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Bridging Cultures for Christ
1 Timothy 2:5

The Mediator provides a forum for dialogue about theological issues related to ministry in Asian and Pacific contexts. Views expressed in the Journal reflect those of the authors and not necessarily the views of the seminary, its administration, or the editorial committee.

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Preface

The faculty and students of Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary seek to make their learning applicable to current issues in today's ever-changing world. The articles in this issue address many challenges our world faces today. Theology must be relevant to creation if it is to be a genuine reflection on the character of God. The task of a theological seminary is to explore the word "relevant." The faculty of APNTS seek to instill in students the character that models Christ's humility and wisdom, the knowledge to discern and address cultural and spiritual forces of our day, and the skills that will make them effective in service to others.

This issue begins with biblical studies from the Old and New Testaments. Modine uses a creative literary approach to analyze the challenging speeches in Job to help the themes of this ancient book. My own article explores theological themes in relation to caring for the land and how this theme is spiritualized in the New Testament yet holds a literal hope. Clemente's article delves creatively into Paul's letter to Philippians to show how important relationships are among believers.

The articles then move into various topics that impact ministry in contemporary contexts. Cing explores how the complexities of Buddhism, Wesleyanism, and Process Theology have similarities and differences and how all these impact ministry in Myanmar. Branstetter raises the important topic of ministry to persons with disabilities. Jin takes several well known themes of education theory and applies them to Korean and Chinese learning contexts. Finally, Yang raises our awareness of God's love for those imprisoned and called for serving and ministering to them. May their research be useful glimpses into the topics they explore.

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Foes, Fools, and Fouls

Unsound Logic in the Speeches of Eliphaz the Temanite (Job 4–5; 15; 22)

Mitchel Modine

Introduction

Over one hundred years ago, Horace M. Kallen claimed to have, as he wrote in the preface to the revised edition, "restored the Book of Job of the Old Testament to what [he believed] was its original form—that of a Greek tragedy in the manner of Euripedes."[1] Though this was an intriguing proposal—for one may see many elements in common—it did not gain traction in Joban scholarship. It seems guilty of what Samuel Sandmel famously called "parallelomania" in 1961.[2] That is, it perceives a parallel, perhaps even a conscious imitation, of a literary form conspicuously alien to the society that produced it. Based on this, a parallelomania patient argues for literary dependence of the document in question (e.g., Job) upon that supposed to be imitated (e.g., Euripides' tragedies). By contrast, it would make more sense to compare Job to the Mesopotamian "Poem of the Righteous Sufferer,"[3] as ancient Israel and Babylonia are a lot closer to each other in terms of worldview than ancient Israel and classical Greece. Mark Larrimore recently salvaged something of Kallen's proposal. Though noting that it was a "quixotic idea . . . [because the] historical claim is far fetched," Larrimore nevertheless suggested that "Kallen's sense that the Book of Job may work

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[1] Horace M. Kallen, *The Book of Job as a Greek Tragedy*, 2nd ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1959), vii.

[2] Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81.1 (1962): 1–13.

[3] See Benjamin R. Foster, *From Distant Days: Myths, Tales, and Poetry of Ancient Mesopotamia* (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 1995), 298–313.

as drama is right on the mark."[4]

In this paper, I suggest a different way in which the opponents of Job can be said to have not spoken correctly about God. I take inspiration from Kallen in looking to Greece, but to rhetoric rather than its drama. I will examine the speeches of Eliphaz for logical errors.[5] Dispute literature,[6] like Job, usually directs its readers to see one side as the hero and the other(s) as the villain(s): Job is hero and good; Eliphaz is villain and bad.[7]

The dialogues running from Job 3–41 (including the unanswered Elihu in chs. 32–37 and the largely unanswerable God in chs. 38–41) always begin with the verb ענה "he answered." This verb implies responding to something a dialogue partner had said earlier. Perhaps contrary to expectations, we find this word even in the opening of the dialogue: ויען איוב ויאמר, "Job answered and said." The English versions mostly ignore the ויען to say, "Job said" (so NRSV) because it is unclear who Job is answering. The NET Bible, with "Job spoke up and said," recognizes that ענה may be used in response

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[4] Mark Larrimore, "The Book of Job as Community Theater," *Public Seminar*, March 2014, http://www.publicseminar.org/2014/03/the-book-of-job-as-community-theater/.

[5] For the definitions of the fallacies, I rely on the following website, especially the taxonomy: Gary N. Curtis, "Logical Fallacies: The Fallacy Files," n.d., http://fallacyfiles.org/.

[6] Other examples in the Old Testament are the disputes over leadership in Numbers and the various disputes involving the prophet Jeremiah. In the latter case, the LXX consistently calls Jeremiah's prophetic opponents "false prophets," a designation which the MT only has in the verbal phrase "The LORD said to me, 'The prophets are prophesying lies in my name'" (Jer 14:14).

[7] The work of Judy Fentress-Williams problematizes easy categories of hero and villain, as in American Western movies, in which the "good guys" usually wear white hats and the "bad guys" black hats. See, for example, "Abraham and the Multiverse," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 77.1 (2023): 33–39, https://doi.org/10.1177/00209643221132547, http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/00209643221132547.

to a situation more than simply a speech.[8] Moreover, even when Elihu inserts himself into dialogue in 32:6, ויען אליהוא בן ברכאל "Elihu son of Barachel the Buzite answered." Here the NET, consistent with itself and the alternative meaning of the verb, reads, "Elihu . . . spoke up."

I describe my methodology through a sports analogy. I have followed association football (in American English: soccer) for a few years. Soccer is governed by the ominous-sounding Laws of the Game. These laws contain several levels of foul, remedied by, according to severity, an indirect free kick, a direct free kick, a penalty kick, a yellow card, or a red card. I will identify four of the fouls in the fallacious fray of the foolish foe Eliphaz, proposing increasing levels of severity for them according to the schema of fouls in soccer. As the intensity of the dialogue increases, so do Eliphaz's attacks on Job seem to increase in severity: affirming the consequent, *ad hominem*, scarecrow fallacy, and *tu quoque*. The first of these is a formal fallacy, while the other three are variations of a red herring, a spurious argument that distracts from the point at hand. The final foul, red card, will serve to bring my study to a close with a suggestion as to the fate of Job's friends, with whom, as the American saying runs, he had no need of enemies.

Laws of the Game

In 2018, Troy W. Martin proposed a different reading of the ending of the book of Job.[9] Martin says that analysis of Job's concluding words in 42:2–6 has generally fallen into three camps: penitentialist, consolationist, and existentialist. Importantly for the present project, Martin sees problems with all three of these approaches. On existentialist readings—which he says are the least coherent of the three approaches—he writes that "Edwin M. Good

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[8] The lexeme occurs 176, most of them clearly indicating who is responding and to whom they are responding.

[9] Troy W. Martin, "Concluding the Book of Job and YHWH: Reading Job from the End to the Beginning," *JBL* 137.2 (2018): 299–318.

asserts that what Job abandons is the 'entire structure of the world' in terms of guilt and innocence."[10] I argue that the traditional understanding, exemplified here by Good, is misguided. I may cite James Crenshaw as representative of this typical view:

> Guardians of the theory that virtue is rewarded and vice punished in exact measure championed God's justice, sparing no effort in their zeal to secure cherished belief. As a consequence of this intense search for appropriate responses to the hue and cry of spiritual rebels, several explanations for suffering presented themselves with varying degrees of accuracy.[11]

James Kugel agrees, a bit more succinctly: "[Ecclesiastes] is not . . . one long protest against the wisdom ideology (as is, for example, the book of Job)."[12] Kugel continues:

> In the end—as with many a book of dialogues—the author of Job is playing both sides and with his whole heart. His answer is neither Job's nor the comforters' nor, for that matter, even God's, but all three together—which is to say, his answer is the back-and-forth of the book itself.[13]

In my view, the traditional reading that Job, both book and character in that book,[14] argues against Wisdom's basic formula lacks a critical piece of textual evidence. This reading falters in that nowhere in the dialogue, at

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[10] Martin, "Concluding the Book of Job and YHWH," 302–303.

[11] James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 117.

[12] James L. Kugel, *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now*, 1st Free Press trade pbk. ed. (New York: Free Press, 2008), 512.

[13] Kugel, *How to Read the Bible*, 641.

[14] This is one of the many important distinctions made by literary approaches to the Bible, i.e., examining the Bible as a work of *literature*, using the theories and methods associated with secular literary theory.

least not in so many words, does Job explicitly make this argument. I may state it more strongly. It is not enough to note that Job does not rebel against what one may call the zero-sum theory of divine retribution and reward. However, assuming this view was as pervasive in ancient Israel as we are led to believe, Job could not make this intellectual move. As far back as 1835, Alexis de Tocqueville understood how difficult it would be for someone to rebel against such an ingrained idea: "No man [*sic*] can struggle with advantage against the spirit of his age and country; and, however powerful he may be supposed to be, he will find it difficult to make his contemporaries share in feelings and opinions which are repugnant to all their feelings and desires."[15] The book of Job allows us to say only that the traditional Wisdom formula is insufficient, not that it is wrong.

Indirect Free Kick—Affirming the Consequent; Job 4

Eliphaz the Temanite begins to speak in 4:1. The text says that he answers Job, again using the verb ענה. However, it seems clear here and in the entirety of the dialogue that all the speakers—Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, Elihu, and God—are not really answering one another. Instead, they are so entrenched in their own opinions that the expectation the reader may take from calling their conversation a "dialogue"—namely, that any or all of them could have had their minds changed—strains credibility. The "dialogue" is, instead, more like the comments in a social media thread, wherein, according to a popular meme, nobody changes their opinion and everyone's mad.[16]

Eliphaz's contribution to this collective stubbornness quickly falls into logical errors of his own making. His first appearance in the dialogue is a fine example of the wisdom tradition as classically understood. He assumes

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[15] Alexander de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Project Gutenberg., vol. 2 (Project Gutenberg, n.d.), http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/816. Kindle location 4039.

[16] Robert Ford [@raford3], "Whenever You're Thinking of Getting into a Political Debate on Facebook, Use This Handy Pie Chart as a Guide. Https://T.Co/18nNMjv7eh," Tweet, *Twitter*, 12 July 2016, https://x.com/raford3/status/752890254621749248.

that God rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked. The error Eliphaz commits turns this around and judges Job as sinful based on his (apparently) being punished. He says: זכר נא מי הוא נקי אבד ואיפה ישרים נכחדו, "Think about it: who was innocent and punished? Or where were the upright banished" (4:7)? Eliphaz here attacks Job's claim of innocence because no one is punished while innocent, and he treats the situation as a binary. Job is either innocent or guilty. No other scenario may explain what is happening—say, for example, a bet between God and Their Majesty's Loyal Opposition[17] concerning the veracity of Job's righteousness.[18] To be fair to Eliphaz, neither he nor Job has been granted access to the board room of the divine council, and the transcripts of the meetings are still classified, but this does not exonerate Eliphaz. (Assuming it would do so would also commit a fallacy, that of the argument from ignorance.)[19]

I must admit that Eliphaz's affirmation of the consequent in this chapter

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[17] This is my preferred, though wordy, translation for השטן 'the satan.' I think it is helpful for multiple reasons. First, by not using the word "satan" (here, a common noun because of the Hebrew definite article), it avoids improper associations with Satan in the New Testament (aka "the Devil"), for the book of Job certainly does not mean this. Second, and building upon the first, it sidesteps the apparent theological problem of how "Satan" or "the Devil" got access to the throne room—or at least the board room—of Heaven. Third, the term "Loyal Opposition" suggests that the satan is not at all opposed to the designs of God, but in fact works within them. See the Wikipedia definition here: "Loyal Opposition - Wikipedia," n.d., https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loyal_opposition. Fourth, the plural pronoun Their with the singular possessive Majesty's serves two functions. On the one hand, it makes a Trinitarian affirmation even while recognizing that the book of Job is not Trinitarian; and the Trinity itself is not an biblical concept strictly speaking, but it was developed after the biblical period based on hints contained in the Bible. On the other hand, it avoids masculine pronouns for God, which have become increasingly problematic in spite of the Church of the Nazarene's insistence that alternatives not be adopted (see "Careful Use of Language (Paragraph 918)," in *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene, 2023* [Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 2023], 402–3).

[18] I recently described this in a Q&A as "God's gambling problem," which elicited the convener's odd response that there is nothing at stake, when in fact, at least for Job, everything is at stake.

[19] Irving M. Copi, *Introduction to Logic*, 5th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1978), 93.

is implicit rather than explicit: "If you are wicked, God will punish you. God is punishing you. Therefore, you are wicked." What Eliphaz explicitly says, however, is that punishment and innocence cannot exist together. There-fore, since Job is being punished, Job's claim of innocence must be false. According to Eliphaz, Job cannot be innocent. I must note that this does not make Eliphaz's statement false; it is just supported by faulty reasoning. This is another fallacy, what Gary Curtis calls "the Fallacy Fallacy."[20]

Direct Free Kick—*Ad Hominem* Attack; Job 5

Chapters and verses, as is well known, are arbitrary divisions in the Bible. Nevertheless, for the present purposes we may say that as Eliphaz continues his first speech in chapter 5, he turns his attack into one on Job's person rather than his argument. This is known as an *ad hominem* attack (Latin for "against the man"). This is an informal fallacy, or one might say a con-tent fallacy since, as Curtis maintains, "what makes such an argument fal-lacious is not purely a matter of logical form."[21]

Within Wisdom literature, the "fool" often appears in opposition to the wise. NRSV uses this term for several related Hebrew words: כסיל (68x), אויל (21x), and נבל (7x). When Eliphaz uses this language, the implied au-thor[22] likely invokes the entire wisdom/foolishness complex. This is partic-ularly true in Eliphaz's attack upon Job's anger in 5:2, כי לאויל יהרג כעש ופתה תמית קנאה "For anger murders the fool, and jealousy slays the easily

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[20] Gary N. Curtis, "Logical Fallacy: Fallacy Fallacy," n.d., http://fallacyfiles.org/fallfall.html.

[21] Gary N. Curtis, "The Fallacy Files: Informal Logical Fallacy," n.d., http://fallacyfiles.org/inforfal.html.

[22] This is a term from literary criticism. Stated simply, the implied author is the apparent authorial perspective (i.e., "point of view") presented in the text, which may or may not be consistent with that of the real author, the latter being unavailable for cross-examination.

swayed." Linguistically, it is helpful to note that the participle פתה, "simple," shares a root with Jeremiah's difficult lament, "LORD, you have enticed me" (Jer 20:7).

Eliphaz, argues, perhaps on the basis Prov 29:11, "A fool breathes out hot anger, but a wise person exercises restraint." Nevertheless, this is fallacious reasoning. He does not address Job's argument or complaint, but instead dismisses him as a fool. His response in v 8, that he would seek God rather than express anger, is like the opponents implied in Ps 22:8, "Roll your burdens onto the LORD! Let God deliver, let God rescue the one in whom God delights." Both the poet of Psalm 22 and Job objectively experienced unjust suffering: in both cases, the opponents attack them rather than work to assuage their calamity or show their beliefs to be unfounded.

Penalty Kick—Scarecrow Fallacy; Job 15

After Job responds to Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar have their turn—each responded to by Job—Eliphaz again comes in to speak.[23] As noted, his attack becomes more severe on Job, as well as continuing to support his position through faulty reasoning. We have already seen that Eliphaz first accused Job of a logical impossibility and then attacked him personally. Here, in chapter 15, he suggests that, if Job were correct, then the entire system would come crashing down.

I accuse Eliphaz here of the scarecrow fallacy. This fallacy is also an informal or content fallacy, distracting from the main point under consideration, namely whether Job's contention that he does not deserve his suffering is correct. The specific distraction Eliphaz employs here is to accuse Job of undermining religion. He says, אף אתה תפר יראה ותגרע שיחה לפני אל, "You have reduced reverence and maligned meditation before God." This is related to the affirmation of the consequent in ch. 4 but indeed increases the intensity. Were the traditional wisdom conception wrong, that

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[23] This pattern continues through a second round of dialogues, only to be broken down in the third round, when Bildad speaks only briefly and Zophar not at all.

is one thing; if the whole of the cult of Yahweh were wrong, that is something else entirely. Engaging Job on the level of Wisdom theology would be more difficult for Eliphaz and may or may not win him adherents among the people. Accusing him of the attempt to rend religion would be easier because it is generally easier to refute an extreme argument than a subtler one. Moreover, the crowd, had one been present, would likely be more inclined to support him against Job.

Yellow Card—*Tu Quoque* Fallacy—Job 22

Another variation of the red herring, or language that distracts from the main point of the argument to win by defeating something else, is the *tu quoque* fallacy, named for the Latin phrase, "you, also." Curtis says that in committing this fallacy, "one attempts to defend oneself or another from criticism by turning the critique back against the accuser. This is a classic Red Herring since whether the accuser is guilty of the same, or similar, wrong is irrelevant to the truth of the original charge."[24]

הלא רעתך רבה ואין קץ לעונתיך "Isn't your evil vile? Is there no end to your iniquity" (Job 22:5)? This is like the affirmation of the consequent in Job 4, though Eliphaz gets quite specific in his charges against Job. The litany of crimes of which Job stands accused in this passage reminds the reader of another cross-cultural parallel, this time to ancient Egypt. In the *Book of the Dead*, ch. 125, the spirit of the deceased individual argues its way into a blessed afterlife by denying that the person committed various offenses while alive.[25] This passage is often referred to as the "Negative Confession."

Two things stand out in this chapter. First, Job seems to respond rather

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[24] Gary N. Curtis, "Logical Fallacy: Tu Quoque," n.d., http://fallacyfiles.org/tuquoque.html.

[25] E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead: (The Papyrus of Ani) Egyptian Text, Transliteration, and Translation*, Reprint. (New York: Dover, 1967), 344–353.

directly to these accusations in his final speech in ch. 31. If this speech is indeed a response to Eliphaz in ch. 25, the parallel to the Negative Confession is quite strong, as Marvin Pope maintains: "Job's repudiation of evil here has been compared to the negative confession . . . Both catalogues of sins reflect high ideals of social ethics."[26] Again, following Sandmel, we need not suggest dependence here, not least because Job's "negative confession" follows the narrative frame of the book, which proclaims that Job "feared God and turned away from evil" (1:1, 8; 2:3). Proverbs 8:13 suggests that these are two sides of the same coin. In other words, perhaps fearing God meant, in part, perhaps even specifically, not doing evil things.[27]

The second interesting thing comes later in the chapter. Eliphaz seems to develop a soft spot for Job, even if it is a small one. He says: "Agree with God, and experience peace. This is how good things will come to you." This is quite different from the advice of Job's wife in 2:9—"Do you still insist on your uprightness? Curse God and die!" Though his wife may have had some sympathy for her husband, wanting his suffering to end, by counseling this "suicide by God," her advice was rather more violent than Eliphaz's in 22:21!

Red Card—You Have Not Spoken Well of Me—Job 42

Finally, it seems, Eliphaz and his friends are sent off. They do not receive redemption and restoration. True enough, they didn't have anything taken from them as Job did. This leads me to the conclusion that suffering can only be seen as a test if it is defined as such beforehand. This is so even if it is done in an abstract way, as Paul in Romans 5 and James in James 1 do. In this way, it is a bit unfair for God to accuse Eliphaz and the boys of

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[26] Marvin H. Pope, *Job*, 3rd ed., The Anchor Bible 15 (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1990), 227.

