*) depicts the pulling of a rope to steer a ship. The imagery portrays a young boy learning how to steer a boat from a master sailor.¹⁵

Just as the skill of living wisely is meant to be attained by experience rather than merely through lectures on the subject, so the virtues found in Proverbs 1:1-7 are also designed to be produced during teachable moments of experience under the mentoring of a guide. The model for these conceptual virtues becoming a living reality among maturing youth is articulated in Deuteronomy 6:6-9:

These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, and when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

This way of life was never intended to be segmented into Sunday (or Saturday) living with a lesson or two thrown in now and then. Such virtuous living was a holistic approach to life that resulted in transformation taking place day by day among the immature as the mature gave guidance. The lessons were learned as parents and children worked and walked together. At times the stories of the past were appropriately retold to the next generation for remembrance and fostering insights for right living as questions arose in daily dialogue between the adult and the child (see Deuteronomy 6:20-25).

However, this way of life leading to maturity and wisdom was never intended to be an end goal in itself. Rather, fearing God and be-

ing counted as one who was found pleasing to God is the motivation behind such transformation. Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction." Life according to Proverbs is a choice between wise and foolish living. Fearing God provides a lens through which God sees an individual as either a wise person or a fool. D. Bruce Lockerbie notes, "Wisdom and knowledge, not reason and intuition, are the goal of all cognition, all learning, all thinking. And the beginning point is an obligatory reverential awe before God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." ¹⁶

The fear called for by the writer of Proverbs is not so much a panicked state of being scared as much as a restored sense of appropriate, reverential awe, wonder, and utter humility before the most powerful, all majestic, and glorious One. A constant bowing of the will, knee, and ego in humble remembrance with intentional holy caution is the approach for living a life of wisdom that pleases God. This approach results in the enjoyment that God originally intended from Creation. The same call to reverential fear surfaces in Deuteronomy 6:1-2, 13:

These are the commands, decrees and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life....Fear the Lord your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name.

William Brown suggests, "Far from implying terror, holy reverence provides nothing less than a methodological base for the appropriation of wisdom."¹⁷ Such a base includes an appropriate posture that allows for one to "exercise and broaden one's repertoire of virtues" with even greater magnitude. 18 Even more important than the virtues, the "fear of the Lord" posture deals with one's heart as it involves the relationship between Yahweh and people. Dan Allender builds upon this relational component of the aforementioned methodological base. "Awe comes with a sense of the inconceivable reversal of relationship that God invites us to enter." The wisdom and virtues Proverbs speaks of are ultimately found in the context of one's relationship with God. Through consistently embracing a posture of fear before God, authentic relationship with God begins to mirror the words of Deuteronomy 6:4-5: "Here, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all our strength." Thus, fearing God is more about a relational pursuit of God than anything else. It is about a heart to have rather than a rule to keep.²⁰

As we cultivate fearof-the-Lord, we develop a reverent respect for what is going on, and then modestly but also in genuine delight begin doing what is there to be done. Practicing fear-of-the-Lord gradually but surely shifts our attention from a preoccupation with what we can or should do to an attentive absorption in what God has been doing and the way he continues doing it in Jesus by the Holy

As we cultivate fear-of-the-Lord, we develop a reverent respect for what is going on, and then modestly but also in genuine delight begin doing what is there to be done.

Spirit.²¹ A result of such a pursuit of God in holy fear is a life of virtue, character, and wisdom as depicted in Proverbs 1:1-7.

DANIEL 1-6: BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF PROVERBS 1:1-7 PERSONIFIED

The first six chapters of Daniel display examples of young lives that have been transformed in the Hebrew maturation process and are living with wisdom as well as the effects of guided instruction. Although Daniel and his friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, now reside in a foreign culture, their lives continue to demonstrate faithfulness to God. Such responses of wisdom and maturity in the midst of challenging circumstances suggest that these Hebrew youth were reared and have embraced the way of life described in Proverbs 1:1-7 and Deuteronomy 6. John Goldingay describes Daniel and his friends, found in these first six chapters, as "young men well-versed in the practical learning embodied in a book such as Proverbs."²²

Complex choices concerning remaining faithful to God surrounded Daniel and his friends while they lived in exile. These choices include: what to eat and drink or not to eat and drink (chapter 1); giving a full yet difficult interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dreams regardless of the outcome (chapters 2 and 4); bowing down in worship before the King or facing the fiery furnace (chapter 3); interpreting the writing on the wall for King Belshazzar without lessening the difficulty of the interpretation, indicting the King for his sinful actions before God (chapter 5); choosing to remain faithful in daily prayer and thanksgiving to God even though a decree by King Darius had been

made not to do so which resulted in the king's men throwing Daniel into the lion's den (chapter 6).

These stories give accounts of the realities of living faithfully with conviction, wisdom, and skill in the midst of a foreign culture with all the dangers, pressures, and pitfalls that surround such a choice. Although the Daniel court tales are not without the challenges that certainly faced the Hebrew youth in the option of abandoning their loyalty to Israel and their devotion to Yahweh, these stories demonstrate "the possibility of a life, rewarding and creative, in this setting."²³

Daniel 1 sets the tone for the faithfulness, loyalty, wisdom, and skillful living of these Hebrews in exile because they stay true to Yahweh and the values they were taught as children.²⁴ Chapter 1 finds Daniel and his three friends in the middle of a political situation with religious ramifications. After being captured by King Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian armies, some of the captured Israelites, including Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, were separated out from among the other captives for political purposes.²⁵

Verses 3-4 indicate the characteristics of the captives who were to be targeted:

Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring into the king's service some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility – young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. (Daniel 1:3-4 [TNIV])

The reason Nebuchadnezzar made this request is found in the beginning and ending phrases of these verses: "to bring into the king's service [...] to serve in the king's palace."

Some scholars note that Nebuchadnezzar desires to have the best minds and talents from any nationality that his armies have captured to benefit the leadership of his Babylonian kingdom.²⁶ However, other scholars suggest that the reason these characteristics are valued in the captives is political. If these men of "royal seed and nobility" were indoctrinated in the ways of the Babylonian culture and educational system, they could then be used as sympathetic ambassadors within their homeland for the kingdom that captured them.²⁷ What takes place in v. 5 lends further argues that these actions are layered with political ramifications: "The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three

years, and after that they were to enter the king's service" (Daniel 1:5 [TNIV]). The word for "king's table" is the rare Hebrew word pathag found elsewhere only in Daniel 11:26. Sibley Towner notes, "Those who shared the king's board also entered into a covenantal relationship with him; they became his courtiers, his shadow cabinet. Put another way, their freedom of action was preempted by the king."28 Fewell agrees with this position and goes on to reference other places where the concept of pathag has meaning beyond simply the food. She writes, "Eating from the king's table symbolizes political covenant and compromise. When David stops eating at Saul's table, Saul surmises that David has rebelled against him" (1 Samuel 20:30-34). Perhaps to keep his claim to the throne secure, King David demands that the last remaining member of Saul's family, Mephibosheth, eat (always) at the king's table (2 Samuel 9:9-13).²⁹ She goes on to say, "Jehoichin, after the fall of Judah, spends his last days in captivity, eating from the Babylonian king's table" (2 Kings 25:27-29).30

Fewell concludes, "Given this pattern, it is reasonable to suppose that, by assigning such a diet, Nebuchadnezzar is imposing political allegiance. The captives are to depend upon him and be indebted to him for their very existence, not to mention their social success." Eating from the *patbag* for three years develops a taste for the royal foods and wines of the culture, which is not quickly given up if the only thing to assure their continued availability is loyalty to the one serving them. Three years is a healthy time frame for total indoctrination to occur while taste buds change and compromise to the present culture becomes entrenched.

The political ramifications as well as the dietary restrictions may well be why Daniel and his friends tried so hard to come up with an alternative to eating from the *patbag* (see vv. 8-15). They did not balk at receiving new Babylonian names in vv. 6-7. They not only freely entered into the educational system and cultural understanding of the Babylonian culture that was set before them in verses 17-20, but also became so adept in mastering their material that King Nebuchadnezzar "found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom" (Daniel 1:20 [TNIV]).

Culture and names did not make one ritually unclean or compromised before God. However, followers of God in the Hebrew culture considered all food in Babylonian and Assyrian cultures as ritually unclean. For a Hebrew to partake of such foods not only achieved new friendships with foreign people, but also committed one another to political covenantal significance according to Eastern standards.³² Thus, the driving factor for Daniel and his friends abstaining from the pathag concerned their loyalty to Yahweh and the values they had

grown up with that they considered non-negotiable for faithful Jews before their God.

The attributes of a life marked by the virtues found in Proverbs 1:1-7 seem to be clearly demonstrated as Daniel and his friends, with wisdom and skill, find a way to get favor with their captors while remaining faithful to God. It seemed that Daniel and his friends skillfully "worked the ropes" in their situation in such a manner that they were able to capitalize on the favorable relationships with those over them, as God allowed, while they stayed true to who they were and what they stood for as mature, Hebrew worshipers of God.