[27] Ettienne Ellis, "Reconsidering the Fear of God in the Wisdom Literature of the Hebrew Bible in the Light of Rudolf Otto's *Das Heilige*," *Old Testament Essays* 27.1 (2014): 88, http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_abstract&pid=S1010-9919201400010000 6&lng=en&nrm=iso&tlng=en.

wrongsaying, at the very least, because they didn't know God was watching and listening.

כי לא דברתם אלי נכונה כעבדי איוב God says to Eliphaz: "You have not spoken well of me, as my servant Job has done." The content of God's instruction to Eliphaz is that God will accept Job's intercession to not destroy them, but this is not forgiveness for their sin. The Torah, in different places, describes the עולה, "whole burnt offering" in different ways. Most relevant for the present argument is Lev 4:26, which links it with forgiveness of sin, specifically for that of the priest.

In effect, God refuses to do something foolish in response to Eliphaz not speaking well of God. The purpose of Job's sacrifice is not necessarily to forgive Eliphaz's unsound speech, except in the sense that God's withholding of supposedly deserved punishment (see Ps 51:4) for sin can typically be described as forgiveness. In other words, forgiveness of sin is often, or often entails, a cessation or remission of punishment, but here it is not the case, and in any event, it does not make the situation as if sin had never been committed. God does not offer forgiveness for Eliphaz, but merely holds himself in check through the good feelings that Job's prayer gives God. Numbers 15:3, in this connection, suggests that an עולה gives a pleasing odor to God. Perhaps one can say that, at least here, prayer soothes the savage God. The book of Job, through the voice of God, is repudiating retributive justice. Thus, God holds back from committing a foul against Eliphaz. In sports, acting or responding angrily is a foul, and in a fight between competitors, it is usually the second person to throw a punch who gets ejected from the game.

Conclusion

Eliphaz the Temanite commits (at least) four logical fallacies in his dialogue with Job. I have identified them as affirming the consequent, *ad hominem* attack, scarecrow argument, and *tu quoque*. As the intensity of the dialogue increases, so do the attacks on Job. Finally, I argued that when God judged Job to be right and Eliphaz to be wrong, God did not offer forgiveness to Eliphaz but merely a cessation of punishment. Perhaps the 43rd chapter of Job needs yet to be written.

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The Promised Land and Its Care as a Means of Grace for God's People

David A. Ackerman

Introduction

The growing environmental crisis has created a disheartening dichotomy for many Christians today. On the one hand, there is a sense of dread and fear because of the growing and sometimes vocal pessimism about the looming environmental crisis of global warming. On the other hand, people in the pews see stories in the media of people gluing themselves to the road in protest of global warming. So, with a bit of skepticism, they reject the radical agenda of the growing environmental cult. They view environmentalism as a new form of religion that detracts from the crucial mission Jesus left his disciples to do. Confusion, division, and despair result.

This pessimism has been mainly promoted by dispensational premillennialism, which has become the predominant eschatology among evangelicals. Christians long for the day of escape by rapture so they can be removed from this deteriorating and decaying world. Al Truesdale argues that this view has led evangelicals to abandon concern for the environment, which is all doomed anyway "in these last days." He writes, "No lasting covenant between God and the creation exists. Although the creation is not viewed as inherently evil, the final destruction of evil entails the destruction of the world. In the end, despair, not hope, elimination, not redemption, is this world's truth." He adds, "Until evangelicals purge from their vision of the Christian faith the wine of pessimistic dispensationalist premillennialism, the Judeo-Christian doctrine of creation and the biblical image of stewardship will be orphans in their midst."[1]

At contention are various Bible passages that refer to creation and the

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[1] Al Truesdale, "Last Things First: The Impact of Eschatology on Ecology," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 46 (1994): 116-20. 117, 118

end of this age. For example, in Genesis 1:26 and 28, God commands humanity to "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (v. 28).[2] As stewards of creation, humans have a certain degree of creative and destructive power over the rest of the animate and inanimate objects of earth. Perhaps like no other time in recorded human history has this become an issue as it has with the present generation.

In a now-famous essay in 1967, Lynn White blamed Christianity for the growing environmental crisis because of its focus on anthropocentrism that comes from a literal interpretation of these verses from Genesis. Humanity has assumed dominion over the earth, and as a result, the earth has suffered because of human consumption. The result is a dichotomy between humanity and nature: people use nature as an object to be conquered to support their technological advancements.[3] As Douglas Moo states, environmentalists "view orthodox Christianity as a cultural virus that must be eradicated from the world if the planet is to survive."[4]

The basic blame is that Christianity is anthropocentric, especially in its push for individual salvation. Humans are the special focus of God's creation. This idea is not erroneous in itself since we are made in the image of God, but the challenge is when the rest of creation is relegated to being an object to fulfill our pleasures. Environmentalists have taken the opposite position to the point of advocating a new ideology of ecocentrism. Humans are but a small and temporary nuisance in the overall existence of nature. Behind both these positions lies the fundamental spiritual problem of sin. At its root, sin is an egocentric rebellion against God that appears to destroy

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[2] All quotations of Scripture unless otherwise noted are from *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016).

[3] Lynn White. "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155 (1967): 1203-207.

[4] Douglas J. Moo. "Nature in the New Creation: New Testament Eschatology and the Environment. *Jets* 49/3 (September 2006) 449-88, p. 450.

the very purposes of God's creation. Fallen human nature leads to a distortion of God's grace.

John Wesley's definition and description of sin are helpful in reflecting on the growing crisis. He describes "inward sin" as "any sinful temper, passion, or affection; such as pride, self-will, love of the world, in any kind or degree; such as lust, anger, peevishness; any disposition contrary to the mind which was in Christ."[5] Pride shows up as an exalted self-will, misguided love of the world, and unhealthy desire for earthly pleasures.[6] Our misuse of the earth and all its creatures for such selfish reasons is but a manifestation of "practical atheism" whereby we sin against God by rejecting his sovereignty over it and our place in it as God's stewards.[7] Sin is seeking fulfillment in self and creation rather than in the Creator. The result is that nature becomes an object to fulfill the desires of flesh-bound human nature.

The self-centeredness of the post-Enlightenment, post-modern period in which we live has caused people to see humans as the center of creation. People see the earth as ours to discover and exploit for our own selfish purposes. This drive has only served to feed the hedonism that consumes the human soul, expressed in all forms of idolatry. Wesley summarized idolatry in three forms: objects that gratify the outward senses, objects that enliven our imagination with false promises, and the pride of life that entices us with honor, wealth, and things that feed selfishness.[8] The Christian message of new hope in Christ counters this notion with the promise of release from the bondage of sin and the transformation into new persons capable of perfect love.

The care of the earth is a theme that runs throughout the Bible. In the

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[5] John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley,* Bicentennial Edition (Vol. 1-4; ed. by Albert C. Outler, Nashville: Abingdon, 1984), 1:320.

[6] Wesley, *Works*, 1:337-38; see also 3:353-55; 4:152-54.

[7] Theodore H. Runyan, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 207.

[8] Wesley, *Works*, 4:65.

Old Testament, the land is promised, gained, lost, and restored. As the church grew beyond the land of Israel, the idea of a land for God's people became spiritualized. The spiritualization of the "promised land" can potentially diminish concern for the care of the earth. Essential aspects of the land in Israel's history, such as Sabbath rest and blessings and curses for obedience or disobedience, can be lost. Spiritualization of the land universalizes God's promises for all people and motivates believers to be faithful. A careful reading of the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, reveals that God always intended the land as a means of providential grace to point to his greater promise of salvation. Earth care for believers today can also be a means of grace that builds hope for the eternal "land of promise" spiritualized in the New Testament.

The Land as the Obedience of Faith in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, the land serves as God's tool to lead his people to faithful obedience.[9] God as creator is the owner of all land and gives it to humanity for cultivating food (Gen 2:8). In the midst of the battle over sovereignty between Pharoah and God, Moses reminds Pharaoh of the fundamental truth of creation: "The earth is the Lord's" (Exod 9:29). As sovereign, God can bless people with land or remove them from it. Walter Brueggemann has argued that the land is the central motif of Old Testament theology: "The Bible is the story of God's people with God's land."[10] The story of Israel is about land, summarized in the cycle of the metanarrative of the Old Testament:

> Land created and given (creation)
> Land lost (flood)
> Land promised (Abraham)
> Land gained (conquest)
> Land lost again (Judges, kingdom, and exile)

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[9] Several almost synonymous words are used for land in the Hebrew Bible: *'ereṣ*, *'ădāmâ*, and *śādeh*.

[10] Walter Brueggemann, *The Land* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 13.

Land restored (return from exile).

People depend on the land for their food, safety, culture, and life itself. The interdependence of humanity to the earth can be seen in creation as humankind (*'ādām*) comes from the dirt (*'ădāmâ*; Gen 2:7). Humanity must be reminded of this relationship and that our bodies will one day return to the earth and become one with it again (Gen 3:19; Job 34:15). To attack the land is to attack our very source of existence. The relationship of humanity to the earth is governed by our relationship with God. When Israel failed in its covenant with God, the earth likewise failed them. Their disobedience broke the harmony (*šālôm*) with creation. The story of brokenness began with the disobedience of Adam and Eve in Eden as God pronounced a curse on the land (Gen 3:17-19). From that point on, it has been a struggle for humans to restore balance.

The Land as Promise

The metanarrative of the Pentateuch centers on the theme of promise/fulfillment, particularly as it relates to the possession of the land of Canaan. God was not finished with humanity or its relationship to the earth after the failure of the first parents or the generations after them. Even after the destruction and reboot of the flood, God provided a promise through nature with the rainbow that life would continue (Gen 8:21-22). The divine plan of redemption began to unfold through God's promises to the landless, wandering nomad named Abram found in Genesis 12:1: "Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.'" With this promise, the curse of the land began to be reversed, but it was a difficult journey to the land of promise. Several times, Abraham had to be reminded that land was part of God's promise and plan for his yet-unborn descendants (12:7: 13:15-17; 15:12-21). Abraham responded with the obedience of faith by leaving the old land and going to the unknown future land. The promise of lineage was fulfilled through the miraculous birth of Isaac (Gen 18), but the promise of land was still a long time in coming. God made a covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15:18 in a common covenantal fashion, promising him "from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, 21

the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."

There were two major interruptions in God's plan of abundance and land for Abraham's descendants. The first was forced slavery under the pharaohs of Egypt. God raised up Moses specifically to free the people from bondage in order to fulfill the promise to Abraham. God said to Moses, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey . . ." (Exod 3:7-8). The exodus from Egypt became the primary symbol of God's saving grace toward Israel.

The second interruption in the fulfillment of the promise was the crisis of faith at Kadesh Barnea as the now-freed Hebrew people faced the decision to enter the land promised to Abraham. They rejected the optimism of faith shown by Caleb and Joshua and instead turned to listening to their fear of the inhabitants of the land (Num 13:27-29). Their lack of faith resulted in a forty-year disharmony between the harsh desert and their basic survival (Num 20:4-5). They were without land, home, or anything to support their life except the promises of Yahweh that he would be with them. Brueggemann writes, "To be placed in the wilderness is to be cast into the land of the enemy—cosmic, natural, historical—without any of the props or resources that give life order and meaning."[11] Since Israel had no resources, it had to trust God fully.

God did not leave them alone in their struggle but provided mana and quail. They had to learn to trust in God, who is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation" (Exod 34:6-7).

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[11]Brueggemann, *Land*, 29.

The Land as a Means of Grace

The fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham came with the conquest of the promised land by Joshua and the Israelites (Josh 21:43-45). The landless and homeless now had everything they needed to thrive in peace and harmony. The land provided rest and security from the hard labor of slavery and the struggle for survival in the desert. A significant message in the Pentateuch and the Historical Books is that the continued possession of the land required the obedience of faith. Each generation would need to learn of God's mercy towards them (Deut 3:20; 12:9-10). They needed to know that the land was a special inheritance (*naḥălâ*), a gift of God's grace and not their own righteousness (Deut 9:4-5).

God's covenant with the people included many stipulations about how to live in the land. Harmony with God through obedience brought harmony with the land. The theme of the covenant is summarized in Deuteronomy 5:32-33: "You shall be careful therefore to do as the Lord your God has commanded you. You shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. You shall walk in all the way that the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you shall possess." Failure to obey would lead to expulsion, just like in the garden of Eden (Gen 2:15-17; Deut 11:10-12). One reason the law was given was so that Israel would know how to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod 19:6). Being a holy nation allowed them to dwell in the land Yahweh had promised and helped them conquer. Brueggemann adds, "But Israel's Torah is markedly uninterested in a religion of obedience as such. It is rather interested in care for land, so that it is never forgotten from whence came the land and to whom it is entrusted and by whom."[12]

The promised land offered a return to the harmony between humanity and creation found in the Garden of Eden. The law governed this harmony by providing guidelines for how to care for the land. The laws are too numerous to list here, but several examples are revealing. Leviticus 25 describes two significant times when the land was reset. The Sabbath year

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[12] Brueggemann, *Land*, 60.

provided rest for the land (vv. 1-7). As the people honored the land, they would also be honoring the Lord. In response, the land would provide what they needed. In addition, the year of Jubilee restored land lost so that the poor and needy could once again find sustenance from the land of their inheritance (vv. 8-17). The nation's security in the land depended on their obedience (v. 18). God reminded them that they were only sojourners on his land (v. 23). Part of their responsibility in the land was not to over harvest it so that the poor and needy would be cared for (Lev 19:9-10). They always needed to remember that it was the Lord who saved them from slavery and that the land was a matter of God's grace (19:5-6).

Losing Faith and Losing the Land

As the story of Israel in the land unfolds, the book of Judges records their struggle against the sin of idolatry, leading to moral compromise. Brueggemann notes, "The literature of Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings is the account of the tortuous route by which heirs became exiles."[13] The possession of the land in Judges 2:6 became exile from the land in 2 Kings 24:14-15. Israel's kings were to be only servants of God on the land, but they and the people failed to keep the terms of the covenant and suffered the consequences for it. Brueggemann further states, "Remarkably, in one generation [Solomon] managed to confiscate Israel's freedom and reduce social order to the very situation of Egyptian slavery. . . . The very land that promised to create space for human joy and freedom became the very source of dehumanizing exploitation and oppression."[14]

Sin always makes nature humanity's enemy and results in its exploitation. As a consequence of Israel's rejection of God, the land rebelled against them for their disobedience. The prophet Hosea paints a vivid picture of the spiritual condition of Israel during the kingdom period. He describes the complete collapse of law and order and its effect upon the land in 4:1-3:

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[13] Brueggemann, *Land*, 73.

[14] Brueggemann, *Land*, 10-11.

Hear the word of the Lord, O children of Israel,
　　for the Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land.
There is no faithfulness or steadfast love,
　　and no knowledge of God in the land;
there is swearing, lying, murder, stealing, and committing adultery;
　　they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed.
Therefore the land mourns,
　　and all who dwell in it languish,
and also the beasts of the field
　　and the birds of the heavens,
　　and even the fish of the sea are taken away.

Jeremiah echoes this message in 12:4, "How long will the land mourn and the grass of every field wither? For the evil of those who dwell in it the beasts and the birds are swept away, because they said, 'He will not see our latter end.'" Israel's problem was not unique but lies at the very heart of humanity. As Arie Lova Eliav writes, "Thus, from the beginning of civilization, the human race has been afflicted by two kinds of slavery: one to nature, for the sake of survival; the other, of the weak to the strong, out of fear. This dual bondage has been the lot of humankind for countless centuries."[15] There is no mention of Jubilee or Sabbath rest for the land after the initial giving of the law in Leviticus and Numbers. It was a good theory that appears to never have been practiced by Israel. With exile, the spiritual problems of the people led to a loss of rest and social security. God removed his providential grace from the land, and the people suffered socially and physically.

Because God is merciful and gracious, not all was hopeless and lost. Isaiah 43:18-21 anticipates the renewal of the land:

Remember not the former things,
　　nor consider the things of old.
Behold, I am doing a new thing;
　　now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?

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[15]Arie Lova Eliav, *New Heart New Spirit: Biblical Humanism for Modern Israel* (Philadelphia, New York, Jerusalem: Jewish Publication Society, 1988), 67-68.

> I will make a way in the wilderness
>   and rivers in the desert.
> The wild beasts will honor me,
>   the jackals and the ostriches,
> for I give water in the wilderness,
>   rivers in the desert,
> to give drink to my chosen people,
>   the people whom I formed for myself
> that they might declare my praise.

Interestingly, there is no mention of Jubilee or Sabbath rest for the land after the initial giving of the law in Leviticus and Numbers. It was a good theory that appears to never have been practiced by Israel. With exile, the spiritual problems of the people led to a loss of rest and social security. God removed his providential grace from the land, and the people suffered socially and physically. Isaiah 43:18-21 reminds us that God is merciful and gracious, and so not all was hopeless and lost. The Old Testament is the story of a journey to return to the harmony God created at the beginning.

Spiritualization of Creation in the New Testament

At first, it may seem that the New Testament has little reference to the care of the land; however, the motif of promise/fulfillment continues but expands because of a new understanding of who constitutes "Israel." With the expansion of the church beyond Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, to speak of the land as a geographical place became meaningless. On the one hand, those Jews who lived in the land of Israel were not in free possession of it because of the occupying Roman forces. On the other hand, new Gentile believers were far from the land of Israel, so referring to possession of the land was irrelevant to them. The early church viewed Israel not as a geopolitical entity but as the people of God who accepted Jesus as Messiah (Rom 10:12; Gal 3:28; Eph 2:13-16; 1 Pet 2:9-10). The spiritualization of the land universalized God's promises for all people and motivated believers to be faithful. Instead of referring to the land where the people of God are to

be located, the New Testament refers to all of creation to be transformed.[16]

The Renewal through the Kingdom

The primary way this transformation is expressed is through eschatology. Eschatology in the New Testament focuses on the coming of God's kingdom. Jesus pronounced the arrival of the kingdom after his baptism (Mark 1:15). Much of his teaching, particularly his parables, focused on explaining how the kingdom was present, would continue to grow, and would come in fullness in the future. The "not yet" experience of the kingdom indicates that it is not earthly in nature but spiritual, but somehow, it affects the present age. The kingdom is an expression of God's sovereignty over all creation. God's kingdom has broken into the present age in Jesus (Matt 12:28) and reversed the effects of Eden. When Jesus the King spoke, creation obeyed: diseases were healed, the sea was calmed, the bread and loaves were multiplied, and the dead were raised. His ministry was holistic because he was sovereign over creation. When the kingdom broke into decaying creation, creation's transformation began. To pray for God's kingdom is to anticipate new creation.

An example of the link between the kingdom and creation can be found in the Beatitudes. Although Jesus does not mention the word "kingdom" in the Beatitudes, the whole Sermon on the Mount focuses on how disciples ought to live as citizens of God's kingdom. The third Beatitude found in Matthew 5:5 connects the spiritual quality of meekness with the promise of inheriting the earth. This verse echoes Psalm 37:11: "But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace." All of the Beatitudes emphasize spiritual qualities, but this particular one puts earthly living in a new perspective. It is difficult to know how literal Jesus meant by "earth," but it shows a reversal of the pattern begun with Adam and Eve. Meekness (*praeis*) is humble dependence upon God and the opposite of sin. Meekness is the result of mourning over our self-sovereignty and coming to realize that we need God more than anything else.

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[16] The only place where the phrase "land of Israel" occurs in the New Testament is in Matthew 2:20-21.

Two key events of Christology confirmed the power of God's kingdom and moved creation closer to the promises of the Old Testament. The first was the *Incarnation*: the Almighty, immaterial, and spiritual God became part of what he created to show his plan for this creation. Christian environmentalism must begin with the phrase, "The Word became flesh" (John 1:14). Second, Jesus' *resurrection* brought the full reversal of death as the power of sin and the decay death brings to creation. His resurrection is the guarantee that creation will be restored and God's kingdom will reach its fulfillment (1 Cor 15:24, 54-56). His physical body, destined to return to the earth like all other descendants of Adam, became the first of creation to experience the transformation of the kingdom's fulfillment (v. 20; Col 1:18). The promise of new creation will be fulfilled in the resurrection of believers to the same imperishable (*aphtharsia*) and spiritual (*pneumatikon*) bodies (vv. 42-44) fit for a creation no longer bound by death.

Longing for the Restoration of Creation

The restoration of creation is integral to God's plan of salvation for humanity. The New Testament expresses a longing for this restoration in multiple passages. For example, in Romans 8:19-22, creation is personified as groaning for release from its "bondage of decay" that has bound it since the fateful decision of Adam and Eve. The word "futility" (*mataiotēti*, v. 20) expresses creation's hopeless cycle of deterioration as it suffers the effects of death. Creation joins humanity (v. 17) in suffering and groans and struggles to find liberation from death's hold. Creation's destiny is connected to the spiritual bondage of humanity; so long as humanity remains bound by death, so also will creation. The groaning of creation is a prelude and announcement that renewal is coming.

All creation, including humanity, suffers on the journey to new creation. The "yet" of suffering reminds us that as long as we live in the "land," we are dependent upon God's grace. New kingdom life begins while we are still in the "land," but we know that this is not our destiny. Our new home of promise is something greater than this decaying earth. The redemption we experience now through Christ is the "firstfruits" and promise of the full redemption of creation. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, whom we are given now as God's precious gift of his grace, is the assurance that

all the promises of God will be fulfilled in Christ (v. 23; 2 Cor 1:20-22). Believers are given a foretaste now of what new life in God's kingdom will be like.

Paul recenters all of creation, including humanity, *in Christ* and what he has done and will do. Christ is the source, sustainer, and fulfillment of all physical and spiritual existence. Among many terms and descriptions, Paul uses the phrase "new creation" (*kainē ktisis*) to embody the hope of God's plan for the full restoration of his creation. Second Corinthians 5:17 summarizes Paul's theology in one concise statement. It begins with an open invitation to *anyone* but with the condition of being *in Christ*. The very reason humanity and everything else exists is to find purpose in relationship to Christ. For those who choose to embrace the offer of God's grace, the result is *new creation.* Recreation is not done by human power but requires the human responses of faith and obedience. The result is a removal of the control of the powers that dominate this age while we await the full coming of the new age of God's kingdom.

The "new creation" of Galatians 6:15 refers to the new life in Christ demonstrated by fully trusting in his supremacy (2:20) and guided by obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit (5:24-25). The Spirit transforms us into the likeness of Christ because we have allowed him the position of Lord (2 Cor 3:18). A new type of existence began "in Christ" that is not bound by this creation but affects all of creation. New life in Christ reverses the effects of sin and offers the promise of resurrection victory over the power of sin and its enslaving power of selfish pride (Rom 6:5-11). By solving the core human problem of sin that has also plagued creation since Adam and Eve (represented in the "ground" of Gen 3:17), Christ began the process of restoring all creation to its intended purpose of acknowledging his lordship (Phil 2:9-11). Paul was optimistic about the power of God's grace to bring about this change not only in the human spirit but in all of creation.

Colossians 1:15-20 brings the two doctrines of incarnation and resurrection together and shows their impact on creation. Paul centers all creation in the person of Jesus Christ, who is the full representation in the creation of the invisible God. Christ became one with creation to experience the death that seeks to destroy it. His resurrection nullified death's power and began the reversal of the curse suffered by creation since Eden. New

creation began with Christ's resurrection. Humans can participate in this "newness of life" by identifying in faith through baptism with Christ's death and resurrection (Rom 6:4). Russell comments, "The life, death, and resurrection of Christ not only set in motion on the salvific process for those who believe but also initiated the process by which Christ would ultimately reclaim his entire creation."[17] He notes, "The passage in verse l8 thus moves from creation to new creation and finally in v. 20 to creation restored to its proper place under Christ as its head."[18] Lohse adds, "This peace which God has established through Christ binds the whole universe together again into unity and underlines that the restored creation is reconciled with God."[19] Christ's incarnation continues through the ministry of the church, his body, which is to carry out his mission of reconciliation through the power of his resurrection. Experiencing the new self in Christ opens our eyes to creation's longing for restoration and inspires us to do all we can through the power of the Spirit to usher in God's kingdom, even in this present evil age.

Earth Care and the Optimism of Grace

Providential Grace

New life in Christ is not only a spiritual journey but should impact every aspect of who we are. John Wesley articulated an optimism that the promises of the Bible are true and that we can experience God's transforming power on this side of the grave. He also studied nature and was interested in science, as demonstrated in his five-volume natural philosophy called *A Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation*. Wesley believed that God's goodness is present everywhere in creation. As Creator, God knows all the properties of the beings he created and preserves and sustains all that he

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[17] David M. Russell, *The "New heavens and New Earth": Hope for the Creation in Jewish Apocalyptic and the New Testament* (Studies in Biblical Apocalyptic Literature; Philadelphia: Visionary Press, 1996), 185.

[18] Russell, *New Heavens*, 183.

[19] Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon* (Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 59-60.

created. [20] In the beginning, God created each creature for good, and everything existed in harmony, in "ecological balance."[21]

God gave Adam and Eve the freedom to love, but with that freedom came the potential for sin. Adam and Eve apostatized from God and chose death instead of the way of love.[22] Creation now exists in a fallen state because of human pride and idolatry. Sin has distorted the goodness of creation and taken with it the lost condition of humanity. Creation is now always broken, though the goodness of God is still evident (Rom 1:19-20). Creation remains good despite human sin because God continues to create. This goodness is an aspect of providential grace. Metz writes, "Divine providence may be defined as that activity of God by which he conserves and preserves his creation and cares for and directs all things to their final destiny."[23] Although God gives grace to all people and sustains "brute creatures," he has a special dispensation for those who believe in Christ.[24] This special grace is experienced as restoration in God's image.

The Divine Image

Wesley spoke of three aspects of the *imago Dei:* natural, political, and moral. The natural image is the "spiritual nature and immortality of the soul" that gives humans understanding, will, and liberty.[25] Humanity bears the "political image" of God regarding nature. Wesley based his idea on Genesis 1:26-28. Humanity has the special responsibility as caretakers of creation and serves as co-governor with God but under his authority. We are called to be good stewards and realize that temporal things are not ours to dispose of as we please. This aspect of the image must seek the good of

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[20] Wesley, *Works*, 2:539.

[21] Runyon, *New Creation*, 10.

[22] Wesley, *Works*, 2:399.

[23] Donald S. Metz, "Providence," *Beacon Dictionary of Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1983), 427; also referencing Acts 17:25, 28; Rom 11:36; Col 1:17.

[24] Wesley, *Works*, 2:543.

[25] Wesley, *Works*, 2:409.

creation as channels of God's goodness, blessings, and grace.[26] However, this aspect of God's image has been corrupted by sin. One way Wesley saw this in his day was through cruelty to animals. The goal of the political image is to serve in the world like God since we are created in his likeness. The same way God treats nature is how we ought to treat it. Wesley states, "Thus we are to use our understanding, our imagination, our memory, wholly to the glory of him that gave them."[27]

To renew the political image, the moral image must first be renewed. Sin has marred the moral image and ruined our relationship with God and, subsequently, with creation. The cause of Adam and Eve's fall was a moral failure to obey. Therefore, the moral problem must be resolved in order to live out God's mission for humanity in creation. Runyan writes, "It is only as 'we become, as it were, a member of the family [of nature]'; it is only as we receive the world anew from the hand of the Creator—and that means, only as God becomes again *our* Creator and we become the true image— can we be genuinely empowered."[28] Life, both present and eternal, is only possible because of God's grace and continual creation. All grace is a manifestation of God's love for us in Christ. Runyan summarizes, "Grace is manifested in three ways: in our creation, in God's forgiveness, and in our transformation or re-creation."[29]

Missio Dei in Christ

The mission of God in the world through humanity can be only accomplished through God's grace and is best accomplished through transformation in Christ. The sanctifying process begins with the new birth and progresses through the power of the Holy Spirit. Wesley states succinctly that "gospel holiness is no less than the image of God stamped upon the

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[26] Wesley, *Works*, 2:240.

[27] Wesley, *Works,* 2:283-84.

[28] Runyan, *New Creation*, 206.

[29] Runyan, *New Creation*, 26.

heart."[30] The teleological fulfillment of God's plan for humanity is summarized in the word "sanctification." Sanctification is the ultimate experience of God's grace in this life, leading to pure love. Wesley looked at sanctification from two perspectives. He writes, "It is love excluding sin; love filling the heart, taking up the whole capacity of the soul." He adds, "For as long as love takes up the whole heart, what room is there for sin therein?"[31]

Perfect love comes only in Christ and never from ourselves. We can love only because God has first loved us (1 John 4:19). God's will for us in Christ is to be renewed in the image of God. Love is an extension of the work of God's grace in Christ transforming us. Every person is "created in the image of God, and designed to know, to love, and enjoy his Creator to all eternity."[32] The renewal of the image of God in humanity should begin to usher in the transforming power of God's kingdom through the renewal of creation. Our goal ought to be to return to the ecological *shalom* that existed when Adam and Eve had pure hearts of perfect love.

As we grow in God's love, we reflect this love toward all other creatures.[33] The love of God "shed abroad in our hearts" ought to result in a concern for justice for all people.

As is often quoted from Wesley, "The Gospel of Christ knows no religion, but social; no holiness, but social holiness. Faith working by love is the length and breadth and depth and height of Christian perfection."[34] Those most affected by the abuse of creation are the poor. The term "eco-justice" seeks to capture how "caring for the earth and caring for humanity,

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[30] Wesley, *Works,* 2:194.

[31] Wesley, *Works,* 2:160, 167.

[32] Wesley, *Works*, 2:397.

[33] Wesley, *Works*, 4:295.

[34] John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley* (ed. by Thomas Jackson, 14 vols., Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press 1979), XIV:32).

particularly for the poor and marginalized, are inextricably linked together."[35] In the spirit of James 1:27, one way to care for widows and orphans is to ensure they have a good environment that can support them. Love for God and love for others replaces love for self that sees the world as a resource for pleasure. Wesley states, "It is in consequence of our knowing God loves us that we love him, and love our neighbour as ourselves. Gratitude toward our Creator cannot but produce benevolence to our fellow-creatures."[36]

New creation begins when Christ is honored as sovereign, and we are filled with God's love through the power, presence, and leading of the Holy Spirit. The new life continues to grow and change as we allow the Holy Spirit to teach us the mind of Christ, which is the very purpose for why we have been created. The good news of Christ brings change when we fully embrace it through consecrated and committed living. The good news of Christ brings change when we fully embrace it through consecrated and committed living. The Spirit applies the ministry and mission of the Son to our hearts.[37]

Our actions ought to be determined by the primary value of this kingdom, which is love. Paul gives three core values of the kingdom in 1 Corinthians 13:13, "So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love." Since these qualities are eternal and the kingdom is breaking into this age, we, as followers of Christ, ought to develop these and emulate them in all we do. Love will be expressed by compassion to our fellow creatures, beginning with our neighbor, inclusive of our enemies, and extended to all of God's good creation. As an extension of Christ's incarnation, we are his ambassadors of reconciliation in this new creation (2 Cor 5:17-21).

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[35] Taikan Oki and Shinjiro Kanae, "Global Hydrological Cycles and World Water Resources," *Science* 313, no. 5790 (2006), 1068-72.

[36] Wesley, *Works*, 4:67.

[37] Wesley, *Works,* 1:75; 2:191; 4:284.

Conclusion

Colossians 1:20-21 reminds us that reconciliation comes because of Christ's death on the cross and victory over this death through resurrection. The battle with sin and death has already been fought and won. Creation is restored in and through Christ. This process begins now, in this present age, through his ambassadors and stewards. We should no longer live in Adam, who turned his back on love to follow his own desires, but as Christ who "did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:6-8).

We can trust that God's grace is still at work in creation through his providential grace. Because all grace comes through Christ, the grace in creation becomes sanctifying grace for humanity as God's special representatives. The doctrine of entire sanctification is not only spiritual but should impact every aspect of our existence, including the care of the earth. Douglas Hall writes, "If Christology is our foundational premise both for theological . . . and anthropological . . . doctrine, then 'dominion' as a way of designating the role of Homo sapiens within creation can only mean stewardship, and stewardship ultimately interpreted as love: sacrificial, self-giving love (*agape*)."[38] Michael Northcott notes: "Green consumerism, ecocracy, even environmental protest movements, ultimately cannot succeed in radically changing the direction of modern civilisation so long as they avoid the moral and spiritual vacuum which lies at its heart."[39]

The reality of sin and its effect upon creation should push us to seek God's restorative grace, not only for our own individual eternal destinies but for the creation longing for its restoration to the *shalom* of Eden. We can begin to live out God's promises and blessings on the whole earth as

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[38] Douglas John Hall, *Imaging God: Dominion as Stewardship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 186.

[39] Michael S. Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: University Press, 2001), 312.

the land of promise for God's people. As believers who are being transformed *in Christ*, we participate in the liberation and restoration of creation when we put ourselves under the lordship of Jesus Christ. Our hearts are transformed from self-centered survival of the fittest to others-focused unconditional love. This love sweeps up our neighbors, enemies, and the creation which we are called to steward. The writer to the Hebrews understood this hope well. A Sabbath day's rest in the promised land of spiritual peace remains for those who cast off their sin and look to Jesus in faith for full salvation (Heb 4:9-11; 12:1-2).

Patron-Client Κοινωνία:

Exploring the Partnership Paradigm of Paul and the Philippians

Jomer Anthony S. Clemente

Introduction

Purpose of the Study

The prevailing belief in pastor-centeredness significantly impacts the nature of relationships between leaders and members in a church setting. In my observation as a minister, there are Filipino churches that perceive the dynamics of ministry predominantly as the sole duty of the pastor. Meanwhile, members bear the responsibility for financial sustenance. This situation seemingly portrays a patron-client relationship, especially among affluent members who act as patrons, with the pastor assuming the role of the client. This reality prompts the question of whether such relational patterns align with the intended design of the church according to biblical principles. With that in mind, this paper explores the concept of κοινωνία as "partnership" in Paul's letter to the Philippians and how it could serve as a paradigm for a leader-member relationship by considering its theological foundations and practical applications.

Patron-Client Relationship in the Ancient World and the New Testament

In a nutshell, Crook asserts that the patron-client dynamic in ancient Rome was defined by the relationship between the patron (giver) and the client (taker). This relationship created an expectation of duty from the client to reciprocate favors and express gratitude to the patron. Consequently, clients honored their patron's reputation in various ways within the public court.[1] MacGillivray characterizes this paradigm as a voluntary, albeit often

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[1] Zeba Crook, "The Divine Benefactions of Paul the Client," *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 2 (2001): 10–11.

exploitative, reciprocal relationship that prevailed in early Roman culture.[2] Furthermore, MacGillivray contends that the relevance of the patron-client relationship to Biblical and New Testament Studies makes it essential knowledge for scholars in this field.[3]

According to Syverson, there were many forms of patron-client relationships in the ancient world: personal patronage, friendship, public benefaction, literary patronage, divine patronage, political patronage, and brokerage.[4] Crook argues that the New Testament writers' masterful use of patron-client language proves their understanding of the concepts of patronage and clientage. They either supported or opposed it as a social structure.[5] Thus, the New Testament presents the patron-client system both in a positive and a negative light. For this study, I examine the patron-client relationship wherein the church members act as the patron or the benefactor, and the church leader serves as the client or beneficiary, particularly of material needs.

Patron-Client Relationship as a Church Problem

The virtue of patronage and clientage as a social structure depends on the context. For instance, the patron-client relationship, in which the church members serve as the patron of the physical necessities of their leader in the Filipino context, can be problematic. Various dangers might arise considering the Filipino culture of *útang-na-loób* (debt of goodwill; debt of gratitude). Cleofas indicates that while this Filipino cultural practice can be viewed as a virtue, its applications in the context of nepotism, patronage politics, lifelong servitude, corruption, and other forms of injustice raise

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[2] Erlend D. MacGiliivray, "Re-evaluating Patronage and Reciprocity in Antiquity and New Testament Studies," *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 6 (2009): 38.

[3] MacGillivray, "Re-evaluating Patronage," 38.

[4] Jeffrey R. Syverson, "Grace in Paul's Letter to Titus in Light of Greco-Roman Patronage" (Master's thesis, George Fox Evangelical Seminary, Portland, Oregon, 2009), 20–25.

[5] Crook, "The Divine Benefactions," 14.

moral concerns.[6] And a church setting is not an exemption. Some local churches in the Philippines face such a difficulty, particularly the pastors. An acquaintance overseeing an organized church in an urban setting once told me about his frustrations in ministry. He could not fully exercise his function as the church administrator without the approval of the so-called "big givers" or those members who provide a huge chunk of the church's financial support, including the pastor's material needs. In this sense, the relationship of the pastor and members becomes employer-employee. But is this what God wants as the common practice in his community? What does the New Testament say about such a situation where churches provide the material necessities of their leader, similar to the Philippians to the Apostle Paul?

The Partnership of Paul and the Philippians as a Paradigm

This paper investigates the relationship between Paul and the Philippians, particularly their κοινωνία (partnership). Paul wrote to the Christians in Philippi while most likely imprisoned in Rome around A.D. 62.[7] With Jesus as the ultimate example, Paul exhorts the Philippians to live virtuously, deepening their dedication to serving God and one another. In addition, he wrote to the Philippians to inform them of Epaphroditus' recovery from a severe illness, to uplift their faith, to reassure them of his good health, and to express gratitude for their ongoing support.[8] The Philippians had been faithful in financially supporting Paul. Thus, materially, they can be perceived as the patron and Paul as the client. Jennings states that Paul speaks candidly about the gift the Philippians gave him in 4:10–20, which he wanted the church to see as a sanctified, righteous fruit that validated the church's faith. The Philippians' financial aid to Paul proved their loyalty to him and the gospel mission. Hence, Paul transformed the

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[6] Jacklyn A. Cleofas, "Towards a Practical and Empirically Grounded Account of Utang-na-loob as a Filipino Virtue," *Kritika Kultura* 33, no. 34 (2019–20): 156–179.

[7] "Introduction to Philippians," *ESV.org*, accessed April 2024, https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/introduction-to-philippians/.

[8] "Introduction to Philippians," *ESV.org*.

financial support of the church from a common practice to a unique manifestation of their unity within God's design for the community of believers.[9] To further comprehend the relationship between Paul and the Philippians, I suggest analyzing the concept of *κοινωνία* (partnership) anchored in three theological themes (see Figure 1): Christology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology.