The biblical theme of the people of God remaining faithful and true to Yahweh in the midst of a foreign court or culture is not limited to the characters in the book of Daniel. The story of Joseph in Genesis 37, 39-50 conveys the narrative of a Hebrew sold into slavery in Egypt.

Stories are effective avenues for teaching younger generations their identity and behavioral expectations as followers of God.

After living faithfully in the midst of temptation from situations dealing with sexual impropriety to abuse of the power and possessions of his master, this story foreshadows an example of a life lived in consistent harmony with the future recordings of the Proverbs 1:1-7 model. Other examples of biblical characters living faithfully before God in foreign cultures include

Esther and Nehemiah. In each of the stories and situations, the pressures to sin and the seductiveness of the lifestyle of the city were real.³³ Nevertheless, story after story gives evidence to a consistent biblical motif that God's people are known for doing what is right and just, regardless of the cultural situation and surroundings.

Stories are effective avenues for teaching younger generations their identity and behavioral expectations as followers of God. "The corpus of 'resistance stories' known as Daniel 1-6, as well as the Esther tradition, are certainly about maintaining identity and witness under the pressures of surrounding cultural values and contrary ethical behavioral norms....Daniel's stories...become the new virtues and...the new stories with which to raise the young." It is the mandate of God that compels the mature of the Church today to fulfill the responsibility of

raising the immature to a new state of transformational living in holy fear before the Lord.

EPHESIANS 4:11-16: THE PROCESS TOWARDS MATURITY

According to missiologist David Bosch, unlike the New Testament, the Old Testament does not indicate that the people of God, who followed the old covenant, were ever sent by God to various geographical regions and cultures with the purpose of evangelism.³⁵ However, both Old and New Testament accounts call for the immature followers of God to be instructed and involved in the maturation process. This leads to a wise and transformed life and community of God-fearing people. Ephesians 4:11-16 displays a passage detailing the continued theme of the mature raising up the immature in a transformational process that yields fullness in Christ and unity within the Church:

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-13 [TNIV])

It is clear that one of the responsibilities of the leaders of the Church universal is to "equip" the people of God. The idea of equipping alludes to the empowering, growing, and focused development of the people being led by those with mature faith in leadership positions of the Church. This equipping mandate took place for the purpose of involving others in the Church's mission beyond the already established mature leadership team. Although scholars disagree on the precise reasoning for "equipping" with reference to the phrases that follow in this passage, the theme of maturing as a people of faith in God is the focal point for the discussion at hand. ³⁶

The meaning behind the word for "mature" denotes the reaching of a set goal: the set goal of all believers is indeed maturity in Christ.³⁷ The first half of the Ephesians' passage articulates God's method and mode for helping all in the faith become mature. God gives the Church already-mature, "apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers" (v.11). View these individuals as avenues to bring about the completion of the overall purpose of God with regard to leading the maturation process of transformed lives. The leadership of this group helps bring forth the results of unity and fullness in the faith as Christ-followers.³⁸ This process yields a people who are ready "for works of service" as verse 12 indicates. However, the second half of the Ephesians passage goes on to convey why the importance of maturity

in the faith, rather than merely doing works of service, is so vital to the Church:

Then we will no longer be infants tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Ephesians 4:14-16 [TNIV])

Immature lives that have been transformed into mature lives through the process facilitated by those already mature in the faith, result in the Church being anchored in the faith and knowledge of God. Ernest Best notes, "Love coming from Christ is the cement fitting and holding together the members, and all members without exception have their part to play in this."39 A result of this love coming from Christ is a journey of growth and life transformation by those involved in the maturation process. Although this growth process does have secondary individual ramifications, the primary transformational process of growth into Christ regards a corporate body known as the Church (4:13).⁴⁰ Peter O'Brien affirms these conclusions on the corporate nature of the passage. "Significantly, Christian growth or progress does not occur in isolation, for Paul's language here envisages God's people collectively (we all) [v.13, author's emphasis] as en route to this vital destination."41 The process of growth in love from the head, which is Christ, has been the hidden agenda since verse 11.42

Proverbs 1:4 speaks of "teaching the immature" leading to the acquiring of an attribute of "skill" in the following verse. Both concepts from the Proverbs passage mirror the ideas found in the Ephesians text. The "immature" child mentioned in Proverbs has characteristics of being gullible, simple, and persuaded easily by every kind of influence. The picture from Proverbs is the same image found in Ephesians 4:14 of "infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming." Infants are immature, gullible, simple, and easily persuaded; they are effortlessly influenced by good and evil alike. By progressing in growth into a state of maturity, an anchoring faith with a skill to navigate through false teachings into waters of truth will result. O'Brien adds:

The contrast between 'the mature person' of v. 13 and the 'children' here [in v. 14] is pointed. Not only do the latter's ignorance and instability stand over against the knowledge

of the *mature* adult, but also the use of the plural 'children' (with its implications of individualism) stands in contrast to the *one* 'mature person' who is a corporate unity.⁴³ [author's emphasis]

The transformational process leading to maturity pilots unstable, rudderless children to become a unified, grown-up vessel ready to be used in the Kingdom.

As noted earlier, the etvmology of the word for "skill" in Proverbs 1:5 depicts one who is able to handle a boat in rough waters. Likewise, a person who handles a boat with skill also possesses the other attributes found in the Proverbs passage such as being a person of prudence and discretion. Both of these virtues deal with being able to assess situations and make wise decisions based upon sound and timely thinking. The writer of Ephesians suggests that a

The transformational process leading to maturity pilots unstable, rudderless children to become a unified, grown-up vessel ready to be used in the Kingdom.

mature person becomes a person of skill, able to rightly handle the various theological fads that are blown across his or her course.

The culture of the day surrounding the church at Ephesus with its various religious teachings loaded with falsity and error reeks of similarity to the culture of today with its syncretistic, theological winds that threaten to wreck the Church and its sure foundational teachings. Skillful people are useful people to the purposes and works of Christ. All members of the team are thus skillfully involved in the work of the ministry. However, just as Daniel and his friends mature into people of great skill and wisdom, they are able to navigate the culture of their exile due in part to their mastery over the cultural teachings and philosophies of the day as Daniel 1 records:

To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds. At the end of the time set by the king to bring them into his service, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service.

In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom. (Daniel 1:17-20 [TNIV])

Skillful, mature Christ-followers must learn to wisely walk the fine line between being in the world but not of the world for the purpose of effective missional evangelism. There is a healthy place to

Skillful, mature Christfollowers must learn to wisely walk the fine line between being in the world but not of the world for the purpose of effective missional evangelism. dwell between becoming a people sequestered behind the walls of the church building or falling prey to ingesting every cultural drink offered, which produces a faith of poisonous syncretism. This line can only be staked for missional living grounds when the people of God do so with lives that fear the Lord and are deeply invested in a love relationship with Christ and each other. Only then will mature, faith-

ful, skillful, prudent, discerning, unified, loving, Christ-honoring lives emerge from a process of transformation ready to be lived among all cultures in all places for the name and honor of Jesus..

Project Conclusions

All of life is sacred and to be lived as an act of worship before the Lord, regardless of the time, place, or culture. Whether a teenager named Daniel who finds himself choosing to live faithfully while in exile or an American teenager desiring to represent an accurate picture of a humble, yet well-trained Christ-follower serving on the fields of England. Thus, whether in exile or England, a genuine life lived with consistent spiritual disciplines exercised both individually and communally while being propelled by the fear of the Lord generates a credible and savory witness for Christ and the gospel with every breath a person breathes. Apart from reasonable, Christ-exalting lives holistically lived in humility, grace, love, joy, and a natural manner, the world will neither know its identity nor that it is in need of redemp-

tion in order to return it to the intended way of life as Creator God originally designed.⁴⁵ English missionary Lesslie Newbigin aptly questions, "Why should people believe our words if there is nothing happening to authenticate them?"⁴⁶ A life that pursues the virtues of Proverbs 1:1-7 cultivates a basis for an authentic life of transformation and maturing wisdom that is appealing to others is most likely to happen.

Although the original setting of the instructional responsibilities of Proverbs 1:1-7 and Deuteronomy 6 seem to have been designed to be undertaken within the context of the home, the continued abdication of parental responsibilities in the present day calls for guides within the church family to assume this instructional process.⁴⁷ As new guides emerge within the church and lead youth to undertake this process of incorporating Proverbs 1:1-7 into their young lives, a new generation of Christ followers will show the effects of the seven virtues mentioned in this corpus of verses: effective instruction, righteousness, justice, equity, prudence, discretion, and skill. Acquiring a good reputation with good sense due to the virtue of *haskel* does nothing but help facilitate the gospel among areas in desperate need of good news.