Figure 1: Three Theological Themes of Κοινωνία (Partnership) in Philippians

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[9] Mark Avery Jennings, "'Make My Joy Complete': The Price of Partnership in the Letter of Paul to the Philippians" (PhD diss., Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 2015), 260.

Κοινωνία in the New Testament

The Greek κοινωνία is one of the most common Greek terms church members know, which is often understood as "gathering together." But in the New Testament, κοινωνία is translated into English in manifold ways. Strong defines κοινωνία as "partnership, i.e. (literally) participation, or (social) intercourse, or (pecuniary) benefaction:—(to) communicate(-ation), communion, (contri-)distribution, fellowship."[10] Furthermore, according to Srongs G2842, KJV translates κοινωνία in the New Testament in the following manner: fellowship (12x); communion (4x); communica-tion (1x); distribution (1x); contribution (1x); to communicate (1x).[11] In Philippians, KJV translates κοινωνία as "fellowship" (1:5) and ἐκοινώνησεν as "communicated." However, the ESV translates both terms as "partnership," which I deem more fitting as I consider the relationship between Paul and the community of believers in Philippi, given that the Philippians serve as a patron and Paul as a client, specifically with material provisions.

Christological Foundation: Sharing a Common Example

The Philippians Partnership in Sharing Troubles

Philippians 4:14–15 provides a picture of the depths of Paul's relationship with the Philippians and vice versa. Paul appreciates the benevolence of the Philippians' sharing in his troubles through partnership. In v. 14, the phrase "to share my trouble" is translated from the Greek συνκοινωνήσαντες, while "partnership" in verse 15 is from the Greek ἐκοινώνησεν. Both of these Greek terms share a similar κοινός-root, which means "common," the same as κοινωνία.

In the New Testament, "sharing in others' trouble" is frequently admonished in the early church. In Acts, Luke records the giving of possessions to share in the trouble of the needy (4:32–35), including daily distribution of food for the widows (6:1). Paul encourages believers to bear

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[10] James Strong, "Strong's Concordance," *Blue Letter Bible*, accessed April 2024, https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2842/kjv/tr/0-1/.

[11] Strong, "Strong's Concordance."

one another's burdens (Gal 6:2) as he teaches participation in others' sufferings (1 Cor 12:26). Furthermore, John commends the love and hospitality of the church toward traveling missionaries and strangers by supporting them (3 John 5–8). These exemplify the principles of sharing others' troubles through sacrifices to meet various needs. But why did they need to do this? Paul provides an answer in Galatians 6:2: "and so fulfill the law of Christ" (ESV). The church principle of sharing others' troubles is rooted in Christ. It is the fulfillment of His law, in which He serves as the ultimate example.

Christ's Example of Humility and *Kenosis*

In Philippians 2:1–11, Paul discusses Christ's example of humility. Paul appeals to the Philippians to put the interest of others above their own (v. 4), telling them to have a common mind in Christ (v. 5). In the succeeding verses, Paul reminds them about the example of Jesus who "emptied himself" (v. 7), sharing the trouble of all humankind as he died on the cross, bearing everyone's sins (v. 8). In this context, Jesus' emptying of self is referred to as *kenosis*, from the Greek κενόω, meaning "to empty."[12]

Examining *kenosis* in Philippians 2, Josette and Baholy expound that:

> In the intricate explanation of this epistle, a central theme emerges—the "Kenosis of Jesus Christ." The humility of Christ, as elucidated in Philippians 2:5-11, becomes the touchstone of Christian life. "Kenosis," a term coined to encapsulate Pauline Christology, unravels the divine act of God humbling Himself. In the voluntary abasement of Jesus Christ, God's love unfurls, laying bare the path to salvation. Without the divine descent into humility, the tapestry of redemption remains incomplete.[13]

Therefore, for the church to fulfill the law of Christ in sharing others'

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[12] Strong, "Strong's Concordance."

[13] Ramarolahy Patricia Josette and Robijaona Rahelivoloniaina Baholy, "The Kenosis of Jesus Christ: Model of the Christian Life According To Philippians 2:5-11," *Britian International of Humanities and Social Sciences* 6, no. 1 (2024): 26.

troubles, the community of Christ ought to share a common example who is the ultimate model of humility and selflessness—Jesus Christ. Christ's *kenosis* exemplifies the depth of humility and selflessness that serves as the bedrock of Christian conduct. His sacrificial act of emptying Himself not only provides the ultimate example but also establishes the framework for how believers are to live out their calling. With this understanding of Christ's humility in mind, the focus now shifts to how this principle of imitation manifests through shared suffering.

Imitating Christ through Shared Suffering

In Philippians 3:10, Paul uses the Greek phrase κοινωνίαν [τῶν] παθημάτων, which translates as "fellowship of sufferings," in reference to sharing the suffering of Christ. Throughout the New Testament, Paul and the early church recognized that following Christ meant partaking in all of His triumphs as well as His trials, which occasionally included suffering (Matt 5:12; Acts 14:22; Rom 8:17; Phil 1:29, 3:10; Col 1:24; 2 Tim 3:12; Heb 11:25; 1 Pet 3:17, 4:1, 12, 13, 19).

Sharing in Christ's suffering is one of the overt Christological foundations of the partnership of Paul and the Philippians as they both strove to imitate the Lord (Phil 3:17; cf. 1 Cor 11:1). Asumang concludes that the Philippians undoubtedly provided a model for developing a doctrine of imitation that fully explained the cruciform nature of Christian existence, which encompasses the sacrificial work of Christ.[14] Thus, as a patron, Jesus gave His life to provide humanity's utmost need—salvation. Imitating His example, the Philippian Church, as material patrons to Paul, selflessly supported him amid their own difficulties (Phil 4:14–20). In the same way, he, as a spiritual patron to the early Christians, including the Philippians, sacrificially ministered to them despite imprisonment (1:7).

The shared suffering with Christ, as outlined in Paul's teachings, reveals the cruciform nature of Christian existence, highlighting the importance of

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[14] Annang Asumang, "Modeling the Gospel in Joyful Partnership: Exemplars and the Uniting Theme of Philippians," *The Journal of the South African Theological Seminary* 13, no. 3 (2012): 42.

aligning with His example in all aspects of faith. The Philippians' willingness to endure hardships in solidarity with Paul mirrors this sacrificial model, demonstrating the enduring impact of Christ's example on the life of the church. This exploration into the mutual influence of suffering and imitation underscores the relevance of these principles for contemporary believers.

Ecclesiastical Call: Sharing a Common Mission

The Philippians' Partnership in the Gospel

In Philippians 1:5, Paul delightfully acknowledges the partnership of the Philippians in the gospel: "because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now" (ESV). In this verse, he uses κοινωνία in describing his partnership with them in sharing in the gospel. This commendation highlights the call of the church to preach the gospel, beginning with the commission of Jesus to His disciples (Matt 28:19; Mark 16:15–16; Acts 1:8). Schaller explicates that undeniably, the essence of New Testament ministry centers on the gospel. The ministry of gospel preaching was established by Christ's core commission to His disciples. Consequently, imparting obedience to His commands—different from simple ethical precepts— aligns with this mission.[15]

The apostles passed on the call to preach the gospel to the succeeding generation of Christians. One of the vivid examples of this is Paul's charge to Timothy (2 Tim 4:2). However, it is also clear that Paul shared this call with the Philippians. In the ESV, the term "gospel" recurs throughout Philippians twelve times, emphasizing the partnership of Paul and the Philippians in the gospel. In 1:12–14, Herrick comments that Paul's preaching continues to advance the gospel despite his imprisonment. His incarceration appears to further the gospel. Because of this, the reason he was chained became known to the entire imperial guard. And other brothers

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[15] John Schaller, "The Origin and Development of the New Testament Ministry" (1981): 1-12, accessed April 2024, https://essays.wisluthsem.org.

and sisters spoke out about the gospel with more courage.[16] The Philippians' dedication to the gospel, as celebrated by Paul, emphasizes a substantial partnership that reflects the essence of New Testament ministry and sets the stage for their ongoing commitment to the mission.

Evidence of the Philippians' Commitment

In some other verses, Paul's partnership between Paul and the Philippians is further evidenced by their unwavering support during Paul's imprisonment and their active involvement in spreading the gospel (1:7). Also, Paul and the Philippians worked together to share the gospel and showed their dedication to upholding the faith in the face of adversity as they lived worthy of the gospel (1:27–30). Moreover, Paul urges the Philippians to be powerful witnesses because of their outlook and commitment to sharing their light as children of God in the world, which would complement their cooperation in advancing the gospel (2:14–16). Campbell points out that Paul's ministry emphasized the struggle to advance the gospel, a theme reflected in both his disputed and undisputed letters.

However, churches founded during Paul's missionary journeys, including the Philippian Church, maintained a consciousness of proclaiming the gospel despite adversity.[17] The steadfast commitment of the Philippians demonstrated through their support and active involvement in advancing the gospel illustrates their deep partnership with Paul and sets the stage for exploring the mutual benefits of their collaboration.

Mutual Benefit in Partnership

In the twenty-first-century context, Christenson observes that the phrase "partnership in mission" has gained popularity within mission circles. However, forming collaborations among Christian organizations—even

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[16] Greg Herrick, *Philippians: The Unconquerable Gospel* (Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 2001), 20.

[17] Gordon Campbell, "The Struggle for the Progress of the Gospel at the Heart of the Pauline Mission," *Irish Biblical Studies* 21 (1999): 77–78.

those that share a dedication to evangelism and Scripture—is challenging.[18] Nevertheless, around two thousand years ago, Paul and the Philippian church enjoyed a mutually beneficial partnership wherein both parties benefited from the reciprocal nature of their relationship. The Philippians provided material support to Paul, allowing him to focus on his ministry, while Paul reciprocated by offering spiritual guidance and teachings to them. As a patron, the Philippian Church enabled Paul to continue the church's mission through material support as he worked to spread the gospel. In turn, Paul served as a spiritual patron to them, evidenced in his prayers for them and desire for their spiritual growth. It resulted in the Philippians actively participating in the common mission of the church, not only financially but also through their lives and preaching.

The mutual benefits in the partnership between Paul and the Philippians not only advanced the gospel but also enriched both parties spiritually and materially, providing a model of effective synergy that remains relevant for the present mission endeavors.

Eschatological Anticipation: Sharing a Common Hope

The Vision of Partnership and Hope

The vision of partnership lies in the sharing of a common hope. So, what is the hope of Paul and the Philippians? Paul's words in Philippians 3:13–16 provide a good response as he emphasizes the one thing he does in verse 13: "forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead" (ESV). Paul further expounds in v. 14: "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (ESV). Then, he exhorts the Philippians in verses 15 and 16: "Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold to what we have attained" (ESV).

Paul discusses his viewpoints on Christian development and maturity in these verses, accentuating the importance of looking forward rather than dwelling on past transgressions or triumphs. The ultimate aim of the

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[18] Joel Christenson, "Koinonia: DNA of Gospel Partnership," *Mission Round Table* 10, no. 1 (2015): 12–15.

Christian life is to become more like Christ—the "goal" of which he speaks. Believers receive a heavenly calling and eternal life with God as their "prize." Paul inspires mature believers to think alike and share this as a common perspective. He displays trust that God will reveal the truth in time. Consequently, believers must hold fast to their faith and continue growing while keeping their focus heavenward. That said, Bieringer contends that Paul balances the "effort-reward scheme" of athletic language with the "giving-receiving scheme" of his call language. In doing so, he emphasizes the future-oriented nature of his message, which is a hallmark of his preaching and lifestyle.[19] Paul's emphasis on forward-looking faith and communal maturity sets the stage for understanding the nature of believers' ultimate hope and glorification, framing their journey towards a higher calling.

The Hope of Glorification

Moreover, in Philippians 3:20–21, Paul writes: "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it, we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself" (ESV). These verses distinguish between believers' earthly and heavenly citizenship. Christians' true home is in heaven, while earthly citizenship is temporary. The phrase "await a Savior" expresses eschatological hope—the anticipation of Christ's second coming. The transformation of believers is symbolized by the transformation of their bodies. Thus, Jesus, through His power, will transform our bodies into the likeness of His own gloriously restored body.

Paul's vision of glorification transcends mere physical change, reflecting a significant shift from earthly limitations to divine perfection (1 Cor 15:42–44). This promise of a glorified body offers not just hope but also a profound sense of purpose and direction for believers (Rom 8:18). It provides a transformative lens through which the struggles and sacrifices of this life are understood in the light of eternal glory (2 Cor 4:17). The anticipation of such a momentous change encourages believers to live with a forward-looking faith, deeply rooted in the certainty of Christ's return and the ultimate renewal of creation (Phil 3:20–21; Rev 21:1).

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[19] Reimund Bieringer, "'… Striving for the Prize': The Theological Significance of Athletic Language in Philippians 3:12-16," *Studia Nauk Teologicznych PAN* 14 (2019): 85.

Living Out the Eschatological Hope

Paul's eschatological anticipation is further illustrated in Philippians 1:23. Heinz concludes that Paul indicates his hope that salvation will be fulfilled right away after death.[20] He adds that Paul and other New Testament writers are not the only ones who have this viewpoint. Some academics contend that the New Testament does not consistently teach Christ's impending Second Coming.[21] Nevertheless, Paul and the Philippians share the same hope and, thus, await the same Savior. Their partnership, driven by eschatological anticipation, leads them to move forward. Hence, all of their sacrifices for one another, both as patron and client, are beyond the external but towards the eternal.

In the New Testament, this common hope pushes the community of believers to endure suffering until the very end (Matt. 5:10–12; Rom. 5:3–4; 2 Cor. 4:17–18; 1 Peter 5:10; James 1:2–4). Middleton asserts that what influences how Christians try to live in the present is what they hope and anticipate as the climax of salvation. Thus, a lived eschatology is ethics.[22] As George Eldon Ladd put it, "the presence of the future."[23] Thus, the shared eschatological hope between Paul and the Philippians not only underpins their mutual sacrifices but also redefines their present experiences, aligning them with the promise of future glorification and eternal glory.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I suggest that leaders and members of the church must have a reciprocal patron-client κοινωνία (partnership), imitating a common example (Jesus Christ), fulfilling a common mission (preaching of the gospel), and holding on to a common hope (heavenly reward) (see Figure 2).

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[20] Heinz Geisen, "Eschatology in Philippians," *Paul and His Theology* (2008): 272.

[21] Geisen, "Eschatology in Philippians," 272.

[22] J. Richard Middleton, A New Heaven and A New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 24.

[23] George Eldon Ladd, The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdsman, 1974).

The ultimate example of humility and selflessness is Jesus Christ. His sacrificial love and self-giving commitment to the Father's will serve as the foundation for any partnership. Therefore, everyone in the church—both leaders and members—should imitate Christ as the common example by selflessly serving others, just as Jesus gave His life for humanity's salvation.

Church Leader providing Spiritual Support (among others) for the Church Members

Church Leader(s) as Patron(s)

Church Members as Clients

Patron-Client Κοινωνία:

Common Example;

Common Mission;

Common Hope

Church Leader(s) as Client(s)

Church Members as Patrons

Church Members providing Material Support (among others) for the Church Leader(s)
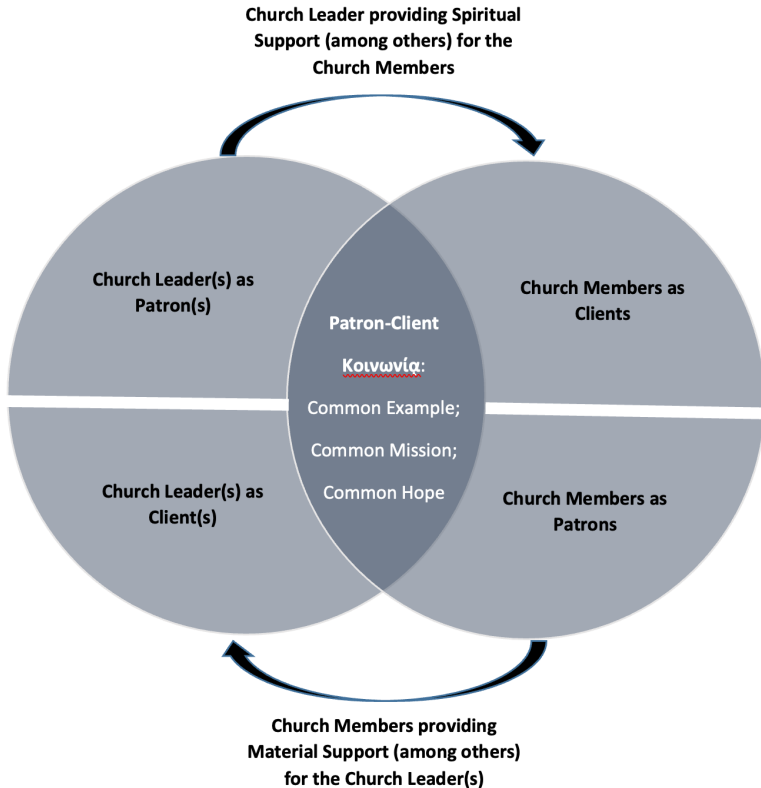
The partnership between Paul and the Philippians involved both material and spiritual aspects. The Philippians supported Paul materially, allowing him to focus on his ministry. In return, Paul provided spiritual guidance and teachings to them. In this relationship, church members must consider how they can support their leaders and vice versa. The partnership should be mutually beneficial, with both parties benefiting from their relationship.

Thus, as a church, we need to determine how we can actively support

one another. Furthermore, the Philippians actively participated in the common mission of spreading the gospel. Their partnership with Paul extended beyond financial support to their lives and preaching. Similarly, the church needs to actively engage in its mission, not only through material contributions but also through personal involvement, evangelism, and discipleship.

Finally, the partnership between Paul and the Philippians was driven by the common hope of the eternal. They endured suffering together, knowing that their sacrifices had a heavenly reward. The church must recognize and focus on the bigger picture—the eternal reward of the partnership. We are to be reminded that our sacrifices are not in vain but contribute to God's kingdom.

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A Comparative Analysis of Buddhism, Wesleyanism, and Process Theology
Implications for Holistic Transformation in Myanmar

Cing Sian Thawn

Introduction

Myanmar, predominantly a Buddhist nation, also embraces Christianity, with 87.9% and 6.2%[1] of the total population practicing Buddhism and Christianity, respectively. With this in mind, and with the recognition of the significant role of religion in societal transformation, this paper explores the similarities and differences between Buddhism, Wesleyanism, and Process theology. The aim is to identify aspects or elements within these traditions that have potential applicability and relevance for our approach to holistic transformation in Myanmar.

Context of Buddhism, Wesleyanism, and Process Theology

Historically, these philosophies and theologies originated in distinct times and settings. Buddhism traces its roots back to as early as the sixth century B.C.E., following the enlightenment experience of Siddhattha Gotama, also called "the Buddha."[2] Wesleyanism, founded on the belief and teachings of John Wesley (1703-1791), the founder of Methodism, emerged in the eighteenth century, emphasizing holiness in personal and social life.[3]

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[1] Nina Evason, "Myanmar (Burmese) Culture," Cultural Atlas, accessed October 6, 2023, https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/myanmar-burmese-culture/burmese-myanmar-culture-religion.

[2] Richard Francis Gombrich, *Theravada Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo* (London: Routledge, 1995), 32.

[3] Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism*,

Process theology developed as a theological movement two centuries after Wesleyanism, specifically in the mid-twentieth century.[4] Alfred North Whitehead's philosophy significantly influenced its formation and development, serving as the foundation for American process theology. Charles Hartshorne, John Cobb, and others greatly influenced by Whitehead's metaphysics or philosophy played significant roles in the development and popularization of process theology.[5]

The context in which Buddhism emerged was often viewed as a protest or reform movement against the costly rituals and sacrifices initiated by the Hindu Brahmins. Gotama, the Buddha, sought to replace these practices with moral training and mental discipline, leading individuals toward ultimate liberation, or *Nibbana*.[6] Some liken Gotama's reformation from Hinduism to the reformation initiated by Martin Luther from Roman Catholicism.[7] Similarly, Wesley intended his Methodist movement, focusing on spiritual renewal, to be a revival within the Church of England and not a separate rival from it. Indeed, Wesley remained a member of the Anglican Church throughout his life.[8]

Process theology emerged as an attempt to reconcile traditional Chris-

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2nd ed. (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2015), 59; "Wesleyanism," Messiah University, accessed November 02, 2023, https://www.messiah.edu/info/20265/the_three_traditions_that_shape_our_mission_and_why/328/wesleyanism.

[4] John B. Cobb, *Process Theology as Political Theology* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), 19.

[5] Cobb, *Process Theology as Political Theology*, 19; Ewert H. Cousins, "Introduction: Process Models in Culture, Philosophy, and Theology," in *Process Theology*, ed. Ewert H. Cousins (New York: Newman Press, 1971), 5.

[6] Rudi Maier, "Salvation in Buddhism," *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 10, no. 1 (2014): 12, https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jams/vol10/iss1/3/.

[7] Pat Alexander, ed., *Eerdmans' Handbook to the World's Religions*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1994), 226.

[8] Robert Black and Keith Drury, *The Story of the Wesleyan Church* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2012), 17–18.

tian thought with scientific advancements, particularly the concept of process and change. This theological perspective responded to the changing social conditions in a context dominated by democracy and science. The theologians behind process theology believed that it was essential to reformulate the teachings of the church to align with the changing context, emphasizing a shift from historical to scientific methods in the study of religion that would also adapt to the evolving intellectual landscapes.[9]

Buddhism, Wesleyanism, and Process Theology: Core Doctrinal Teachings

This section provides a comparative analysis of the doctrinal teachings of Buddhism, Wesleyanism, and Process theology under three sections: Buddhism and Wesleyanism, Wesleyanism and Process theology, and Process theology and Buddhism.

Buddhism and Wesleyanism

Buddhism and Wesleyanism, representing atheistic[10] and theistic frameworks respectively, clearly differ when it comes to theological concepts. Buddhism, rooted in the Buddha's teachings, is concerned with human predicament and its solution.[11] This is systematically organized into the Four Noble Truths, namely the Truth of Suffering (*dukkha*), the Cause of Suf-

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[9] John B. Cobb, Jr., "Process Theology," Process and Faith, accessed November 15, 2023, https://processandfaith.org/resources/articles/process-theology/.

[10] S. Dhammika, *Good Question Good Answer* (Singapore: Buddha Dhamma Mandala Society, 2006), 7. Indeed, many considered Buddhism as a philosophy rather than a religion, for instance, when asked, a Buddhist monk by the name Dhammika replied that Buddhism is "the supreme philosophy." It is "the philosophy of awakening" from the word, *budhi*, meaning "to wake up."

[11] "One thing only does the Buddha teach, namely, suffering and the cessation of suffering." Bhikkhu Nanamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans., *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Majjihima Nikaya* (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1995), 235.

fering (*samudaya*), the Cessation of Suffering (*nirodha*), and the Path lead-ing to the Cessation of Suffering, or the Way (*magga*) called the Noble Eightfold path.[12] Life is seen as suffering, with desire as its cause, and the Noble Eightfold Path[13] as the means to end suffering and the attainment of *Nibbana*.[14] In contrast, Wesleyanism, based on a theistic framework, holds on the Biblical account of the existence of God, the God three-in-one (1 John 5:7).[15] Wesley summarized the core doctrines of Wesleyanism into three: "1) That Men [and women] are all by Nature *dead in Sin*, and conse-quently *Children of Wrath*,[16] 2) That they are *justified by Faith* alone,[17] and 3) That Faith produces inward and outward Holiness."[18]

Despite their theological disparities, Buddhism and Wesleyanism share fundamental concepts that are significant for social transformation. Love

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[12] Weragoda Sarada Maha Thero et al., *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta: The First Sermon of the Buddha* (Singapore: The Singapore Buddhist Meditation Center, 2017), 11-13.

[13] The Noble Eightfold Path are Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. They are categorized into three-fold disciplines such as morality (*sila*) is made up of Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood; Concentration(*samadhi*) is made up of Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration; and wisdom(*panna*) is made up of Right View and Right Thought. Mehm Tin Mon, *Kamma, The Real Creator* (Yangon: Mehm Tayzar Mon, 2007), 16.

[14] Matthew Meghaprasara, New Guide to the Tipitaka: A Complete Reference to the Pali Buddhist Canon (Regina: A Sangha of Books, 2013), 384.

[15] See Wesley's sermon, "On the Trinity," available at Wesleyan-Holiness Digital Library, https://whdl.org/sites/default/files/resource/book/On_the_Trinity_Sermon_55_-_John_Wesley_0.pdf?language=en.

[16] See Wesley's sermon, "Original Sin," sermon #44, available at Wesleyan-Holi-ness Digital Library, https://whdl.org/sites/default/files/resource/book/EN-JohnWesley-Sermons.pdf?language=en.

[17] See Wesley's sermon, "Justification by Faith," sermon #5, available at Wesleyan-Holiness Digital Library, https://whdl.org/sites/default/files/resource/book/EN-JohnWesley-Sermons.pdf?language=en.

[18] John Wesley, *A Short History of Methodism* (London: Foundery, 1765), 7, In-ternet Archive.

holds a central role in both traditions. The teachings of Buddhism are rooted in love and compassion (*karuna*).[19] The opposite of love, anger, or hatred (*dosa*) is considered one of the three roots of evil.[20] Similarly, Wesleyanism, according to Wynkoop, can be better described as "a theology of love" than "a theology of holiness," with love being central to the whole message of John Wesley.[21]

Another commonality lies in the emphasis on morality and good works. However, good works and morality for Buddhism serve as a stepping stone towards liberation or *Nibbana*.[22] In Wesleyanism, these are seen as the result or fruit of one's spiritual experience or genuine faith, with inward and outward holiness expressing one's spiritual experience.[23] To quote Wesley, "For our corruption thro' Original Sin is so great, that all our faith, charity, words and works, cannot merit or deserve any part of our justification for us."[24]

Holiness is another shared element between the two traditions. Wesleyanism, often referred to as the Holiness tradition, asserts the possibility of attaining Christian perfection or entire sanctification in this life.[25] Wesley's concept of Christian perfection or entire sanctification is not about flawlessness or "the absence of sin" but "the active presence of love ex-

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[19] Walpola Rahula and Paul Demieville, *What the Buddha Taught*, 2nd ed. (New York: Grove Press, 1981), 46.

[20] Mon, *Kamma*, 15.

[21] Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love*, 27; See Wesley's sermon, "On Love," sermon #139.

[22] Acharya Buddharakkhita, trans., *The Dhammapada: The Buddha's Path of Wisdom* (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1985), 47.

[23] John Wesley, *The Principles of a Methodist* (London: Printed for the Author, 1796), 8.

[24] Wesley, *The Principles*, 7.

[25] Theodore Runyon, "Introduction: Wesley and the Theologies of Liberation," in *Sanctification and Liberation: Liberation Theologies in Light of the Wesleyan Tradition*, ed. Theodore Runyon (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1981), 10.

pressed not only in word but in deed: from God to humanity, from humanity to God; from God through human beings, to their fellow human beings."[26] Similarly, Buddhism insists on eliminating all defilements as a prerequisite for liberation and the attainment of *Nibbana*.[27]

Despite these similarities, it must be noted that they diverged in the means to overcome defilements (Buddhism) or attain Christian perfection (Wesleyanism). Buddhism emphasizes personal effort with the Buddha as the Path shower,[28] while Wesleyanism emphasizes divine assistance, with the Holy Spirit playing a crucial role in leading believers into the ever-increasing likeness of Christ, enabling them to forsake their sinful nature. In his sermon, entitled "On Grieving the Holy Spirit," Wesley expressed,

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[26] Runyon, "Introduction," 34; see Wesley's sermon, "On Perfection," sermon #76; "Christian Perfection," sermon #40; "The Scripture Way of Salvation," sermon #45; also, his book entitled, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*.

[27] Meghaprasara, *New Guide to the Tipitaka*, 387. Compare a liberated person in Buddhism with the marks or characteristics of a Methodist described by Wesley. "He [or she] is the happiest being in the world, free from all "complexes" and obsessions, the worries and troubles that torment others. . . . He [or she] appreciates and enjoys things. . . . He [or she] is joyful, exultant, enjoying the pure life, his [or her] faculties pleased, free from anxiety, serene and peaceful. As he [or she] is free from selfish desire, hatred, ignorance, conceit, pride, and all such defilements, he [or she] is pure and gentle, full of universal love, compassion, kindness, sympathy, understanding, and tolerance." Rahula and Demieville, *What the Buddha Taught*, 43. "A Methodist is one, who has the love of God shed abroad in his [or her] heart, by the Holy Ghost given unto him: one who loves the Lord his God with all his [or her] heart, and with all his [or her] soul, and with all his [or her] mind, and with all his [or her] strength. . . . He [or she] is therefore happy in God, yea, always happy, . . . overflowing his [or her] soul with peace and joy. . . . He [or she]" cannot but rejoice, . . . he [or she] loves his [or her] brother also. And he [or she] accordingly loves his [or her] neighbor .. loves every man [and woman] as his [or her] own soul. His [or her] heart is full of love to all mankind, . . . a man [or woman] is not personally known to him [or her] is no bar to his [or her] love; repays hatred for his [or her] good-will. . . . And he [or she] hath now put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering." John Wesley, *The Character of a Methodist* (London: G. Paramore, 1747), 5-8, Internet Archive.

[28] "It is the greatest battle to fight against defilements . . . But the Buddha showed the way how to fight and conquer them peacefully by the Noble Eightfold Path." Mehm Tin Mon, *Meditation: The Buddha's Way* (Yangon: Mehm Tayzar Mon, 2013), 19.

"There can be no point of greater importance to him [or her] who knows that it is the Holy Spirit which leads us into all truth and into all holiness."[29] Furthermore, in "The Scripture Way of Salvation," he asserted, "We are enabled 'by the Spirit,' to mortify the deeds of the body,' of our evil nature."[30]

Buddhism and Process Theology

Buddhism and Process theology represent distinct philosophical and religious traditions. While Buddhism does not necessarily suggest a personal deity, Process theology incorporates a dynamic and relational understanding of God. Despite these foundational differences, some significant parallels can be drawn.

Firstly, both traditions share "the denial of substance,"[31] or a fixed or unchanging reality, emphasizing impermanence or a process-oriented understanding of reality. In Buddhism, impermanence (*Anicca*) is one of the three marks or characteristics of existence (*Ti-lankkhana*), along with suffering (*Dukkha*) and no-self or soullessness (*Anatta*).[32] These three marks are fundamental to Buddhist teachings.[33] Similarly, Process theology, as the

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[29] John Wesley, *Sermons on Several Occasions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1771), 1227, https://whdl.org/sites/default/files/resource/book/EN-JohnWesley-Sermons.pdf?language=en.

[30] Wesley, *Sermons*, 452.

[31] John B. Cobb, Jr., and David Ray Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1976), 137. Process theology is indeed traced back to Gotama, the Buddha.

[32] Rahula and Demieville, *What the Buddha Taught*, 20.

[33] The dialogue between the Buddha and the monks about the three marks of existence goes like this, "The body (*rupa*), O Bhikkhus, is soulless (*anatta*). If O Bhikkhus, there were in this a soul then this body would not be subjected to suffering. But since this body is soulless, it is subjected to suffering. What thinks ye, O Bhikkhus, is this body permanent or impermanent? "Impermanent (*anicca*) Lord." Is that which is impermanent happy or painful? "It is painful (*dukkha*) Lord." Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans., *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1994),

word "process" suggests, denies "static actuality," asserting that all actuality is process.[34] It emphasizes becoming and relation over being and absoluteness.[35] Whitehead's "philosophy of organism"[36] greatly influenced Process theology. According to Whitehead, ". . . the flux of things is one ultimate generalization around which we must weave our philosophical system."[37]

Secondly, both Buddhism and Process theology reject the idea of the existence of a permanent soul in an individual. In Buddhism, an individual is composed of an ever-changing mind and matter (*nama-rupa*). Instead of an eternal soul, Buddhism suggests a dynamic life-flux (*santati*) that flows *ad infinitum* as long as it is fed with ignorance and craving and contends that there is no eternal soul beyond this dynamic life-flux.[38] Indeed, to believe in the existence of a permanent soul for Buddhists is an illusion. Process theology similarly posits that individuals are "a series of events."[39] There is no real thing beyond this. According to Whitehead, "'Actual entities'—also termed 'actual occasions' are the final real things of which the world is made up. There is no going behind actual entities to find anything more real. . . . The final facts are, all alike, actual entities; and these actual entities are drops of experience, complex and interdependent."[40]

Thirdly, both traditions emphasize the interconnectedness of all things.

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[34] Cobb, and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 7.

[35] Charles Hartshorne, "The Development of Process Philosophy," in *Process Theology*, ed. Ewert H. Cousins (New York: Newman Press, 1971), 47.

[36] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1929), 22.

[37] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 240.

[38] Venerable Narada Mahatthera, *The Buddha and His Teachings* (Taipei, Taiwan: The Buddha Educational Foundation, 1998), 360, 402.

[39] Norman Pittenger, *Process-Thought and Christian Faith* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968), 13.

[40] Whitehead, Process and Reality, 23.

One of the core doctrines of Buddhism, the concept of Dependent Origination (*paticca-samuppada*), explains that nothing exists in isolation, and all phenomena are interconnected.[41] The concept of the law of *kamma* (action or deed) and *samsara* (the wheel of birth and rebirth) also explains this interconnected nature of existence.[42] Similarly, a fundamental concept in Process thought is the idea of an interconnected society of "occasions." One cannot exist in isolation from others, their immediate environment, their past, the broader human history, the natural order, or potential future developments. Our being encompasses all the influences that have shaped us, our surroundings, external pressures, and the collective human experience.[43] It rejects a dualistic understanding between self and the world. Instead, it proposes a unified reality where our being is inherently connected to the world we inhabit, and both mutually shape each other.[44]

Process Theology and Wesleyanism

With both being rooted in Christian thought, Process theology and Wesleyanism diverge significantly in their theological foundations and perspectives on God's nature and interaction with the world. While Wesleyanism maintains a more traditional view of God, Process theology, on the other hand, introduces a fresh perspective that challenges the traditional understanding of God and God's relation to the world, which I will discuss briefly before exploring the similarities between the two traditions.

Firstly, Process theology portrays God as a more relational, dynamic,

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[41] Venerable Narada Mahatthera, *The Buddha and His Teachings* (Taipei, Taiwan: The Buddha Educational Foundation, 1998), 338.

[42] Dhammapada 1: 127, "What we are today comes from our thoughts of yesterday, and our present thoughts build our life of tomorrow: our life is the creation of our mind. If a man speaks or acts with an impure mind, suffering follows him as the wheel of the cart follows the beast that draws the cart." Juan Mascaro, trans., *The Dhammapada: The Path to Perfection* (New York: Penguin Books, 1973), 35, 53.

[43] Pittenger, *Process-Thought*, 12-13.

[44] Cobb, and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 81.

and evolving deity in a continuous process of becoming. Rejecting the traditional understanding of God as an unchanging, timeless, unaffected by "his" creation, and independent of the world, Process theology suggests that "God is essentially dynamic and interrelated with the world, rather than changeless and independent of the world."[45] God is constantly engaged in a process of "self-creation, synthesizing in each new moment of his experience the whole of achieved actuality with the plenitude of possibility as yet unrealized." Thus, God is intimately connected to the evolving world.[46]

Secondly, Process theology challenges the idea of God as "the ruling Caesar, or the ruthless moralist, or the unmoved mover."[47] According to Whitehead, God has a primordial and consequent nature. The primordial nature refers to the eternal and unchanging aspects of God's existence. In this aspect, God is the ground of all possibilities. "He is the unlimited conceptual realization of the absolute wealth of potentiality," said Whitehead. "He is the lure for feeling, the eternal urge of desire."[48] The consequent nature reflects God's dynamic interaction with the evolving world where "the world reacts upon God."[49] In this consequent nature, God is influenced by events, choices, and actions in the world. He is being affected by and actually enriched by the activity that occurs in his world.[50]

Thirdly, Process theology diverged from the traditional concept of God as the creator of the world. Rather, according to Whitehead, God is "the poet of the world, with tender patience leading it by his vision of truth,

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[45] Catherine E. Keller and Austin J. Roberts, "Panentheism and Process Theism," *Modern Living* 63, no. 2 (Spring 2022): 122, https://doi.org/ doi:10.3828/mb.2022.8.

[46] Schubert M. Ogden, "The Reality of God," in *Process Theology*, ed. Ewert H. Cousins (New York: Newman Press, 1971), 123.

[47] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 404.

[48] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 405–406.

[49] Cousins, "Introduction," 13.

[50] Pittenger, *Process-Thought*, 22–23.

beauty, and goodness."[51] The world, as a whole, according to Process philosophy, is "*in* process and is *a* process; it is not a finished and settled system composed of discrete entities which are inert, changeless, static."[52]

Also, Process theology rejects the idea of God being in complete control and all-knowing. Instead, it emphasizes a loving God whose "richest perfection possible is perfection in relationships and not 'absolute power' or unchanging substance."[53] Therefore, God's activity in the world is perceived as a loving and creative activity that is "persuasive, not controlling." Therefore, "each divine creative impulse into the world is adventurous, in that God does not know what the result will be."[54] According to Whitehead, "God's own life is an adventure . . . in the sense of being a risk since God will feel the discord as well as the beautiful experiences involved in the finite actualizations."[55]

Despite this significant divergence in the nature of God and God's interaction with the world, some central claims of Process theology align with the Wesleyan theological framework. Cobb, for instance, considers Wesley as a process thinker due to the resonance between his perspective and that of a process thinker. This is evident in Wesley's emphasis on God's involvement throughout an individual's life, "the emergence of faith, growth in love, falling back into sin."[56] Furthermore, he observed how Wesley's preaching and theology focus extensively on the various stages of this dynamic process and God's involvement in them.[57]

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[51] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 408.

[52] Pittenger, *Process-Though*, 12.

[53] Pittenger, *Process-Thought*, 22.

[54] Cobb, and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 57.

[55] Cobb, and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 61.

[56] John B. Cobb, "Wesley the Process Theologian," (lectures, Point Loma University, San Diego, February 2000), available at *Religion Online*, https://www.religion-online.org/article/wesley-the-process-theologian/.