Developing youth with hearts bent towards *sedeq, mispat* and *mesarim* was critical to the USA teams serving among UK communities in local service projects. These daily social action ministry projects in strategic locations for the gospel were designed to acquire credibility for the church with city officials and townspeople in Northeast England. Hopefully, as the English observed both USA and UK Christian students with hearts of righteousness working together to do their part to bring about equity and justice among the marginalized in the community, they also witnessed a demonstration of young people being concerned with doing something beyond themselves.

The Hebrew characters in Daniel 1-6 exhibit lives worthy of imitation by students who prepare to serve in the context of a foreign culture. The study of Daniel and his friends in chapter one demonstrates how skillful living allows for one to remain faithful and true in even the most challenging cultural situations. However, before a transformed life was demonstrated in missional serving overseas in England, life transformation enabled by instilling the disciplines of the guided training first had to take place at home. It would be hypocritical and inauthentic to travel overseas to be involved in missional endeavors when those same people are not involved in such ventures in their own local communities.⁴⁸

Regardless of the cultural context in which USA team members eventually found themselves, by adhering to the disciplines of the

guided training, these students emerged as people who submitted themselves to a process of lasting transformation.

The challenge to live faithfully before Christ is much greater when the culture presses for idolatrous choices that bow to the community gods of the day. Choosing to bow to such cultural masters submits one to a form of societal slavery. ⁴⁹ As Christ-followers take their stand to live faithfully, the result often leads to alienation and other forms

The challenge to live faithfully before Christ is much greater when the culture presses for idolatrous choices that bow to the community gods of the day.

of persecution from the dominant culture. Those who choose to live faithfully as "minorities in exile" as opposed to the majority who embrace the worldviews and morals of the culture, at times should read portions of Scripture such as Daniel 1-6 "from the shadows" of societal exile so that the full intention of the perspective from the original exiled people of Scrip-

ture can be comprehended.⁵⁰ Such a viewpoint from Daniel 1-6 can be highly motivating to the youth striving to follow Christ amidst a culture that makes them feel exiled due to their convictions to remain faithful to Christ and his gospel. Observing the faithful lives of Daniel and his friends gives encouragement and plausibility to the youth of today who choose to stand faithfully as God-fearing Christ-followers in their own context of cultural exile.

Such a theme and goal of living faithful, holistic lives of transformation is not only relevant for young people of this era, but also is attainable. The reason this type of faithful and genuine lifestyle is conceivable lies in the notion that students of the postmodern generation value authenticity in life choices. The choice to attain a Christ-centered life of guided discipline which leads to transformation is indeed a challenge when surrounded by the voluminous amount of cultural temptation. However, the reality of the outcome along with the value of the end result makes the student who chooses to follow Christ via the guidelines set before them a goal worthy of the pursuit. Resisting the urge to seek conformity to the culture is a choice that is valued and respected among students today.

The corporate emphasis of growth into maturity of faith is a rea-

son the training was formatted and structured with the USA teams in mind as opposed to merely the individual team member. Individual growth took place as the entire team grew together in the maturing process of transformation. Because the maturation process hinged on growth stemming from a love relationship with Christ, the ethos of the training involved cultivating a maturing love relationship with Christ among the team. The approach to the training components such as Bible study, prayer, worship, evangelism, accountability, service, and other spiritual disciplines were set to prepare both the individual and the team for missional living at home and abroad. The result was a team of people maturing in their faith and ready to share the love of Christ as they served others in various cultural contexts. Being able to navigate life as faithful Christ-followers is a trait of one who no longer suffers from immaturity. Such was the goal of the NE-1 Training Guide implemented by the USA teams who prepared to serve in Northeast England in July 2006.



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Missions in Northeast England Wayne Downs

"Missions in Northeast England" So What?

Questions for Consideration:

- 1. Within a society that is increasingly materialistic and individualistic, themes which are themselves further complicated through the saturation of quasi-religious rhetoric and postmodern thought, how are teenagers to submit to the biblical admonition to be in the world but not of the world?
- 2. In light of the breakdown of the nuclear or traditional family unity, what role does Christian parenting play in the healthy spiritual formation of today's youth? More precisely, in what ways should parents consistently fear God in order to provide mature examples to their children?
- 3. Are today's youth valued in the local church? How can clergy and congregations help integrate youth into meaningful leadership roles and involvements outside of "typical" youth events and interactions?

Is Christianity a Threat to Self-Actualization?

An Examination of Friederich Nietzche's Criticism of Christianity

WAYNE DOWNS

If one could view Nietzsche's concerns as being the concerns of a humanitarian, then perhaps one could also see in Nietzsche a man who fervently wanted all "able-souled" people to be liberated from any form of tyrannical system. While many might want to pass over Nietzsche as simply an angered atheist, Nietzsche's criticisms of Christianity rightfully deserve the attention of the theologians and congregants he sought to unravel.

One of Nietzsche's most famous statements is, "God is dead." This statement has captured the attention of countless people since its pronouncement, but Nietzsche's criticism of Christianity is far richer than this single quote. At some point in virtually all his works, Nietzsche attacks Christianity. While many might want to pass over Nietzsche as simply an angered atheist, Nietzsche's criticisms of Christianity rightfully deserve the attention of the theologians and congregants he sought to unravel. Thus, it is the task of seminarians, church leaders, and defenders of the faith to strive to understand the content of such attacks. Not only may such investigatory exercises help identify objections made by other scholars and constituents of the general public, but inquiry into the minds of skeptics and critics of the Christian faith can strengthen one's own faith. As a seminarian, I found parts of Ni-

Prepared by James Ellis III

etzsche's assailment toward Christianity offensive yet refreshingly insightful. Therefore, I have worked to explore and articulate aspects of Nietzsche's critique on Christianity that could help others understand his position and provide readers with food for thought.

Nietzsche was no doubt a man with legitimate convictions. His rejection of Christianity was not merely some desultory jest toward the predominate ideology of his time. Alistair Kee suggests that it was Nietzsche's own deeply religious soul that aroused in him a need to reevaluate exactly what mentality Christianity was producing around him. Kee basis his assessment of Nietzsche on the argument that "a truly irreligious man would not have thought the project worthwhile." Nietzsche was concerned with what he perceived to be a declining affirmation of life due to two particular Christian concepts: simple obedience to the church and clergy, which he called "slave morality," and the belief in life after death, which he called "otherworldliness." Thus, with a noble desire to liberate humanity from religiously-induced bondage so that the enjoyment of abundant living could be reinstated, Nietzsche commissioned his attack on Christianity.

Christianity, according to Nietzsche, was a great obstacle to be overcome if the potential of humankind ever were to be maximized. For Nietzsche, however, Christianity was not founded on the person of Christ or Christ's teachings; rather, it was the Apostle Paul who stood at the foundation of Christianity.³ With Paul set as an antagonist to humanity, Nietzsche sought to recover for humanity a rightful position from where greater heights of self-actualization could occur. The goal of this essay is to examine Nietzsche's premises for a reevaluation of morality, with particular focus on why his view led to a heavy disdain for the Apostle Paul, and to seek to understand Nietzsche's final hope in his endeavor.

The Crisis in Sight

Having been born to a pious family, including a father and two grandfathers all of whom were Lutheran pastors, it may be difficult to imagine Nietzsche capable of being unemotional regarding religion.⁴ The religion that engrossed Nietzsche as a child, however, was cold and mechanical. If not leading to Nietzsche's distaste for Christianity, it is likely that Nietzsche's childhood familiarity with Christianity was referenced as evidence to bolster his claims for its ineffectiveness and fraudulence. Whatever the case might have been for Nietzsche's attenuating relationship with Christianity, Nietzsche displayed extreme atheism from about 1880 to his death in 1900 at the age of 56.

From that time forward, Nietzsche's entire philosophy and thought seemed to revolve around Christianity, which he approached solely as a critic of the faith.⁵

While Nietzsche grew intellectually as a student of history, theology, and philosophy at the University of Bonn, he began to interpret Western civilization as a structure built upon a faulty foundation.⁶ As he progressed in his studies and continued to observe the Protestant German culture in which he lived, Nietzsche's convictions regarding the unnecessary and artificial limits people lived under grew more concrete. Eventually, Nietzsche felt obligated to make his assessment of Christianity's hindrance on humanity public. Nietzsche strived to show that Western culture's core concepts of freedom and equality sprang from Christianity. While the concepts of freedom and equality are certainly not negative aspects of Western culture, Nietzsche seemed to find no genuine faith among the adherents of the religion that dictated the public's conceptions of these ideas. To Nietzsche, the church congregants were in a position of constant hypocrisy because, when they did believe that certain notions were integral to their faith, they failed to act accordingly. On the other hand, when people did act within the guidelines of their beliefs, their actions appeared as disingenuous social conformity. The hoax of Christian morality was wreaking havoc with the glorious possibilities of Western man, and this was the overriding concern of Friedrich Nietzsche.⁸ The problem, in Nietzsche's eyes, was that the people were victims, caught in the trap of religiosity, and the trap was working flawlessly.