[57] Cobb, "Wesley the Process Theologian."

Wesley's emphasis on Prevenient Grace (grace that goes before), human free or uncoerced will to respond to this grace, and his rejection of the concept of predestination that says, "everything is determined from the outset by God's one, unchanging act of the will,"[58] resonates with Process theology that focusses on God's divine love in the form of his creative activity in influencing human's decision.[59] According to process theology, divine love is persuasive rather than controlling.[60] Indeed, Oord believes that among various theologies, process theology enriches our understanding of Christian love as it describes "God's love as both creative and responsive."[61]

Both traditions emphasize the significance of human and divine cooperative work for transformation. Wesley's model of synergism, where humans partner with the divine in the redemptive and transformative process, parallels the concept of co-creation in Process theology. Wesley insists that humans have a significant role in transformation as God involves them in the process. They labor with God as God works in and through them.[62] Similarly, Process theology emphasizes the co-creative role of humans with God. According to Hartshorne, "Process philosophy, fully thought out, is creationism! . . . Creativity, if real at all, must be universal, not limited to God alone."[63] Both traditions, thus, affirm the role of individuals in shaping the world and their future in collaboration with the divine.

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[58] Cobb, "Wesley the Process Theologian."

[59] Cobb, and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 51.

[60] Cobb, and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 69.

[61] Thomas Jay Oord, "Process and Wesleyan Theologies," *Thomas Jay Oord* (blog), August 15, 2011, https://thomasjayoord.com/index.php/blog/archives/process_and_wesleyan_theologies.

[62] Runyon, "Introduction," 28.

[63] Hartshorne, "The Development," 53-54.

Implications for a Holistic Transformation Approach
in the Myanmar Context

The comparative analysis of the three philosophical and theological frameworks not only enriches our understanding of holistic transformation but also provides significant philosophical-theological frameworks for affecting holistic transformation in the context of Myanmar.

Buddhism and Wesleyanism

Buddhism and Wesleyanism, both emphasizing love or lovingkindness, holiness, ethical living, compassion, and good works as integral parts of one's religious experience, have profound implications for a holistic individual and societal transformation in Myanmar. In a diverse ethnic and religious landscape like Myanmar, the emphasis on lovingkindness that extends to all creation or "universal love"[64] (Buddhism) and love towards all people[65] (Wesleyanism) is crucial for societal transformation, fostering tolerance and peace. Also, this approach of lovingkindness will contribute to promoting social justice and reconciliation and create a more harmonious and compassionate society, which is the pressing need in Myanmar.

Their shared emphasis on ethical living, good works, generosity, and social action is significant for holistic transformation in the context of Myanmar, a context stricken by poverty, crimes, political instability, and the presence of systems or structures that promote oppression, exclusivism, and inequality among the people. This approach can not only help bridge the widening economic gap but also promote justice that will result in a more just, safe, and equal society.

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[64] Rahula and Demieville, *What the Buddha Taught*, 43.

[65] Wesley, The Character of a Methodist, 8-9, 11.

Buddhism and Process Theology

Buddhism and Process theology's emphasis on impermanence can have significant implications for holistic transformation in Myanmar. The recognition of the need for adaptability and openness to change is crucial, especially in the context of Myanmar. This adaptability and openness are crucial for change that will lead to transformation.

Additionally, both emphasis on the interconnectedness of things and the idea that nothing exists in isolation can have significant implications for social transformation. This will lead to the advocacy for inclusive, collaborative, and empathetic approaches to social transformation. Also, this will direct our actions for the greater good as we shape one another.

While the concept of no permanent soul in an individual suggested by both may contradict our Biblical faith, it holds a significant conceptual implication for addressing the prevailing corruptions in society that are caused by selfishness. This idea of "no self" or "selflessness" is a transformative force in fighting against selfishness and the consequences it brings to society that will contribute to the realization of a society marked by other-centeredness.

Wesleyanism and Process Theology

Wesleyanism's emphasis on prevenient grace and Process theology's emphasis on God's creative love and engagement in the world offers a valuable framework for holistic transformation in Myanmar, where religious and cultural superiority and nationalism prevail. This framework encourages a positive perspective on differences, believing in God's work in diverse contexts.

Wesley's synergism and Process theology's co-creative process provide a new perspective on human-divine cooperation for a better society. Considering the current socio-political landscape of the country, this concept of co-creating or co-transforming with the divine can instill in us a sense of agency and responsibility for personal and social transformation that will motivate us to actively engage in shaping the future of our country.

Also, the rejection of predestination (the idea that God has the past,

present, and future already decided) in Wesleyanism with the concept of the consequent nature of God in Process theology can serve as a motivating factor, particularly for Christians in Myanmar to believe in the power of prayer that can bring positive changes in our nation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Buddhism, Wesleyanism, and Process theology, although emerging in different times and settings with distinctive theological and philosophical frameworks, share concepts that offer unique perspectives for perceiving and affecting holistic transformation in Myanmar. Drawing elements from them and integrating them into a holistic approach can address the complex challenges facing Myanmar today that will pave the way for the realization of a holistic, meaningful, and lasting transformation in Myanmar.

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Implications of Self-Worth through Human Vocation
for Persons with Disabilities[1]

Julie Branstetter

Introduction

There are many aspects of God's call on individuals in the Holy Scriptures. First, when meeting the Eternal God through an encounter with Jesus, an individual is called to believe in Christ and follow him. People are called to participate in God's redemptive work through belonging to the family of God, the Church, and through joining the work of the Holy Spirit in the world. The Father is already at work in the world sustaining and wooing humankind, while the Spirit moves creatively. Although believers are universally called to work according to their abilities and station, sometimes, albeit rarely, they are called to a very specific type of work. Finally, through the course of their lives, followers of God are called to more than one type of work; whatever form their work may take in any given season, they are called to a life of service to God in Christ.[2] How one works—honestly and

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[1] This paper is dedicated to my maternal uncle, Julian Brantson Mitten, who entered his eternal rest on November 23, 2022. Uncle Julian was a shining light to many of what God can do through a person with a disability. About Julian B. Mitten, from his obituary: "[Julian] attended local schools and participated in the 1977 graduation ceremonies at Bradley-Bourbonnais Community High School. As an adult, Julian lived in Latham, Watseka, Libertyville, and Bradley, Illinois. He attended College Church of the Nazarene University Avenue in Bourbonnais where he excelled at greeting and hugging. He loved to travel and had flown to Ontario, CA, Atlanta, GA, Kansas City, MO, and Orlando, FL. He enjoyed vacations with his dear friends, the Remole family, in Missouri and Georgia every summer for over 40 years." Before retirement, Julian worked at the Kankakee County Training Center and enjoyed participating in the Everyone Cares Camp on the Chicago Central District for many years of his life. His example was an inspiration for ministry to people with disabilities in North and South Korea and Beijing, China.

[2] William Messenger, "Calling in the Theology of Work," *Journal of Markets &*

excellently—and the attitude in which one works are much more important than the specific type of work one is engaged in.

From a theological standpoint, human vocation is connected to the idea of divine calling and purpose; God has created each of us to do meaningful and important works in this divine drama we find ourselves in. All persons were created to make a significant contribution—particularly by virtue of being in relationship with God and through specific "doings," which, aided by Christ, bring fulfillment to the larger story of God's redemption of humankind. Thus, vocation is the doctrine that God is at work in the world through individuals who, in cooperation with his Spirit in them, allow God "to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose"[3] for the sake of God's creative, sustaining, and redemptive works on earth. When identified and accepted, individual vocations take on a clarified focus, such that individuals live out a specific calling and engage in a specific area of passionate interest, regardless of the occupations or job responsibilities he or she holds.

Furthermore, God, who said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over . . . all the creatures that move along the ground,"[4] did not leave any person outside of his loving care and intention. Seeing that every individual is made in the image of God, then it follows that those who exhibit some form of disability were made to reflect God for his glory. Our discussion of vocation/calling and work for persons with disabilities will include its significance for persons with mental, physical, and developmental disabilities, with the goal of uncovering the role that work plays in contributing to a sense of self-worth in the individual.

Through exploring the *Imago Dei* in persons with disability, this researcher will uncover aspects of the divine purpose in individuals with disabilities in our churches and society and highlight the larger, meaningful

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Morality 14, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 171–87.

　　　[3] Philippians 2:13, 14, all Scriptural citations are from the NIV.

　　　[4] Genesis 1:26.

contributions they were designed to make when given the right opportunities. Because persons with disabilities exist in every society, it is our assumption that answering these questions from a biblical perspective will have implications for the meaning of life for people of all cultures. Answers to these questions will lead us to a theology of work for persons with disabilities, with a particular emphasis on those with intellectual disabilities.

The Value of Persons Living with Disability

This author agrees with R. Paul Stevens, who asserted that "God is providentially involved in our lives, so we are not a collection of accidents."[5] Along with the psalmist, we declare that no one is a random collection of accidental firings of DNA, neurons, muscles, or organs. Every person is uniquely and beautifully created for a wonderful, awe-inspiring purpose that God determined, including his or her personality, strengths, and weaknesses.[6] Augustine affirmed this when he wrote, "There is no life which is not of God, for God is supreme life and the fount of life."[7]

However, for many Christians, the presence of a disability in the life of a loved one evokes questions about the wisdom and goodness of God. Parents, especially, have questioned whether their child's disability was the result of a past sin or a means for God to teach him or her a lesson. Persons wrestling with the seeming cruelty of raising a child with a disability and the individuals themselves will naturally bring to light questions of God's Sovereignty, benevolence, and permissive will.

In truth, we are all vulnerable and dependent creatures. The line between ability and disability is often fuzzy and imprecise; it is social convention that determines what is normative. "Non-disabled and disabled persons are caught up in networks of dependencies, relationships without

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[5] R. Paul Stevens, *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Vancouver, B.C: W.B. Eerdmans ; Regent College Pub, 1999).

[6] See Psalm 139:14-16.

[7] Thomas E. Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion: A Theology of Disability and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Brazos Press, 2008).

which participation in life activities considered normal would be impossible."[8] Thus, we can confidently say that no one is perfectly equipped in all areas of life, whether physical or intellectual, and all of us have deficiencies in specific areas.

In comparison to a perfect, awesome God, all persons have some form of relative disability. For example, my friend with mild cerebral palsy was bullied as a child due to his slurred speech and unsteady gait. In my childhood, I was bullied for wearing thick glasses and having a constant stuffy nose due to allergies. As an adult, my friend with cerebral palsy is a whiz at computer software, whereas I struggle to make technology work for me. My late uncle with Down's syndrome certainly had less anxiety in social situations than I do, and he could recite the birthdays, death dates, and wedding anniversaries of dozens, even hundreds, of people he considered his friends. In contrast, whether through preoccupation or poor memory, when I walk into a room of my own home to retrieve a particular item, I often forget why I'm there. As we age, our bodies and minds wear out, even if our spirit soars. None of us perfectly displays the complete image of God, either cognitively or physically. From a biblical view, we are all broken individuals affected by sin and its effects, and we are all in need of healing and restoration.

This is not to minimize or deny the struggle of those individuals who bear more apparent "disabilities," defined by the inability to function physically, mentally, and/or intellectually at normative levels. Recent social movements admirably emphasize the unique abilities, as opposed to disabilities, of those with medically diagnosable disabilities. This emphasis, however, need not abandon the very real struggle of the individuals themselves to belong, thrive, and make meaning of their lives within the context of a society biased toward normative functioning. Exploration of vocation and work as a means to improving self-efficacy and a sense of self-worth may help clarify the purpose for which individuals with disabilities were put on earth.

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[8] Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 47.

Human Vocation for Divine Purposes

God's design for individuals and cultures has always been for flourishing. The Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah 61 clearly declared the future Kingdom message of healing for the brokenhearted and freedom for the captives.[9] As individuals created in the image of God, God declared humans to be his masterpiece, "created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."[10] The primary means by which God performs those good works is through an individual's vocation.

However, human philosophies and systems can diminish the beauty of divine calling and reduce humans to cogs in a machine for the benefit of society. Strict conformity to social norms regarding individual capabilities breeds a self-contempt for the diverse design of the human condition. To be sure, the worth of the individual cannot be derived using a utilitarian, communist lens of his or her purpose on earth. If human mechanisms for productivity or reciprocity in relationships are used as a gauge for human worth, an infinite number of reasons to be disappointed in others arise. Thomas E. Reynolds suggested "legal forms of insuring fairness can neutralize the unique worth of persons, reducing all to exchange equivalency."[11] On the other hand, when the intrinsic precious value of the individual is assumed, love is a possibility in every relationship, no matter how marred or imperfect the relationship began.[12] From a divine perspective, love ceases to be love when defined through a transactional view.

To view persons with disabilities as "less than" or sub-human may be normative according to an earthly (fallen) mindset. Western worldviews that hold up autonomy as the model of healthy functioning, in particular, overlook the reality that each of us is dependent on one another for multiple aspects of human flourishing. Reynolds called this assumption the "cult of normalcy." He asserted that "communities . . . are led to project the fear of

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[9] See Isaiah 61:1, 2.

[10] Ephesians 2:10.

[11] Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 137.

[12] Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 137.

disorder and worthlessness onto others who exhibit bodily qualities that are different and unfamiliar."[13] Our perceptions of human worth and potential have been skewed by widely held conceptions of ability and wholeness versus disability and brokenness. Reynolds continued, "The 'problem' is not the person with the disabilities; the problem is the way that normalcy is constructed to create the 'problem' of the disabled person."[14] However, when viewed through the lens of Scripture, we come to understand that people with disabilities carry no special category, either negative or positive, for belonging to the people of God or for accomplishing good works; they have also been included in the call to divine relationship and vocation extended to every person created by God.

A scriptural view of work does not measure its outcome by its complexity or simplicity. We do not evaluate a vessel based on what we want it to do; it must be evaluated according to the purpose the Divine Artist created it for. Timothy Keller has reminded us, "The gospel frees us from the relentless pressure of having to prove ourselves and secure our identity through work, for we are already proven and secure. It also frees us from a condescending attitude toward less sophisticated labor and from envy over more exalted work. All work now becomes a way to love the God who saved us freely; and by extension, a way to love our neighbor."[15] The Potter molds the clay; it is not for us to direct the purpose others were created for, but rather to seek the Creator's highest purpose for them.

Next, we turn to the Scriptures themselves to discover God's purpose for individuals with disabilities and to deal with the potentially problematic interpretations of ceremonial laws when read from a normative worldview.

Worth of the individual in the Old Testament

There are few mentions of disability in the Torah, and the passages that do

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[13] Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 73.

[14] Reynolds, *Vulnerable Communion*, 73.

[15] Timothy Keller and Katherine Leary Alsdorf, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work* (New York: Penguin Books, 2016).

mention it could be categorized as naming only visually identifiable [physical] disabilities.[16] A Jewish reading of the Torah would conclude that disability could quite possibly be the result of individual disobedience to the covenantal relationship between God and Israel. While this represents an incomplete reading of the Old Testament's view of disability, such a view could potentially be ascertained from passages in Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

The only mention of disabled persons in Leviticus is in chapter 21:17-23, where priests with disfigurements were prohibited from entering the Holy Place because Yahweh's holiness required service from persons who were whole and undefiled. The disfigurements mentioned in this passage named blindness, lameness, mutilations of the face or limb, a broken foot or hand, hunchback or dwarfism, a blemish of the eyes, an itching disease, scabs or crushed testicles. These were all referred to as "blemishes," symbolizing ritualistic impurity, not moral impurity. Thus, for the purpose of keeping the Levitical Holiness Code for priests to minister before the altar of God, it was necessary to exclude those with such disabilities from service in the Holy Place. It should be noted, however, that priests with disfigurements were allowed to minister everywhere else in the Tabernacle, just not in the holy sanctum. They were also included in partaking of the sacrificial meals offered.[17]

In addition to Leviticus 21, Deuteronomy 23:1 prohibited anyone with crushed or mutilated testicles from entering "the assembly of the LORD." Scholars have pointed to this as a ceremonial law that referenced Yahweh's disgust for the pagan practice of emasculating males to serve as eunuchs in his sanctuary. However, Isaiah 56:3-5 assured us that those who had been emasculated and were determined to be obedient to Yahweh did, in fact, belong to his people.

Deuteronomy 28:21-68 listed the curses the LORD would bring upon Israel if they did not obey him in times of prosperity. While the majority of

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[16] Amos Yong, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church: A New Vision of the People of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).

[17] Yong, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church*, 19.

the curses named diseases that would befall Israel when the people diso-beyed, verse 61, read from an ableist perspective, could give way to the be-lief that disabilities were included in the curse for disobedience. However, the vague language naming "every kind of sickness and disaster not re-corded in this Book of the Law" has clearly not provided sufficient evidence upon which to formulate a theology of disability as being synonymous with divine curses.

From a strictly Old Testament perspective and what Amos Yong desig-nated a "normate" Christological view,[18] believers could be led to conclude that there was truly something "defiled" or sinful about persons manifesting a disability.[19] This would, of course, be in direct contrast to the teaching in Job that a blameless person can become the victim of horrific suffering. However, in the majority world, it is not uncommon for people—including Christians—to hold the view that impairments or disfigurements are direct consequences of the sins of predecessors. For people of these cultures, a person's disability is frequently a matter of profound shame for his or her family and for society in general. This hindrance to flourishing has high-lighted the need for a theology of redemption for disabilities.

In answer to the shame-filled experience for those living with disability, Jeremy Schipper related the Suffering Servant's affliction in Isaiah 53 with the social experience of one with a physical disability or disease.[20] Tradi-tionally, the passage has been applied to the scorn and punishment Christ endured on the cross as he took on the sin and afflictions of the human race. However, this author believes that the experience of having been "des-pised and rejected by mankind," of having been held in low esteem by oth-ers, is biblical evidence that Jesus was indeed familiar with the social expe-rience of a person with a disability. Furthermore, this passage promised

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[18] The "normate" view of Scripture, also termed an "ableist" view, refers to reading Scripture from the lens of able-bodied persons who (unintentionally) apply its meaning to discriminate against persons with disabilities.

[19] Yong, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church*.

[20] Jeremy Schipper, *Disability and Isaiah's Suffering Servant*. Biblical Refigurations (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

redemption for the pain and suffering endured by those with a disability, as it was written, "Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering . . . the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed."[21] Not only did Christ endure what those experiencing social rejection have endured, but he has also redeemed the experience of disability by healing the wounds received when a person with a disability is considered by others as stricken by God. God has not abandoned those with disabilities. On the contrary, He has redeemed the disability and will use it for His glory!

Teaching on Care for the Disadvantaged in Deuteronomy

Israel was herself a premature nation of slaves while in Egypt. Oppressed by a nation stronger than herself, she was helpless to overcome her circumstances on her own. She needed rescue and deliverance from hands that controlled her. Following her rescue from slavery, Yahweh desired that Israel continue to live in dependency upon him. Deuteronomy 7:8 describes that because Yahweh loved Israel and had redeemed them from a life of enslavement to the Egyptians, they were to provide the same care for the vulnerable among them. The fatherless, widow, and long-term foreigner residing by choice among Israel were dependent upon Israel's people for sustenance.

While there are no explicit commands in Deuteronomy regarding care for the disabled, there are plenty of references about caring for the disadvantaged. Those included providing refuge for those who committed manslaughter, prohibition of impartial judgment of civic cases, and commands to show hospitality and to provide generously for the poor. In Deuteronomy 4:41-43, God commanded the Israelites to designate specific cities of refuge for those who innocently caused the accidental death of another. Through providing asylum, God protected the lives of those on whom others would seek revenge.

Deuteronomy 10:17-19 declares that God would show no partiality or accept any bribes; he would treat fairly anyone who would come to him.

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[21] Isaiah 53:4-5.

"He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing."[22] Reflecting God's care for the destitute, Israel was commanded to provide hospitality and care for the fatherless, the widow, and the foreigner residing among them. This passage even goes to the extreme of commanding Israel to **love** (*ahav*) the stranger/foreigner because they themselves had been foreigners in Egypt and knew what it was like to be oppressed and displaced. Furthermore, multiple references in Deuteronomy 1-11 and 27-34 provide kinship for the foreigner who was "within your gates."[23] As an act of remembrance and thanksgiving for the LORD's deliverance out of bondage, the righteous path of obedient Israel was to provide and care for those less fortunate than them.

Interestingly, there has been no explicit mention of intellectual or developmental disability in the Old or New Testaments. On the contrary, an alternative (disability) reading of the Old Testament could determine that infirmities not explicitly condemned or linked to generational sin were covered under the sacrificial system, not because sin was implicated, but because basic provision was made for the fallen, broken state of humans in general. From this perspective, God already made perfect provision for the flourishing of the person with developmental or intellectual disabilities.

Due to the societal disadvantages imposed upon the disabled, God's people who accommodate, include, and even honor those with disabilities among us are akin to King David's bringing the lame Mephibosheth to the royal table and providing for his lifelong needs (a narrative example of God's grace extended to a person with a disability). Such attitudes and behaviors are consistent with the nature of a holy God who shows covenantal *hesed* love to His people and is an accurate Kingdom orientation toward persons viewed by society as the "least of these."

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[22] Deuteronomy 10:18.

[23] Mark R. Glanville, Luke Glanville, and Matthew Soerens, *Refuge Reimagined: Biblical Kinship in Global Politics* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2021), 41.

Redemption of Disabilities in the New Testament

Luke's account recalls when, at the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus was called to read from the scroll of Isaiah a prophecy about his purpose as Messiah. On that day, Christ announced that the Sovereign Lord had anointed him to preach good news to the poor, release for the prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, and *to set the oppressed free*. Thus, Jesus went about Judea, Galilee, and the Decapolis healing every disease and sickness and exorcising demons from the afflicted. There were multiple accounts of Christ's healing people with physical maladies: the lame, those with skin diseases, the blind, the deaf and mute, and even raising young men and women from the dead. At the time of their healing, Christ restored the ostracized to their community; he commanded healed lepers to show themselves to the priest and to offer the required sacrifices. For the woman with the issue of blood, he publicly declared her healed. The delivered demoniac was commanded to return to his hometown and to tell his friends and family what the Lord had done for him. Interestingly, there were no accounts of anyone being healed of an intellectual disability by Jesus.

John 9 tells of the encounter in which Jesus healed a blind man whose impairment was, according to Jesus, due to no one's sin, not his own or his parents' sin, but so that the works of God might be displayed in his life.[24] His subsequent healing gave Jesus an opportunity to condemn the refusal of the religious leaders to admit their own spiritual blindness and condemn the injustice of accusing persons with disabilities of sinfulness "at birth." Once the healed man was expelled from the synagogue, Jesus found him and challenged the man to believe in him, the "Son of Man," a title Jesus used to refer to Daniel's prophecy but also to identify himself with the human condition. Jesus frequently lifted up those bowed low under the weight of human oppression and physical maladies. He must not have considered those with intellectual disabilities in need of healing because, if he had, there would surely be accounts of such encounters.

In his first letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul wrote of what the Corinthians had once been at the time of hearing the message about Christ:

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[24] See John 9:3.

"Not many of you were wise by this world's standards, not many were influential, not many were of noble birth . . . But God chose the foolish things of this world, and the despised things, and the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him."[25] Amos Yong makes a case for understanding "the things that are not" as a typology applicable to those with intellectual disabilities.[26] Wrongly viewed as pathetic by the majority population and frequently regarded as more pitiful than those with physical impairments, persons with intellectual disabilities have been stripped of all status in societies that esteem autonomy and self-determination. In collective societies that derive honor from conformity and intellectual achievement, the status-lessness of the intellectually disabled is even more pronounced. God's design for the Church was that no one should be able to boast of what he or she had or had not received: neither status nor physical strength, social connections, nor human accomplishments.

According to the Apostle Paul, Christ's death on the cross revealed the foolishness of the human powers that seek to determine who should be regarded as admirable or desirable. In contrast, God chose the ones the world considered foolish to manifest his great grace and beautiful handiwork. Paul's gospel declared that we are all equal partakers of God's grace to us in Christ Jesus.

Illustrations of Vocation for the Disabled

What contribution do disabled persons have to make to the overall good of society? Before we embark on a discussion of vocation for the disabled, we must recognize that it will look different depending on the gifts and capacities of every individual. Nevertheless, this does not diminish the importance of vocation for fulfilling an individual's purpose in God's mysterious plan. Thus, a balanced perspective of human flourishing for persons of diverse abilities must consistently take into account dual aspects of being and doings. Furthermore, our treatment of the subject of vocation and work for disabled persons must begin with loving individuals unconditionally

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[25] 1 Corinthians 1:26-29.

[26] Yong, *The Bible, Disability and the Church*, 99.

apart from any expectations for his or her doings and how those doings benefit us. Reynolds reminds us:

> Love is life-giving generosity, a compassionate regard that draws near and attends to the beloved . . . with his or her good in mind. Such generous concern requires that we adjust or even give up our hold on reality as we see it and open ourselves to the unfamiliar, the strange, perhaps threatening presence of another without imposing conditions that restrict or exclude their own capacities and ways of being.[27]

In addition to this, research has shown that work placements matching an individual's capabilities have undeniably contributed to a sense of self-worth for those with disabilities. Rosalie Torres Stone and colleagues noted that "studies on U.S. adults with significant disabilities have shown that work enhanced self-esteem and feelings of belongingness."[28] While Torres Stone studied individuals with psychiatric disabilities (mental illnesses that impeded normal functioning in daily life), her observations hold implications for persons with physical and developmental disabilities.

Torres Stone and her colleagues' study of young adults aged 16 to 30 years old measured the extent to which work impacted their participants' sense of self-worth. The outcome was noticeable: "For adults with psychiatric disabilities in the U.S., Norway, and Sweden, work offered a sense of identity, a boost in self-esteem or self-worth, and structure to their daily lives.[29] The participants' age group was a developmentally "distinctive" time for establishing a foundation for long-term career trajectories, and positive work experiences of the participants helped them to discern their own in-

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[27] Reynolds, Vulnerable Communion, 116.

[28] R.L. Freedman and S.L. Fesko, "The Meaning of Work in the Lives of People with Significant Disabilities: Consumer And Family Perspectives," *Journal of Rehabilitation* 62 (1996): 49–55. Cited in Rosalie A. Torres Stone et al., "The Meaning of Work for Young Adults Diagnosed with Serious Mental Health Conditions," *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal* 41, no. 4 (December 2018): 290–98, https://doi.org/10.1037/prj0000195.

[29] Torres Stone, "The Meaning of Work," 291.

terests and talents. Financial reward and independence were other important aspects of work for these young people.[30]

Beyond a sense of self-worth and financial independence, work provided community for the individuals. "Adults diagnosed with psychiatric disabilities reported that employment provided social contact, a sense of belonging and promoted friendships, and connection with others and society, even in cases where individuals felt isolated and unhappy at work."[31] Work provided social engagement, as opportunities for socializing were fewer after high school, and participants felt isolated without the natural environment and structure of school.[32] At a time when young people were establishing new social networks, the workplace became a place for mutual camaraderie.

Torres Stone's study reported that having a job was linked to a higher degree of functioning. For Hispanic individuals diagnosed with mental illness, work assignments even became a step to recovery as they provided a channel for coping with their disability, and the social networks it created helped to improve their symptoms.[33] Work also provided participants with the ability to shift from recipient of help to "helper" identity, which promoted recovery and provided a sense of normal integration into society. Conversely, not having a job was linked to poorer mental health and lower subjective physical health. Additionally, work meant financial independence from family support, and a steady income provided a sense of stability and predictability.[34]

Holding a job helped participants gain a sense of importance and purpose beyond oneself. In fact, participants seemed to want to prove those wrong who held prejudice against those with mental disabilities. It gave participants an area to be productive and kept them active and engaged,

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[30] Torres Stone, "The Meaning of Work," 291.

[31] Torres Stone, "The Meaning of Work," 291.

[32] Torres Stone, "The Meaning of Work," 294.

[33] Torres Stone, "The Meaning of Work," 294.

[34] Torres Stone, "The Meaning of Work," 293.

which was seen as the better alternative to staying at home, passing their time in idle pursuits. Work gave structure to their day and prevented boredom. It meant being part of a greater society and giving back to others. It even provided an opportunity to help those with lesser abilities than themselves. Getting along with co-workers gave a sense of enjoyment and happiness.

Holding a job helped those with psychological disabilities gain social identity by proving to others that they were productive members of society. Torres Stone and colleagues reported, ". . . many young adults cited the important opportunity that work provided them to show others that they were capable of acquiring and keeping a job despite having a mental illness. For some young adults, having a job specifically enhanced their self-esteem and self-confidence."[35] For mature adults, the additional piece of holding an identified occupational position (for example, head of purchasing, elected union representative, or assistant director) was the main source of their acquired positive self-image rather than just having a job.

Self-efficacy, or the belief that one has the ability to accomplish the goals that have been set before him or her, is particularly enhanced through work. The researchers concluded that "the present study illustrates that work provides intrinsic benefits to young adults that can be translated into increased levels of self-efficacy and motivators to work."[36] For those already feeling socially marginalized and stigmatized, coming to work provided social support and social activities, which improved both self-esteem and self-efficacy. This, in turn, provided an overall improved sense of psychological well-being.

A bi-vocational pastor in the greater Chicago area shared his reflections on his full-time work with adults with disabilities at Elim Christian Services. At Elim, individuals with disabilities engage in educational services for half-days and in work-related activities for the rest of the day. They also perform monthly service projects in the community. Pastor Ryan wrote:

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[35] Torres Stone, "The Meaning of Work," 295.

[36] Torres Stone, "The Meaning of Work," 295.

One of the jobs we have is packing school supplies that get donated and distributed to local schools, providing [the schools] much needed and desired help getting kids what they need. On distribution days, we send 8-10 of our adults from various program areas to assist in actually handing out the supplies to kids. The absolute joy on the faces of our adults as they give out the boxes they personally helped pack is a sight to behold! That particular "work" that they do provides an opportunity for them to be a blessing to someone else, and who doesn't enjoy being able to be a blessing?

A few weeks after one of our distribution days at a school just down the road from Elim, we had a large fundraising event on our campus. I was at one of the tents when a family with a young girl came by. They mentioned the distribution at their daughter's school, and I asked her if she liked her box of supplies. She was beaming [sic] and said she was extremely happy. I mentioned that I worked with the people who put together the Hope Packs, and she was beaming [sic] even more. It was a pleasure to pass along her thank you's a couple of days later to my class. Work made them a part of something bigger than themselves and beyond themselves.[37]

"In a social model of disability, difficulties experienced by individuals with physical disabilities are rooted in social structures rather than physical differences."[38] According to this perspective, an individual's sense of self is influenced by positive interactions with others in his or her social environment. Due to a socially constructed sense of self, regardless of a person's view of self, he or she is likely to need strategies to protect that sense of self

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[37] Email Interview with Rev. Ryan Kuehl, Chicago, IL, December 6, 2022.

[38] Beverley J. Antle, "Factors Associated with Self-Worth in Young People with Physical Disabilities," *Health & Social Work* 29, no. 3 (August 2004): 167–75, https://doi.org/10.1093/hsw/29.3.167.

from negative images held by the people around them.[39] The above litera-
ture suggests that work assignments, regardless of the complexity of tasks,
add a sense of accomplishment, and work communities contribute to a
sense of purpose for those with limited abilities.

When my uncle with Down's syndrome was able-bodied (before his ill-
ness caused physical decline), he delighted in coming home to my grand-
parents' or parents' home from his usual group setting on weekends or hol-
idays. His first tasks upon arrival were ones he enjoyed: gathering up the
trash and sweeping the front porch. Sometimes, you could see him putter-
ing around in the guest bedroom where he stayed, rearranging items there,
going through mail and the family calendar in the kitchen, or recycling
trash. Although he had his own bedroom at the group home where he lived,
there was a sense of ownership when he stayed with family. He was encour-
aged to stay busy, whether through household tasks or through doing his
"homework,"[40] as it gave him a sense of belonging and purpose. He also
reveled in the money he was making at his workshop job.[41] As a young teen,
he served as guest book supervisor at my parents' wedding, a role that
suited his gregarious nature, which he often recalled with pride in the years
to follow. Later, he served as guest book supervisor at a friend's wedding
since he excelled at meeting and greeting.

There is no limit to the tasks that persons with disabilities can perform
when creativity is applied. Appropriately leveled tasks have the potential to
bring joy to the individual as well as his or her family. Antle recommended
that social workers "develop interventions that build on the natural

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[39] Antle, "Factors Associated with Self-Worth," 173.

[40] Uncle Julian's "homework" was a writing activity with notebook and pen, in
which he repetitiously wrote down names and important dates of loved ones. He also filled
up calendars in the house with the same. He could remember the important dates of
hundreds of friends and family. In this way, he was truly gifted.

[41] Uncle Julian went to the Kankakee County Training Center, where he and his
housemates worked on contracted projects, similar to those which Elim Christian Services
receives.

strengths of families and their children with physical disabilities."[42] It is important to "challenge notions of life with a disability as tragic, painful and difficult" and to "help young people with physical disabilities build esteem-enhancing opportunities and broaden their network of support beyond their family." Work communities broaden the network of support for people!

A career exploration program was implemented with 55 learners with special needs[43] to determine the effect on the individual's confidence toward moving from high school into a career.[44] Participants chose their desired workplace, performed work duties at the workplace for four days, received feedback from their supervisors, and participated in Occupational Therapy group sessions in which they discussed their apprehensions about work. The therapy sessions also reinforced the work skills they had practiced and effective ways of interacting with people at the worksite.

Two of the participants interviewed evaluated the success of the program after it ended.[45] Even though their typical academic performance was less than average and they both lacked social skills in the school environment, both had performed well at work. The combination of being allowed to choose the workplace they wanted to work in, coupled with the absence of negative expectations from their supervisors and co-workers at the workplace, resulted in a positive experience for both interviewees. Thus, each participant started at their work with a "clean slate" and was able to perform well. The occupational therapist who guided the participants also put few expectations on them that could lead to failure, which helped to bolster the participant's overall positive experience.

Van Niekerk commented on this low-stakes model: "This program and its success are indicative of the value of a well-chosen activity, pitched at

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[42] Antle, "Factors Associated with Self-Worth," 173.

[43] Two case studies of individuals in the author's report presented with ADHD symptomology.

[44] Matty van Niekerk, "A Career Exploration Programme for Learners with Special Educational Needs," *Work (Reading, Mass.)* 29, no. 1 (2007): 19–24.

[45] Van Niekerk, "A Career Exploration Programme," 23.

the correct level of functioning as well as unconditional positive regard . . . The outcomes of the program evidently gave the students the benefits of self-determination and internal locus of control and this experience could help them with better career choices."[46]

Similarly, Pastor Ryan's experience supervising adults at Elim Christian Services affirmed the value of appropriately chosen activities for contributing to a sense of self-worth and accomplishment for persons with developmental disabilities:

> In March of 2020, Elim shut down due to COVID and remained closed until mid-July [2020]. In the gap ... I filled in at one of the larger facilities in need of help, which gave me a glimpse into their home lives and routines....

> Their workplace is a place for a larger collection of friendships which expands their world. Coming to Elim provided purpose for their routine and when that was gone it was very difficult for them. When I was there, I was routinely bombarded with questions about other Elim staff and about when we would open back up. They were disconnected from routines and rhythms that provided purpose and brought [a sense of] fulfillment/accomplishment.

> While not every adult we work with views coming to Elim as 'coming to work,' there are quite a few who do. There are a few who regularly talk about being ready to come to work and being a good worker. They routinely ask when the work projects like Hope Packs or bean packaging will start back up.... They are very proud of what they do and are always ready to share how many bags they filled or boxes they made for the day.[47]

Activities matched appropriately to individuals' interests and abilities

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[46] Van Niekerk, "A Career Exploration Programme," 23.

[47] Email Interview with Rev. Ryan Kuehl, 2022.

were essential for improving a sense of self-worth and self-efficacy.

Finding Vocation with the Disabled

For every community that serves the disabled, the creation of strong social relationships and spiritual communion are potentialities. Whether the communities formed are residential or daytime workshops or recreational settings, the intrinsic rewards of working with persons with disabilities are not for the disabled only; there is deep fellowship gained by faith-filled, able-bodied employees who learn with and from the disabled. One model institution that fosters working alongside the disabled is the L'Arche, an international federation of communities for developmentally disabled adults for the purpose of spiritual communion between residents and caregivers.

L'Arche describes itself as a network of communities that are "connected to each other through friendships and the sharing of common values and practices. They are integrated into their neighborhoods and contribute to their surroundings through a multitude of relationships that they foster."[48] At L'Arche, those with cognitive or developmental anomalies are viewed spiritually as equal partners capable of ministering to those without disabilities.[49] The model allows caregivers to meet the physical needs of the disabled while dwelling with those with disabilities (whom they call "the poor"). It affords an opportunity for the "poor" to meet the spiritual needs of caregivers.

Kevin Reimer, a developmental psychologist, commented on the compassion movement exemplified by the ethos of L'Arche, considering the emotional and physical taxation required of those in the caregiver role: "L'Arche provides an astonishing context for the study of moral action—a movement of compassionate exemplarity in the tradition of Mother Teresa. [Caregivers and residents] participate in an unexpected communion framed

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[48] https://www.larche.org/about-larche/.

[49] Kevin S Reimer, "Unexpected Communion: Purpose, Vocation, and Developmental Disability," *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 65, no. 3 (2013): 199–201.

by the redemptive potential of the cross."[50] Spiritual service to one another (both caregivers and the disabled) was performed in the course of daily routines, work projects, and leisure activities, as well as regular times of corporate worship. The author commended this model for those drawn to its spiritual model of mutual service in community: "The great secret of L'Arche is readily transferable, even to incipient developmental scientists such as myself."[51] Similar models of joint work life, service, and worship in residential settings are worth considering for those with severe disabilities and for caregivers who desire its simplicity.

Vocation among the disabled strengthens the social identity of those who engage in it. God created us for relationship and functionality in mutual relationship. The relationship of helper and "helpee," in which "helpee" is never able to give back, is a dysfunctional view of human nature and of God's design for work to bring fulfillment and self-worth to humans. Regardless of one's ability or disability, one-way relationships that foster complete dependency are not God's way of human flourishing. The supporting member of a helping relationship, including the primary caregiver, must not be the only one helping, lest the caregiver miss out on his or her own flourishing.