THE GRAND HOAXER

One outcome of the Enlightenment period in Europe was a growth in skepticism toward traditional values and authorities which entailed a great crisis of faith. Much of the criticism against Christianity was fueled by scientific discoveries and evolutionary theories, but preceding the science-based criticisms were various philo--sophical arguments ranging from Humean empiricism to Kantian rationalism. Nietzsche was not philosophically unique due to his criticism of Christianity, but he was unique in his particular argument.

Nietzsche's dislike for the effects of Christianity in his culture – namely, the lack of personal maximization – led Nietzsche to the task of investigating Christianity's origin. After some time, Nietzsche concluded that Paul was not only a decisive figure in Christianity, but he alone was *the* decisive figure, responsible for the crime against humanity Nietzsche witnessed around him. According to Nietzsche, the church had for centuries followed a religion that was founded by the power-hungry St. Paul. Nietzsche believed Paul had no regard for

what Jesus taught, but saw in Jesus only potential political leverage by molding him into a Savior for the religiously excitable masses.¹⁰ Paul, as Nietzsche saw him, was a man perplexed by the weight of the Law he valiantly tried to abide yet always failed. His inability to satisfy the Law created in him *resentment* for the Law and a desperately needed means for escape.¹¹

Nietzsche believed Paul found escape from the Law when the notion of elevating Jesus to a position of savior, redeemer, and liberator was born within Paul's mind. There was, in Jesus, an opportunity for a double blessing for Paul. First, Paul could escape the social confines of the Law he hated. In this case, Nietzsche understood Paul as one who saw the Law strictly as a political system rather than a divine mandate. Therefore, if Jesus provided an escape route from the Law then, for Paul, escape too should be understood as a political escape and not a spiritual conversion. According to Nietzsche, Paul did not believe in Jesus as a savior but merely as a means to political power. Nietzsche wrote

At the bottom, he [Paul] had no possible use for the life of the Saviour, – he needed the death of the cross and something more.... St. Paul desired the end, consequently he desire the means ... Even what he himself did not believe, was believed by the idiots among whom he spread his doctrine. – What he wanted was power; with St. Paul the priest again aspired to power, – he could make use only of the concepts, doctrines, symbols with which masses may be tyrannized over, and with which herds are formed.¹²

Seamlessly, this leads to the second component of the double blessing for Paul. If Paul, as a politician, could sell the idea of "Christ crucified" as a means capable of liberating all of humanity from the guilt of sinfulness, then he could exalt himself to a grand position of saintliness. After all, it is not essential that a founder of a system of morality personally believe premises of the system. It is more important that he or she stand *above* the system, even if his or her actions for achieving the aspired position contradict the system he or she establishes.¹³ These are the motives Nietzsche attributed to Paul, and as Nietzsche stood at the end of the nineteenth century, he saw that Paul's plan had indeed worked.

Stephen Williams argues that perhaps Nietzsche should give Paul credit as one who earnestly sought to align his revelation of Jesus as Messiah with the Jewish religion in which he was raised.¹⁴ However, the only credit Nietzsche gives Paul is that of considering Paul as a

well-educated genius and worthy opponent.¹⁵ Nietzsche's case, in large, is built on the fact that Pauline Christianity can be seen to have two factors that would guarantee perpetual success once the ideas took root. The two paramount ingredients in Paul's plan to advance

With Paul set as his nemesis, Nietzsche sought to restore humanity to a higher position from where great heights of self-actualization could occur. his kingdom, according to Nietzsche, were the establishment of a herd mentality, which Nietzsche refers to also as "slave morality," and otherworldliness. Each of these aspects of the religion Paul formed serves to degenerate humanity by robbing adherents of abundant living and holding them captive in impoverishment. ¹⁶

THE HERD AND OTHERWORDLINESS

Paul, being a cunning and apathetic politician (in Nietzsche's opinion), did not have to believe in the doctrines he preached, but he merely had to be able to sale the ideas to the masses. ¹⁷ Fortunately for Paul, being a Jew born and raised in Tarsus and having had a Pharisaic education, he was well acquainted with urban Hellenistic life and he had a strong understanding of Jewish heritage. ¹⁸ Nietzsche argued that Paul's familiarity with both of these cultures enabled him to speak to a large, needy, lower-class population of Jews and other outcasts in Tarsus. These people, particularly the Jews, being mostly needy and marginalized people, would be inclined to relate to the aspects of Paul's message which resembled Judaism. Simultaneously, Paul could use his Pharisaic background to establish trust and persuasively promote the components of his doctrine – namely his teachings about Christ – that would have been less familiar, or even controversial, to the ears of his audience.

If it were true, as Nietzsche claimed, that most of Paul's audience was among society's lowest demographic politically, economically, and racially, this did not pose an obstacle for Paul but was indeed one of the greatest catalysts for his success. Nietzsche perceived Christianity to be essentially a countermovement against the noble values of the elite. In Paul's setting, there was little, if any, difference between lower-class citizens and slaves. Nietzsche argued that by emphasizing the virtuosity in traits already retained by the lower class, such

as timidity, modesty, and neighborly love, and condemning materialistic and competitive behaviors, Paul was able to entice and exploit the lowly. Furthermore, Paul was able to lead them to reverse society's values exclusively by their sheer strength in numbers. To make favorable the traits of the once oppressed majority allowed the behaviors of the empowered elite to be rendered as vicious, thus being the goal of those with *resentment*. Assuming the herd would follow, Paul communicated a vision of turning the established oligarchical government completely upside down, or at least it was to appear this way to the herd. However, it might be asked, if this was what Paul truly wanted, then how could Paul personally achieve his desired aggrandized position?

Nietzsche postulated that Paul had another reason for marketing his plan to the lowly. Envious and resentful people who have a slavish mentality due to experienced oppression, such as the lowly class Paul sought to exploit, are easily manageable due to their lack of self-assertiveness and their habituation to being guided by others. Therefore, while the slavish masses may envy and resent whatever authority is

before them, they most likely only assuage their feelings by indulging in imaginary revenge.²¹

Nietzsche believed that Paul preemptively littered the herd with concepts of sin, guilt, and intrinsic human depravity which incapacitated anyone from saving him or herself in order to establish added security to his (Paul's) kingdom.²² According to Nietzsche, Paul

The hoax of Christian morality was wreaking havoc with the glorious possibilities of Western man, and this was the overriding concern of Friedrich Nietzsche

preached such doctrines of guilt as a politician and not as a spiritual man concerned with metaphysical realities. Thus, if Paul ever showed signs of empathy or confessed behaviors he condemned, it was mere political maneuvering in order to build a sense of relatedness with the people. In actuality, however, Paul knew himself to be immune to the doctrines of sin, guilt, and depravity because he knew the doctrines were prevarications. Nonetheless, making himself one who brought the good news of a Savior capable of freeing humanity from their sin, Paul positioned himself above the masses and made himself a saint. Simultaneously, by preaching the need of an outside source of

redemption, Paul was also able to hold the people under an umbrella of indebtedness, assuring continued submission. However, Nietzsche claimed that weaving guilt-motives into his "gospel" was only one tactic Paul employed.²³ The other tactic Paul utilized was possibly even more controlling and detrimental to the sanctity of life – otherworldliness.

Perhaps no religion or system of morality is well corroborated if life ends at the moment of one's last breath. If life exists only in the "here and now," the injunction condemning certain sensual behaviors seems wanting due to the lack of harsh consequences. In Paul's case, in order to deter a revolt of the multitudes which could potentially make any conceivable behavior normative, Paul needed something stronger than threats of guilt and shame. Therefore, further reaching consequences were established. Nietzsche claims that Paul's source of maximum control is imbedded in the concept of otherworldliness. In Nietzsche's eyes, the gospel according to Paul projects both ultimate reward and punishment into an ever-elusive moment to come. In other words, by promoting an idea of immeasurable freedom or condemnation in the world to come, Paul could confine the people's actions to an acceptable moral median.

Nietzsche reserved his strongest criticism for the concept of otherworldliness because he believed it bred escapism.²⁴ Nietzsche wrote, "When the centre of gravity of life is laid, not in life, but in a beyond – *in nonentity*, – life is utterly robbed of its balance."²⁵ For Nietzsche, a person's most valuable asset is his or her very existence at any given time. In order to enjoy life, and live life to its fullest, another place and time cannot consume one's attention. This problem is recognizable in chapter two of 2 Thessalonians where it is evident that the church had difficulty in managing the preoccupation some church members had with the *eschaton*, which was leading them to lives of inaction. Although Nietzsche never used 2 Thessalonians as a witness against Paul's problematic doctrine, the canonized book itself can be seen to depict the harmfulness of otherworldliness.

Nietzsche claimed otherworldliness deteriorates a person's concern for the present world by causing them to act apathetically toward the pains and injustices of this world, if not causing them to utterly resent this world.²⁶ If justice is always something to come, then it is underastandable how hostility toward the existing world could be derived from the idea of a better, or perfect, world to come.²⁷ For Nietzsche, a satisfactory response to another's problem or another's wrongdoing cannot simply be swept away by insisting that rectification will be found in a nonexistent world to come.

Within the concept of otherworldliness, there is also little sense

of immediacy for any kind of change (other than conversion to Paul's form of Christianity). Nietzsche may have rejected the messages of Hebrew prophets, but he admired their style and insistence that God was a God of wrath who demanded justice. Paul, however, kept the Christians on a path of repression by promising that God's justice would be accomplished in God's time. According to Nietzsche, interpretational changes of the Jewish tradition went unnoticed among the Jews due to their state of *decadence*. The remnants of the positive religion of the Old Testament eventually deteriorated into the negative religion of the New Testament, which Nietzsche described as "a *negative* Semitic religion, the product of an *oppressed* class."

Otherworldliness is an effortless way out of disappointment with the world, whether dissatisfaction comes from an oppressor or from one's self. Konstantin Kolenda explains, "Nietzsche observes that those who condemn the world, who are dissatisfied with it, most likely project on reality their dissatisfaction with themselves, their ability to bestow value, to produce for themselves valuable experiences. Their boredom is most likely self-inflicted and testifies to their weakness." Whether we agree with Kolenda's assessment that people condemn the world due to dissatisfaction they have with themselves or that people accept the doctrine of a world to come because it is simply part of a larger system of thought they find appealing, does not seem

to matter to Nietzsche. Why people believed Paul's gospel was irrelevant to Nietzsche. What mattered to Nietzsche was that the people of Paul's time had bought, and spread, a lie that continued to blind them of grander possibilities of humankind. Nietzsche was, in a sense, a humanitarian who wanted citizens of Western culture to understand that they had fallen victim to a venerated manifestation of

Nietzsche believed that Paul preemptively littered the herd with concepts of sin, guilt, and intrinsic human depravity that incapacitated anyone from saving him or her self in order to establish added security to his kingdom.

slave morality. Therefore, in order to make room for the autonomous self, Nietzsche would have to obliterate any vestige of otherworldliness.³³

NIETZCHE'S REMEDY

In addition to his approval of the depictions of God presented by Old Testament prophets, Nietzsche, in a seemingly meticulous manner throughout all of his discourses against Christianity, also consistently shielded Jesus' message from blame for the current state of slave morality. Jesus, to use Nietzsche's term, was an "idiot," but it must be noted that an idiot is defined by Nietzsche as one with a "free spirit" and who cares nothing for what is fixed. Regarding Nietzsche's summation of Jesus, Gary Banham writes, "Jesus' idiocy consists precisely in his *extreme* freedom where the force of the law lacks any force at all and 'love' becomes a supreme power *precisely through its abstraction*."³⁴

Interestingly, Nietzsche may have considered himself as one in line with Jesus and the prophets, for all three greatly upset the religious leaders by initiating prophetic protest against established systems.³⁵ However, Nietzsche's major yearning was not simply to encourage rebellion or protest, for such notions are too easily misunderstood. Rebellion and protest only elicit infatuations with one train of thought set in opposition with another. That being the case, rebellion and protest typically hinder personal freedom because one has simply made a lateral progression from one system of thought to another, rather than stepping outside of any system and experiencing true freedom. Nietzsche admired the freedom that the Old Testament prophets fought for, and the freedom that Jesus displayed, which was the freedom that Paul sequestered by making Jesus the middleman between God and man. Nietzsche wrote, "For Jesus himself had done away with the concept 'guilt,' - he denied any gulf between God and man, he lived this unity between God and man, it was this that constitutes his 'glad tidings.' ... And he did not teach it as a privilege!"It was Paul, however, with his "rabbinic impudence" who made such communion with God a reward.³⁶ The purpose of Jesus' message, according to Nietzsche, was not doctrinal but ethical, for Jesus demonstrated how a person ought to live and promote apolitical freedom.³⁷ In the end, however, Nietzsche apparently viewed Jesus' message as wasted on a herd whose members were too weak to heed its directive.³⁸

Nietzsche frequently preferred to consult ancient Greek religion and philosophy for direction. One reason for this preference might simply be due to the numerous loaded definitions people might have regarding particular concepts when blanket statements or vague references to Judaism and Christianity are made. A familiar example of such an occurrence can be observed if one were to ask Protestants of different denominations what "speaking in tongues" means. Thus, by referring to less familiar traditions, Nietzsche could avoid inferences people might make based on their own presuppositions. In other

words, the utilization of less familiar traditions provided Nietzsche a cleaner slate on which to cast his presentation of a satisfactory ideology. More importantly, however, Nietzsche esteemed the Greeks' portraitures of their gods because their gods represented the strong and healthy person who was not bound to conformity by a priestly caste. The concept of a higher power was innocuous, according to Nietzsche, provided that the listeners remember what the image represents. Nietzsche claimed, however, that it was too often the case that symbolic images were morphed into real entities that demanded obedience. Nietzsche explained

What is un-Greek in Christianity. The Greeks did not see the Homeric gods above them as masters and themselves below them as servants, as did the Jews. They saw, as it were, only the reflection of the most successful specimens of their own casts, that is, an ideal, not a contrast to their own nature. They felt related to them, there was a reciprocal interest, a kind of symmachia [alliance]. Man thinks himself noble when he gives himself such gods.... Christianity, on the other hand, crushed and shattered man completely, and submerged him as if in deep mire. Then, all at once, into his feeling of complete confusion, it allowed the light of divine compassion to shine....⁴⁰

In essence, Nietzsche's message was one of personal freedom and autonomy, which was a message he saw remnants of in all religions. While Nietzsche's personal conviction consisted of persuading Western culture to reconsider its foundation for morality, Nietzsche's philosophy was based on a dictum penned by the ancient Greek philosopher Pindar who wrote, "Become who you are." Under the presupposition that human beings create their own values in order for one to become who he or she is, it is required that one either find a basis for the values in which he or she can truly believe, or the values should be abandoned and replaced. Nietzsche's reasoning is quite simple. In order for a person to truly enjoy all of his or her own life, it must be a life that is defined and considered significant by that individual and not by something or someone other than the individual herself

THE DEATH OF GOD AND THE BIRTH OF THE OVERMAN

Nietzsche's pronouncement, "God is dead," ⁴² has alarmed and offended many Christians for over a century, but it has most often been a misunderstood statement. With these words, Nietzsche was not

making a claim about the ceased existence of a divine entity; rather, he was attempting to remove a veil that had blinded societies. ⁴³ God was not actually dead, according to Nietzsche, because God never truly existed. What did exist was a personified projection of humankind's ideal self, which overtime became known as its own being. In claiming, "God is dead," Nietzsche pointed to the fact that humankind's pursuit

In order to make room for the autonomous self, Nietzsche would have to obliterate any vestiage of otherworldliness. of reaching its ideal self-hood had ceased. The task, then, for Nietzsche was to recapture the essence of the ideal man that had been relegated to an imaginary figure of a divine entity.

Further still, Nietzsche believed that some people had come far enough in their de-

velopment of wisdom and knowledge to be themselves paragons of humanity. An individual capable of living a fulfilled life, a life that pushes one's maximum potential, is what Nietzsche considered to be an "Overman," (or, "Übermensh," commonly translated as Superman). This highest type of human, Nietzsche described, would be one who transcends the need of a moral God-like figure. It is important to note, however, that Nietzsche did not regard this possibility of human achievement as something intended for everyone. Nietzsche's repetition of Pindar's words was directed toward a select readership and not to the masses, for those born without noble souls have little to develop into. Nietzsche hoped, however, that the coming Overman would be able to transcend traditional moralities and become comparatively superior to other humans. Nietzsche prophesied

A new breed of philosophers is approaching. ... Are they the friends of "truth," these upcoming philosophers?... – they certainly will not be dogmatists. It would offend their pride, as well as their taste, if their truth were a truth for everyone (which has been the secret wish and hidden meaning of all dogmatic aspirations so far). "My judgment is my judgment: other people don't have an obvious right to it too" – perhaps this is what such a philosopher of the future will say. We must do away with the bad taste of wanting to be in agreement with the majority. 46

Conclusion

In the end, it appears that Nietzsche was not altogether irreligious, but he indeed considered Pauline Christianity to be misanthropic because it hindered humankind from reaching its full potential. It also seems that while Nietzsche did strongly refute Pauline Christianity, he reverently held onto a sense of value he found in the teachings that Jesus announced. If one could view Nietzsche's concerns as being the concerns of a humanitarian, then perhaps one could also see in Nietzsche a man who fervently wanted all "able-souled" people to be liberated from any form of tyrannical system. To say that Nietzsche was irreligious, however, would disregard Nietzsche's devout faith in the sacredness of humankind

Nietzsche's religiosity is what disabled him from flippantly skimming Pindar's words, "Become who you are," and his religiosity may have been that which kept him from making Jesus guilty by association for the wrongs Nietzsche saw within Christianity. Instead, Nietzsche saw the life Jesus led as exemplary of a person whom had become who he was – a person free from the kind of oppressive, heteronymous governance that Nietzsche claimed existed in Pauline Christianity. Nietzsche saw the oppressiveness of Paul's "gospel" as

an atrocious act of hatred against humankind. Therefore, from the inception of the thought that human beings can be free from oppressive systems of belief, including Pauline Christianity, Nietzsche could not escape his conviction to preach a message of liberation.

We could speculate endlessly on what might have led to Nietzsche's attitude toward ChristiWhile he did detest Pauline Christianity, he reverently held onto a sense of value he found in the Christianity depicted by the gospel that Jesus announced.

anity. Was his father, the Lutheran pastor, too rigid and emotionally detached? However, such questions, I believe, are pointless. We know that he viewed the church as cold, mechanical, and disingenuous; and we know that he saw in Paul a man with corrupt motives. The real value in studying Nietzsche's criticism of Christianity can be found by asking questions aimed toward our own handling of Scripture. Do we teach a gospel that places Jesus as a middleman between God and

humankind? Do we teach a gospel that endorses blind obedience – a gospel more concerned with rules than with helping people maximize their potential? Do we teach a gospel that evades responsible actions against injustices due to preoccupations with the world to come? If any of these accusations can legitimately be held, as I believe Nietzsche has shown that they can be, then what will be our responses to such accusations as seminarians, congregants, or church leaders? These are the questions I feel Nietzsche's criticism exposes; thus, these are questions we must ask ourselves as people of the faith.



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Notes

- Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, transl. with commentary by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1974), 181. This citation of the quote "God is dead" refers to Nietzsche's famous passage "The Madman," but the quote appears also on pages 167 and 343 in *The Gay Science*. It also appears in Nietzsche's work *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.
- 2. Alistair Kee, Nietzsche Against the Crucified (London: SCM Press, 1999), 143.
- 3. The idea that Paul was the founder of what has become known as Christianity is a central component of Nietzsche's attack on Christianity. This concept repeatedly arises in *The Antichrist*, trans. by Anthony M. Ludovici. (Amherst, NY: Promethus Books, 2000), particularly in sections 39-43. However, this idea was first seen in Nietzsche's 1880 essay, "The First Christian," found in *The Writings of St. Paul*, ed. Wayne A. Meeks (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1972), 289-291.
- 4. Thomas Brobjer, "Nietzsche's Atheism," in *Nietzsche and the Divine*, eds. John Lippitt & Jim Urpeth (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2000), 1-2.
- 5. Ibid., 2.
- Konstantin Kolenda, Philosophy's Journey: From the Presocratics to the Present, 2nd ed. (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1990), 200.
- Ullrich Haase, "Nietzsche's Gotterdammerung," in Nietzsche and the Divine, eds. John Lippitt & Jim Urpeth (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2000), 274.
- 8. Paul T. Jersild, "Nietzsche's Attack on Christendom," *The Lutheran Quarterly* 3 (1994): 231.

- 9. Jorg Salaquarda, "Dionysus versus the Crucified One: Nietzsche's Understanding of the Apostle Paul," in *Studies in Nietzsche and the Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, eds. James C. O'Flaherty, Timothy F. Sellner, & Robert M. Helm (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 103-106.
- Morgan Rempel, Nietzsche, Psychohistory, and the Birth of Christianity (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002) 119.
- 11. Nietzsche, "The Jewish Dysangelist," in *The Writings of St. Paul*, ed. Wayne A. Meeks (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1972), 293.
- 12. Nietzsche, The Antichrist, 61.
- 13. Salaquarda, Studies in Nietzsche and the Judaeo-Christian Tradition, 109.
- 14. Stephen N. Williams, The Shadow of the Antichrist: Nietzsche's Critique of Christianity (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 132.
- 15. Rempel, Nietzsche, Psychohistory, and the Birth of Christianity, 140.
- Kee, Nietzsche Against the Crucified, 86.
- 17. Nietzsche, "The First Christian," in The Writings of St. Paul, 288-291.
- 18. Rempel, 114.
- 19. Jersild, "Nietzsche's Attack on Christendom," 232.
- 20. Kee, Nietzsche Against the Crucified, 85.
- 21. Gabriele Taylor, Deadly Vices (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 92-93.
- Jacob Golomb, "Nietzsche's positive religion and the Old Testament," in Nietzsche and the Divine, eds. John Lippitt & Jim Urpeth (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2000), 44.
- Georges De Schrijver, "From Theodicy to Anthropodicy: The Contemporary Acceptance of Nietzsche and the Problem of Suffering," in God and Human Suffering, eds. Jan Lambrecht & Raymond F. Collins (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1990), 105-106
- 24. Kolenda, Philosophy's Journey, 202...
- 25. Nietzsche, The Antichrist, 61. Emphasis original.
- 26. Plank, "Confronting the Unredeemed World," 130.
- 27. R. Motson Thompson, *Nietzsche and Christian Ethics* (New York, NY: Philosophical Library, 1951), 31.
- 28. Golomb, Nietzsche and the Divine, 45.
- 29. Ibid., 45.
- 30. Decadence is a term Nietzsche used to describe the phenomenon of a corrosion of necessary moral traditions of a society due to a growing distance between the current culture and the time, place, and reasoning that created the given traditions. For Nietzsche, such things as recurring periods of exile caused the Jews to repeatedly reinterpret their faith. Eventually, decadence led to such great chasms in ideology that replacement, rather than readjustments, of beliefs had taken place. For a more detailed account of how Nietzsche understood the effects of decadence in Judaism that helped make fertile ground for the birth of Christianity, Jorg Salaquarda's essay in Studies in Nietzsche and the Judaeo-Christian Tradition is highly recommended.

- 31. Golomb, Nietzsche and the Divine, 50.
- 32. Kolenda, Philosophy's Journey, 206.
- Michael Horton, "Eschatology After Nietzsche: Apollonian, Dionysian or Pauline?," International Journal of Systematic Theology 1 (2000): 33.
- Gary Banham, "Jews, Judaism and the 'free spirit," in Nietzsche and the Divine, eds. John Lippitt & Jim Urpeth (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2000), 73. Emphasis original.
- Merold Westphal, "Nietzsche as a Theological Resource," in Nietzsche and the Divine, eds. John Lippitt & Jim Urpeth (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2000), 18.
- 36. Nietzsche, The Antichrist, 59. Emphasis original.
- Salaquarda, Studies in Nietzsche and the Judaeo-Christian Tradition, 107;
 Thompson, Nietzsche and Christian Ethics, 29.
- 38. Thompson, Nietzsche and Christian Ethics, 28.
- 39. Jersild, "Nietzsche's Attack on Christendom," 232.
- 40. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human*, transl. by Marion Faber & Stephen Lehmann (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 85.
- 41. Leslie Paul Thiele, Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul: A Study of Heroic Individualism (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 211.
- 42. Nietzsche, The Gay Science, 181.
- 43. Kolenda describes Nietzsche's pronouncement of "God is dead" as a statement of judgment that reflects a crisis of the entire culture. As a historian of ideas, Nietzsche views ideas as if they were living "vehicles for the articulation of central attitudes." The whole culture, though claiming Christianity, was in reality practicing nihilism. Nietzsche does not stand alone in this conviction. Kierkegaard also attacks Christianity for its betrayal of the original message of Christ. Kolenda's summary is found in pages 200-201 of *Philosophy's Journey*.
- 44. Haase, Nietzsche and the Divine, 274.
- 45. Thiele, Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul, 211.
- 46. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, eds. Rolf-Peter Horstmann & Judith Norman (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 39-40.

"Is Christianity a Threat to Self-Actualization" ... So What?

Questions for Consideration:

- 1. Nietzsche claims that Paul co-opted the Gospel message for political power. Is it possible to find contemporary examples of politicians and other leaders using Christ for their own personal gain?
- 2. Does the church today leverage fear and guilt as a control mechanism as, according to Nietzsche, did Paul?
- 3. Is Nietzsche's distinction between the teachings of Christ and the teachings of Paul valid?
- 4. How can the church overcome claims that Christianity is nothing more than a moral philosophy?
- 5. Nietzsche claims that the Overman, the ideal type of human, has left the notion of a moral God behind. In what ways can the church proclaim the Christian faith as a holistic system for living and as a necessary component of a full life?

Prepared by Patrick Woods

Poetry

An Introduction

ELIZABETH GRASHAM-REEVES

"Poetry is thoughts that burn, and words that burn" Thomas Gray. 1776

When you receive a letter from a friend, you don't expect the first line to say, "Dear Mr. Current Resident." Just the same, when you receive advertisements from large corporations, you would be startled to read "Dearest John. We're so sorry your pet died – please remember our Labor Day sale starts on Friday." The form of a written document determines much of what will be included in it; 'Dear John' letters always include the phrase "I love you, BUT.." and bills always include the words "TOTAL AMOUNT DUE." We expect these differences. Our mindset changes according to the form of writing that we are given, and we process according to type. What if you didn't know there was a difference? When it comes to the written word, knowledge is key to both discernment and dissemination. And this applies not only to formal and informal correspondence, but also to the art of written word in poetic and prose styles.

When you read prose, you know certain things will occur: there will be a connective plot of some sort, important figures or characters, conflict, dialogue, etc. You've been trained as a child and as an adult to recognize these key prose paradigms, and you have unconsciously codified these rules into your perceptions. Unfortunately, though, the process of reading and understanding poetry has not been as strenuously ingrained into our brains as prose was. Too often, people read poetry the same way they read prose; they apply rules of narrative plot and character development onto a genre that in no way fits those demands. People become confused and discouraged by their lack of understanding. Eventually, they just stop reading poetry because it doesn't 'make sense.' This, however, is a dangerous route that too many professors, pastors and laymen have taken – and it has robbed them

of vast stretches of their faith history (Psalms, Lamentations, Song of Solomon, vast stretches of Isaiah, etc.)

So, when you read the poems that we've included in the journal this time around, remember a few key things:

- In poetry, words do not convey specific meaning as much as they evoke an alternate emotional state; much of the time, words' literal usages have been expanded to cover a variety of different meanings
- Try to discover if there is a rhythm to the poem itself; a simple way to do this is to count syllables. If there is a rhythm, try reading the poem itself out loud and discover how that alters the meaning or impact of the words
- Poems are usually extremely heavily laden with images, both of the normal every day experience and of the fanciful and mythical; These images help to convey emotional or aesthetic states more powerfully than mere words. When you discover a dominant image in a poem, try to 'see' that image as you read the rest of the words; when you overlay the senses of sight and sound, the words themselves become more powerful
- Don't be afraid to re-read or consult with a dictionary. Word choice is extremely important to the poet, and this may lead them to choose a somewhat archaic word over a more commonly used one; Poets are not looking for 'good-enough' words they're looking for the 'right' words
- Don't get frustrated! Poetry is not as simply understood as prose because it is more concerned with emotional response than cerebral propositional truth

Thomas Gray was right; once you can wrap your head around the differences in style between poetry and prose, poetry will breathe new life into your faith as well as burn you with its precision and insightfulness.

Good luck.

Poetry

JIM SIMMONS

Talitha Koum

one wonders what would be said of the mourners the mourners asleep exhausted from their wailing

one wonders how wailing gives way to sleep excruciation to apathy the mourners of fate

the poverty, the anatomy of indigence and lies of racial memory, discrimi nation, the mourners fall still

> get up, Child, she only sleeps the world, cancerous agony black side of town, barrio

Russia, Argentina, Uganda, white trash murdering, being murdered in quiet rooms with statistics

She, the world, only sleeps

Get up, Mourners, raise your voice and laugh at the preposterous notion that all the world's evil and strife

is but the troubled dream of a dead girl.

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Ezekiel Speaks

Is it a little thing for you to take away life so we get your point?

I didn't know you were so obsessed with being understood—

the invisible beginning and end.



JIM SIMMONS

has lived in many places, including Japan, Michigan, Arkansas, and Ft. Worth, to name a few. He is a Dual Masters student, pursuing a Masters of Divinity with a Theology concentration at Truett Seminary and a Masters of Church Music Composition at Baylor. He currently serves at First Baptist Church, Lorena as Minister of Music and Worship. He studied music at Ouachita Baptist (BME and BA Church Mus.) and has hopes of being a published author, poet, and composer. One of his piano pieces, "Notes, Black and White" was performed at Tarelton State University this April. He is considering a DMA in Composition, or a PhD in Liturgics.

Book Reviews



Olson, Roger E. Questions to All Your Answers: A Journey from Folk Religion to Examined Faith. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007. 192 pgs.

"Jesus is the answer." "God helps those who help themselves." "The Bible has all the answers." We have all heard these axioms repeated time and again, as if they were straight from Scripture. However, while they may seem like harmless sayings, these clichés often promote a kind of unexamined faith known as folk religion. In Questions to All Your Answers: A Journey from Folk Religion to Examined Faith, Roger Olson engages the reader in a fruitful discussion about the clichés on which folk religion is built. Too many contemporary evangelical Christians have simply accepted clichés that oversimplify and distort biblical truth. Folk Christianity, the brand of folk religion that is specifically Christian, is built upon familiar slogans that have some truth, but little or no real theological depth. Folk Christianity resists intellectual examination and is content to accept the axioms as truth. However, Olson challenges the readers to examine their faith in order to become what he calls reflective Christians. When we question the familiar maxims of folk Christianity, we are forced to formulate new ways to express our faith. The book assumes that no formulation will ever be the one whole, complete theological truth for all time. Therefore, we must continue searching for better and truer ways of making our faith intelligible to the world. Olson's purpose is not to destroy the faith of the reader by posing tough questions. In fact, the goal of Olson's book is ultimately pastoral. He hopes to inspire readers to assess and inspect these axioms in order to help "folk Christians" develop into mature, reflective believers with an examined faith.

Each chapter deals with a common aphorism of folk Christianity,

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exploring the relevant issues along the way. The Introduction provides an excellent overview of both folk and reflective Christianity, outlining characteristics of each. Chapter 1 entitled "It's a Mystery, Just Accept It: So What Do You Say to an Atheist?" examines the appropriate place of mystery and paradox in the Christian faith. Folk Christians, when confronted with tough theological issues, appeal to mystery too soon, which can lead to anti-intellectualism. Reflective Christians, however, acknowledge the presence of mystery in dealing with matters of faith, but do not use that as an excuse to live an unexamined Christian life. In a chapter that is about mystery and paradox, Olson must inevitably deal with hard-to-understand and, in some cases, unsolvable issues. Nevertheless, the way it is written makes it accessible to everyone, regardless of their educational background. However, the author does not shy away from using and explaining the appropriate language and history to describe the complexities of the issues at stake. Olson engages the reader in an excellent discussion of sovereignty and free will, claiming that although there may be mysteries about the subject that cannot be comprehended, one cannot simply dismiss apparent contradictions as mystery. And, in this way, he challenges the reader to engage in the kind of reflective formulation that he discusses in the introduction. Olson boldly claims that reflective, mature Christians will always be uncomfortable with a paradox because the apparent contradiction forces us to keep asking questions and searching for ways to "relieve" the paradox.

Under the heading "God Is in Control: So Why Is the World Such a Mess?", the author spends a good bit of time describing the ways in which the Calvinist worldview falls into inconsistency and requires further exploration (while hinting that there may be a better way to understand God's relationship to the world). However, Olson is fair in his critique, respectful of those who disagree, and seems truly concerned for those who simply have not thought about their position. He continues the chapter by critiquing those who claim that God is nice.

In chapter 3, "Jesus Is the Answer: So What's the Question?", Olson challenges the reader to see the ways in which this saying is ultimately symptomatic of the tendency, in some evangelical circles, not only to exclude the Father and the Spirit from the Trinity, but to ignore the plurality of American culture and inadequately contextualize the gospel. With so much talk about nuanced theological issues, which are usually discussed in the academy rather than among "folk Christians," one might think that it is difficult for the average reader, who is likely reading for personal formation and growth rather than research, to stay engaged. However, Olson allows his personality and his own experiences to shine through in a way that creates a genu-

ine connection between the reader and the author. Midway through the third chapter, for example, when he emphasizes how the Trinity has been ignored in evangelical circles, some readers might question Olson's personal devotion to Christ. But the author, in a moment of authentic vulnerability, reassures his readers by saying, "All my life I've worshiped him and prayed to him and participated eagerly in Jesuscentered evangelism. I love Jesus."

With the title "The Bible Has All the Answers: So What about Cloning?", Olson explores common misconceptions about the origin and purpose of the Bible. Folk Christianity too often assumes that the Bible has simply descended out of heaven into the hands of humans and does not take into account the spiritual purpose and nature of Scripture, thereby ignoring the process by which human writers and editors have transmitted and preserved the text for us. In the next chapter, Olson explores the question of God's will by taking on the cliché that "God Has a Perfect Plan for Your Life." Folk Christians usually understand God's will as a detailed blueprint for every individual life, but the author, by way of analogy, briefly proposes a new model of understanding God's will that acknowledges both the human and divine elements of God's plan.

Chapter 6, "God Helps Those Who Help Themselves: So Who Needs Grace?", includes a wonderful discussion of the relationship between God's grace and human faith. A good dose of history with Augustine and Pelagius and multiple well-written analogies give the discussion depth and clarity. With his chapter entitled "Jesus Is Coming Soon: So Why Are You Buying Life Insurance?", Olson offers a good starting point for examinations of the rapture fever that so often captivates the imaginations of folk Christians. He presents an often neglected biblical perspective of Jesus' return, focusing on the statements of Paul and Jesus rather than getting into an argument about apocalyptic symbolism.

Chapter 8, "All Sins Are Equal: So Is Reusing a Stamp as Bad as Murder?", challenges the assumption that all sins are equal. Olson points out that many folk Christians use this assumption as an excuse not to interfere with sin in the life of the community, ignoring the fact that some sins are more destructive to relationships and community than others. The author then moves on to matters closer to everyday concerns of Christians in chapters 9 and 10. The former examines the situations where the cliché "Judge not!" is appropriately and inappropriately used, and the latter challenges the way that American Christians think about money and materialism. Both of these issues are examples of how the Bible is twisted to fit American culture. Olson does well to correct the misuse with sound biblical interpretation.

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Throughout the book, the author includes plenty of insight drawn from Christian history. These examples serve to connect the problems of evangelicalism today with our Christian heritage, adding depth to the discussion of these issues. It is helpful for any churchgoer to be familiar with the thoughts and lives of both Augustine and Bonhoeffer, but it is equally delightful for scholars to find a discussion of Zinzendorf and the Moravians. Also, in addition to the examples from Christian history, many well-written analogies can be found to illuminate and clarify issues that readers might misunderstand.

The reader will also be pleased to find that Olson does not shy away from difficult, but needed and relevant, discussions even if they might offend some people(though he is careful enough to be respectful of all points of view). The author carefully presents complex issues clearly and concisely without being quarrelsome. The beauty of this book is that Olson does not dictate to his readers what they should or should not believe. The aim of the book is not to tell readers which beliefs are the "right" beliefs, but which questions are important to ask. In this way, the title is truly descriptive of the book's purpose: it contains questions and discussions meant to challenge and reformulate the pat answers of folk Christianity.

However, given the length of the book, it is impossible to do a thorough historical or theological analysis of each issue. Unfortunately, this may leave some readers wanting more at the end of each chapter. This, however, may be intentional, since at the end of the book Olson encourages his readers to study other books with more lengthy discussions of each topic.

At the end of every chapter, there are questions intended to stimulate discussion on the issues brought up throughout the chapter. This lends itself particularly well to small group discussions on this book. The questions are straightforward enough so that discussion would be easy, but they are deep and personal enough to spark meaningful dialogue. In fact, the questions encourage the very reflection in which Olson proposes all Christians should engage.

This book is highly recommended for anyone desiring to develop his or her folk Christianity into a reflective and examined Christian faith, especially lay people who are looking for an introduction to a broad range of theological issues. This book is useful not only for those who wish to reformulate their ideas in order to better understand what they believe, but also for those who would like to learn how to communicate their faith in more intelligible and meaningful ways to those who live outside the American-Christian ghetto. Unfortunately, it is often the case that those who have the most education and the most developed theological ideas are least able to communicate with

lay Christians. Luckily, this is not the case with Dr. Roger Olson. For this reason, even to those who have all their theological ducks in a row, I recommend this book as a resource for learning easy and effective—but deeply true—language to use in communicating tough ideas to those people who are still examining and deepening their faith as reflective Christians (which should include everyone).

Collin Bullard M.Div., '09

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Volf, Miroslav. The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006. 244 pgs.

In a world saturated with violence and resulting demands to horde the painful memories like a miser, how is the disciple of Christ to react? How are they to remember? How is the believer to encounter the genocide in Darfur, World Trade Center bombings, rising death tolls in Iraq, and international political posturing and sloganeering that cries out for violent remembering? Can a believer rightly cling to a memory that drives towards violence, destruction, and death? In his *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World*, Miroslav Volf addresses the continual call to remember in light of his recurring theological themes: cross, the reality of the coming kingdom, and the reality/necessity of reconciliation. Volf, the Director of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture as well as Henry B. Wright Professor of Systematic Theology at Yale Divinity School, has dedicated much of his literary output towards challenging believers to grow into citizens of the coming kingdom.

Memory is vital for human life. It is memory that gives humanity continuity of character and a coherent sense of self.1 However, "We are not just shaped by our memories; we ourselves shape the memories that shape us." Memory is therefore essential and essentially difficult to manage. The problem of memory is that the mind often recreates its own history, painting the victim in the light of a holiness belonging only to God and the victimizers in the deepest darkness of sin. Without regard to the often faulty nature of memory, the modernviolent world demands the eternal remembrance of wrongs suffered. Ellie Wiesel, the great Jewish scholar and Holocaust survivor has captured this idea well, declaring and pleading, "Oh, they [the survivors - of which he is one] do not forgive the killers and their accomplices, nor should they. Nor should you, Master of the Universe." While remembering wrongs suffered is unavoidable and proper, the question remains: can the follower of Christ hope to remember wrongs eternally? Can the follower of Christ refuse to allow their eschatological reality infiltrate their memories and their actions? It is Volf's contention that no follower of Christ can remember wrongs eternally. Our memories, desires, and actions must come under the sphere of Christ's reconciliatory activity, not simply some part of the human being called "the soul."

At the heart of *The End of Memory* lies Volf's dedication to explicating the demands of reconciliation and messianic care for the divergent other. Despite this noble goal, his thesis that the logic of reconciliation mandates an eventual forgetting of wrongs suffered faced strong opposition in modern politics, psychology, philosophy, and religion. The modern world which is saturated by violence in every sphere emits its violence into the individual and corporate memory of wrongs suffered. This vengeful tendency to memory is often reinforced in contemporary psychology, political rhetoric, and theological delineations. Volf handles these tendencies well. In fact, one of the strengths of *The End of Memory* is its skillful exposition of psychological traditions (early Freud), philosophical understandings (Nietzsche), and Christian traditions (Kierkegaard and Dante) that argue that some type of forgetting of painful memories are vital to healthy human living.

In light of the tendency for memory to become distorted and self-serving, Volf issues a clarion call to the church to remember truthfully, in light of the passion, and towards the triune God's cosmic reconciliation. The passion account and ultimate reconciliation used as the theological framework for remembering. Volf asserts the passion narratives serve as a useful framework for remembering for several reasons. First, Christ's crucifixion acknowledges the truthfulness of all humanity's brokenness and allows no claims to self-righteousness. Second, the passion memory continues to affirm the remembering of wrongs suffered in opposition to wrong-doing, but moves the wronged from a position of vengeance to a position of grace. Third, the passion narratives declare that wrongs suffered are not darkeness invading the light of wholly just saints but instead a violation by the broken against the broken. Finally, the passion accounts, by locating all wrong-doing into the Christian narrative, places all events in the dual dialect of between judgment of the wrong and vindication of the victim and justice and grace: 4

When a victim remembers a suffered wrong at the foot of the cross, he does not remember it as a righteous person but as a person who has been embraced by God, his own unrighteousness notwithstanding. In my relationship with Captain G. in those military interrogations of some twenty years ago, I was certainly on the receiving end of most of the wrong-doing. But I, too, am a wrongdoer. I have wronged the Captain

– not in any outward way...But I've wronged him in my imagination, which, nourished by the felling of humiliation and impotence, has, on occasion, given in to the desire to revenge. 5

The passion speaks of sin, the punishment of the sinless for the sinner, the declaration of the punishment of all sin, and the reconciliation of the sinful with the sinner. It is into this memory that the Christian community, for an individual fails to remember correctly far too often when left to themselves, looks to in violent times to remember correctly. In light of the passion and the reconciliation of all creation to its triune God, the reader is called to remember, remember truthfully, and allow justice to be done, but always in light of Christ's redemptive work and the call to follow Christ into his work. The work is weighty and well timed. Despite the weightiness of the topic the easy to manage prose, personal narratives, and Volf's vulnerability, and willingness to imagine his own reconciliation with his tormentor are illuminating and compelling, which makes the work accessible to both the diligent layperson and the academic.⁶ Volf has done the church a tremendous service - presenting it with the unadulterated demands of the triune God to work as a foretaste in all things, especially at our core memory, towards the still outstanding final cosmic reconciliation. May we remember for the sake of reconciliation. May we remember for the sake of realizing the peace of Christ in our world today.

Notes

- Miraslov Volf, The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World (Grand Rapids: Eerdman's Publishing, 2006), 24.
- 2. Ibid., 25.
- 3. Ellie Wiesel, "A Prayer for the Days of Awe," New York Times, October 2, 1997, Al9. Here quoted on 212.
- 4. Ibid., 125.
- 5. Ibid., 122.
- 6. Ibid., 215-230.

Chris Moore M.Div., '08

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