While it is certainly true that some humans are more dependent on others, such as infants, the elderly, or those with severe disabilities, there is always a contribution made to the relationship by the more vulnerable member that must be acknowledged and even cultivated.

In the most extreme cases, such as in the situation of caring for a person in a coma, the act of caring for a person who cannot care for him- or herself reminds us that every person is made in the image of the self-giving God and cared for by God Himself, but also by the larger community.

Implications for the Church

Disabled persons are called to relationship with God in the same way that

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[50] Van Niekerk, "A Career Exploration Programme," 199.

[51] Van Niekerk, "A Career Exploration Programme," 201.

non-disabled persons are. As God is no respecter of persons, He equips members of the Body of Christ with various giftings. Disabled persons in the Church must be considered equal participants in the life of the community, just as children and the elderly are and as the economically poor and foreigners are. Not only are we to extend welcoming hearts and arms to those affected by disability through Christian hospitality, but we must also seek ways to make church life more accessible to them.

Finally, we must consider how we might best employ the unique giftings of the disabled.

Pastor Ryan at Calvary Nazarene Church in Chicago believes that establishing community with the disabled can add to the richness of the fellowship of believers in churches. He writes:

> When it comes to work, especially the work of the church, I think of a potluck where everyone has something to bring to the table. There's something for everyone to do and some way for people to invest themselves in a way that is shared with others and is a blessing. It doesn't take a whole lot to accomplish that. I don't think every church can pull off some sort of special needs ministry, but every church can find creative ways for special needs adults to use their gifts and abilities in ways that bless the life of the church. The need to serve and be a blessing isn't a unique or special need. Lots of people in churches are trying to find where they belong and finding a work that brings out and highlights a person's abilities as a contribution to the greater Body is a huge help.[52]

In addition to valuing the unique contributions of individuals with disabilities, we must recognize the special graces they bring to the fellowship. As leaders, it is easy to lean toward two extremes: either we see the person as incapable of contributing, or we are overly cognizant of how an individual's capabilities might enrich the church. This diminishes the value that a person's presence among us—his or her "being"—affects the whole body.

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[52] Email Interview with Rev. Ryan Kuehl, 2022.

Every person brings a specific gift to the church, and we must be patient to discover it and make space for the opportunity to see him or her use it.

Engaging in relationships with those with disabilities teaches us what it is to be poor in spirit and to hunger and thirst after God's justice. We learn what it is to "change and become like little children" so we, too, may enter the Kingdom of Heaven.[53] Jesus promised that if we welcome "one such child" in his name we welcome Christ Jesus himself. This admonition extends to those who have childlike spirits, namely, those with intellectual disabilities.

We have already seen that persons with disabilities are socially isolated and looked down upon by the majority culture. Paul's instructions to the Corinthian church described how we are to show special honor to the parts that lack it.[54] "But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other" (1 Cor. 12:24-25). Thus, thinking of persons with disabilities as the "less honorable" parts of the Body needing special honor is an entirely appropriate theology of disability. However, let us be clear that individuals with disabilities are not less honorable because they have less to contribute; it is because of the reality that they are frequently overlooked, hidden, or regarded as "less than" that qualifies them for greater honor!

Conclusion

We have looked at how God intended humans and cultures from the very beginning for flourishing and for our vocations to be lived out in good works to society as part of that calling. Persons with a disability are no less indicated in the theology of vocation, as they are created in the image of God and thus have been ordained for "good works," which God prepared for them to do. Those good works should not be received on the basis of productivity; rather, the contributions of persons with disabilities must be

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[53] See Matthew 18:3-5.

[54] See 1 Corinthians 12:21-25.

equally viewed through the lens of "beings and doings" and not judged according to their complexity or even popularity.

In reality, the presence of those with disabilities among us, and intellectual disabilities in particular, demonstrates what is most important for salvation: simple faith and repentance. Their presence reminds us that Jesus taught us that we must change and become like little children if we are to enter the Kingdom of heaven.[55] It is the mutual fellowship in Christ that helps us to give and receive divine love and to experience union with the Body through his Spirit.

Accommodating those with disabilities among us, making our church buildings, services, and activities accessible to those with varied abilities models Christlike attitudes and Kingdom community. Even more important than accommodation, however, is the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in our spiritual and social life as believers, considering and treating them as equal partners in the grace of God and equal contributors to the healthy fellowship of the Body.

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[55] See Matthew 18:3.

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An Assessment of Korean and Chinese Classrooms
from the Perspective of Paulo Freire's Banking Model of Education

Encheng Jin

Introduction

In his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* Paulo Freire argued that "Education is suffering from narration sickness."[1] Freire reasoned that a narrative system characterizes education as suffering from narration sickness inside and outside the school.[2] By this, he means that teachers talk about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable. While looking into this, I realized Freire's "Banking Model of Education" theory could be a good assessment tool for evaluating Chinese and Korean classrooms because I have studied in both contexts. In the "Banking Model of Education," teachers recognize students as knowledge receivers. Students gain knowledge like depositories as a teacher deposits information in the classroom in a top-down relationship.[3] In order to assess this educational method, it is necessary to understand the features of Chinese and Korean classes and the related study of teachers and students in different cultural settings. I believe this research can inspire my future teaching career.

Features of the Chinese Classroom

After the Cultural Revolution, Chinese educators aimed to innovate

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[1] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 2005), 71.

[2] Connor K. Warner, "A Cure for Narration Sickness: Paulo Freire and Interdisciplinary Instruction," *Journal of Thought* 47, no. 4 (2012): 39, doi:10.2307/jthought.47.4.39, 71.

[3] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 72.

teaching methodology from past traditional Chinese educational methods. The relationship between teachers and students in the conventional Chinese class was unilateral, with teachers requiring students to recite the Chinese Confucius text. Schoenhals insinuated that a strong demand for educational transformation can be found in the Chinese educational department's manuscript.[4] The point was to nurture students so they could actively speak in the classroom. It was suggested that rote learning be removed from the educational system. The new educational strategy in China aims to evoke and stimulate curiosity and preserve natural liveliness in the classroom.[5]

From an interview with a middle school teacher, Schoenhals suggested that Chinese class settings should connect to current learning trends. Although his study was in the 1990s, similar phenomena still exist in Chinese classrooms. According to Schoenhals, facilitators in China aim for students' oral development to strengthen their oral expressive skills. He recognized in his research that Chinese teachers used a competitive approach with students since it can stimulate enthusiasm in the class.[6] Although Chinese teachers tried to develop the students' oral expressive skills, the goal for Chinese students was to gain more points in the college entrance examination to get into a decent college, which is the case even today.[7] Since studying at a good college is almost the only way to change the status in the social hierarchy, the college entrance examination determines a person's future. Because of this, teachers should give students more knowledge in the class to change their lives.[8] Some teachers do not

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[4] Martin Schoenhals, "Encouraging Talk in Chinese Classrooms," *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (1994): 399–412, doi:10.1525/ aeq.1994.25.4.04x0529i, 402.

[5] Schoenhals, "Encouraging Talk," 402.

[6] Schoenhals, "Encouraging Talk," 403.

[7] Nectar Gan, "Record 13 Million to Sit 'World's Toughest' College Entrance Exam," CNN, Last modified June 7, 2024, https://www.cnn.com/2024/ 06/07/china/china-gaokao-2024-record-number-intl-hnk/index.html.

[8] Gareth Davey, Chuan De Lian, and Louise Higgins, "The University

like this way of speaking in the classroom and discourage it because of the college entrance examinations and the culture.

In the culture of China, teachers play a superior role and students an inferior role.[9] It is culturally appropriate for teachers to give more knowledge to students because teachers are superiors. Tan questioned whether learner-centered education is an appropriate method of education. From the educational perspective based on the philosophy of Confucius, education should be a teacher-directed and learner-engaged process. The power in education is primarily in the teacher, but teachers should not abuse this power.[10] This approach makes teachers superior in the classroom. This approach also happens in Korean classrooms, where teachers are knowledge givers, and studying in a good college is essential for teachers and parents.[11] Therefore, speaking in the classroom is discouraged in both Korean and Chinese contexts.

Competition is one of the common phenomena in the Chinese classroom and has been an issue for Chinese education. The Chinese Central Government made suggestions on teaching strategies from 1986 to 2014. These suggestions included creating a democratic classroom atmosphere, promoting healthy competition, and fostering a sense of

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Entrance Examination System in China," *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 31, no. 4 (November 2007): 385–96, doi:10.1080/03098770701625761, 385.

[9] Yufeng Wang et al., "The Influence of Teacher–Student Relationship on Chinese High School Students' Academic Motivation for the Ideological and Political Subject: The Mediating Role of Academic Emotions," *Frontiers in Psychology* 14 (January 8, 2024), doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1329439, 2.

[10] Charlene Tan, "Teacher-Directed and Learner-Engaged: Exploring a Confucian Conception of Education," *Ethics and Education* 10, no. 3 (September 2, 2015): 302–12, doi:10.1080/17449642.2015.1101229, 309.

[11] JeongA Yang and Charlene Tan, "Advancing Student-Centric Education in Korea: Issues and Challenges," *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher* 28, no. 6 (April 29, 2019): 483–93, doi:10.1007/s40299-019-00449-1, 488.

student collectivity.[12] Furthermore, there was a study about the competitiveness of the classroom in non-Western environments. Lam and others from the Department of Psychology at the University of Hong Kong researched around fifty grade-seven students from Hong Kong secondary schools.[13] They randomly divided a two-hour Chinese typewriting course into a competitive and a non-competitive class environment. In this two-hour class, students from the non-competitive environment performed less than those from the competitive environment. Moreover, when students failed to achieve the task or lost the game in a competitive environment, they had worse results on a self-evaluation. In the long term, education like this is unethical, even though competition is a method to make students enthusiastic and engaged in the classroom.

Features in Korean Classroom

Baek and Choi studied the relationship between the classroom environment and academic achievement in English courses in Korean classes. The results of their study showed that schools want warm relationships and task-orientated accomplishments in the classroom.[14] In Korea, most students expect to build a warm relationship, but both students and teachers believe that academic achievement is also strongly emphasized in the classroom in Korea. Thus, the conclusion on the correlation between academic achievement and school environment involves the teacher's engagement

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[12] Xu Zhao, "Educating Competitive Students for a Competitive Nation: Why and How Has the Chinese Discourse of Competition in Education Rapidly Changed within Three Decades?" *Berkeley Review of Education* 6 (2016), doi:10.5070/b86110043, 12.

[13] Shui-Fong Lam et al., "The Effects of Competition on Achievement Motivation in Chinese Classrooms," *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 74, no. 2 (2004): 281–96, doi:10.1348/000709904773839888, 293.

[14] Sun-Geun Baek and Hye-Jeong Choi, "The Relationship between Students ' Perceptions of Classroom Environment and Their Academic Achievement in Korea," *Asia Pacific Education Review* 3, no. 1 (2002): 125–35, doi:10.1007/bf03024926, 126.

and endeavor. From this perspective, organizations should establish models to provide an environment that positively affects student academic achievement.

Based on Kim's research of Korean educational development institutions, Korean students lacked enthusiasm in the classroom in 2003 because of the absence of attention and passion from 1997. Students lost their passion for studying in primary and secondary school classrooms. Teachers and students both strongly agreed about this prevalent phenomenon. This situation was a crisis in the Korean school system. Kim recognized that the crisis came because of a lack of engagement in the classroom and because of the learning service centers, which were " cram schools" known as Hagwon.[15] Most Korean students had already learned their knowledge at cram schools before they learned it from public schools.[16] These organizations or private tutoring require more money from parents, who still send their children to these organizations because they fear their children will fall behind.[17] Kim mentioned that the reason for going to cram is because public schools are lacking in quality.

Three factors were causing the crisis in Korean public school classrooms. First, public schools cannot allow students to choose their subjects according to their interests. The second factor is the need for preparation before the class begins. Third, there is no meaningful interaction between the teachers and students. The solution provided in

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[15] JeongA Yang and Charlene Tan, "Advancing Student-Centric Education in Korea: Issues and Challenges," *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher* 28, no. 6 (April 29, 2019): 483–93, doi:10.1007/s40299-019-00449-1, 489.

[16] Haebin Jung, "How Cram Schools Perpetuate the Cycle of Poverty in South Korea," *The International Young Researchers' Conference*, 2021, doi:10.34614/iyrc2021f22, 5.

[17] Ashley Taylor, "The Impact of Hagwon (Private Tutoring Centers) on High School Students' Academic Performance in South Korea," *Journal of Advanced Research in Education* 3, no. 4 (July 2024): 1–10, doi:10.56397/jare.2024.07.01, 5.

this article is, first, schools should reduce the responsibilities of teachers to necessary tasks like classroom preparation; second, teachers need to accept the different opinions of students and build meaningful relationships with them; and last, students should have more options when it comes to the selection of subjects.[18]

Korean Students in Western Culture

Heo and others compared Korean classrooms to classrooms in Finland by interviewing exchange students from these two countries. They pointed out six differences between these two environments.[19] The six themes include teacher autonomy in teaching, authenticity in learning, relationships between teachers and students, learning assessment, student engagement, and student well-being. With the first theme of teacher autonomy in teaching, Finnish teachers have more volition in selecting the learning contents, activities, and teaching assessments. Korean teachers, however, are directly controlled by the national curriculum and are given texts developed by schools and metropolitan and provincial Offices of Education in addition to being government authorized. However, Finnish teachers have autonomy in the teaching method and learning materials.

Furthermore, authenticity is essential for Finnish education since the learning outcome and purpose are related to reality. Korean classrooms focus mainly on theoretical and abstract understanding, so most of the class might not be related to reality. Regarding assessment between these two countries, Finnish teachers put more effort into understanding students by reflecting in a formative way. Korean teachers tend to judge students' performance with exams, which generally cause anxiety and stress. It needs

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[18] JeongA Yang and Charlene Tan, "Advancing Student-Centric Education in Korea: Issues and Challenges," *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher* 28, no. 6 (April 29, 2019): 483–93, doi:10.1007/s40299-019-00449-1, 489.

[19] Heeok Heo, Irja Leppisaari, and Okhwa Lee, "Exploring Learning Culture in Finnish and South Korean Classrooms," *The Journal of Educational Research* 111, no. 4 (2017): 459–72, doi:10.1080/00220671.2017.1297924, 469.

to be noted that student engagement is deeply rooted in both classrooms. Nevertheless, in Korean settings, the authors are worried about education-related happiness. Both contexts strongly care about students' well-being to support after-school time.

Their article offers five suggestions: autonomy, engagement, authentic learning content and resources, reflection on the learning process and results, and wellness in learning.[20] It was implied that there would be positive outcomes for the teachers if they had a specific range of autonomy in implementing curriculum, arranging learning content, selecting materials and teaching methods, and the freedom of assessment. For students, these are important when trying to engage deeply in other contexts. Finnish and Korean teachers have different opinions on engagement because of their historical backgrounds. Finnish teachers prefer practical activities and real-life tasks, while Korean teachers deliver realistic content in the classroom, allowing students to engage deeply in learning. Authenticity is essential for obtaining learning outcomes. Continuous reflection on the learning process is important for students since it reconstructs and reorganizes knowledge and experience. Students' well-being is important not only from the perspective of economic conditions but also related to the relationship between students and teachers. Hence, creating a comfortable atmosphere in the classroom will make students feel comfortable and safe, allowing them to gain knowledge and engage more in their learning.

Chinese and American Classroom

Control in the class is culturally influenced. Another study provides materials that need to be considered more deeply about control in the classroom. From quantitative research on Chinese and American classrooms, Lam and others discovered that control in the classroom is not

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[20] Heeok Heo, Irja Leppisaari, and Okhwa Lee, "Exploring Learning Culture in Finnish and South Korean Classrooms," *The Journal of Educational Research* 111, no. 4 (2017): 459–72, doi:10.1080/00220671.2017.1297924, 470.

a problem for Chinese students.[21] Compared with American students, Chinese students do not feel socially or emotionally detached from their teachers. However, in terms of how American and Chinese students relate to their teachers, less controlling classes show higher levels of student-teacher relatedness. Even though control does not affect the relationship between the students and teachers in the Chinese context, it somehow affects their motivation when students feel controlled in class. Another fact is that a better relationship between teachers and students will encourage students' motivation to internalize teachers' guidance, expectations, and values. Therefore, the feeling of being controlled is different according to the closeness of the relationships, and students might feel controlled or manipulated when they do not have a good or close relationship with the teacher. Culture plays a big role since China is an ethnic culture, and America is individualistic.[22] School administrators should understand how control relates to culture and managing the classroom.

Foreign Teacher in China

Liumei Wang developed classroom suggestions after she used qualitative and quantitative research to analyze certain factors of around one hundred students and twenty-five foreign teachers using questionnaires and interviews. The foreign teachers had cultural, linguistic, relational, and psychological struggles.[23] The differences between people from high and

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[21] Ning Zhou, Shui-Fong Lam, and Kam Chi Chan, "The Chinese Classroom Paradox: A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Teacher Controlling Behaviors," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 104, no. 4 (2012): 1162–74, doi:10.1037/a0027609, 1171.

[22] Qianzhi Zhai, "A Study on the Differences of Teacher-Student Relationship in Chinese and American University Classrooms," *International Journal of Education and Humanities* 6, no. 3 (January 11, 2023): 147–50, doi:10.54097/ijeh.v6i3.4769, 148.

[23] Liumei Wang, "Foreign English Teachers in the Chinese Classroom: Focus on Teacher-Student Interaction," *The Journal of Asia Tefl* 8, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 73–93, 81.

low contexts can also explain these struggles. A person from a high context struggles in a low context environment because of non-verbal communication.[24] Students felt less motivated by teachers from different cultural orientations because of learning habits. Foreign teachers perceived that the character of Chinese students tends to be shy, and teachers were sometimes even surprised that students preferred learning English alone. Some Chinese scholars already perceived shyness as a problematic behavior in the classroom.[25] However, from the perspective of Wang, learning oral English is different from the Chinese context. In China, students are taught to be quiet, and their learning styles are opposite of the expectations of the foreign teachers in the classroom.[26] Chinese students might feel embarrassed when answering questions alone in front of other students. From the teachers' perspective, most students appear less motivated because of a lack of authenticity in learning English. Learning English is a future job-oriented class for these students, and interacting with teachers is not a priority because getting high exam scores is their goal. A higher score indicates the right to access higher education.[27]

However, some scholars from China have different thoughts on the issue of quietness in class. Jinyan Huang recognizes that North American educators have stereotypes about Chinese students. These educators wrongly label Chinese students as quiet, inactive, and passive learners.

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[24] Edward T. Hall, *Beyond Culture* (Garden City: Anchor/Doubleday, 1977), 111.

[25] Robert J. Coplan et al., "Shyness and School Adjustment in Chinese Children: The Roles of Teachers and Peers," *School Psychology Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (March 2017): 131–42, doi:10.1037/spq0000179, 133.

[26] Liumei Wang, "Foreign English Teachers in the Chinese Classroom: Focus on Teacher-Student Interaction," *The Journal Of Asia Tefl* 8, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 73–93, 81.

[27] Heidi Ross and Yimin Wang, "The College Entrance Examination in China: An Overview of Its Social-Cultural Foundations, Existing Problems, and Consequences," *Chinese Education & Society* 43, no. 4 (July 2010): 3–10, doi:10.2753/ced1061-1932430400, 4.

They might be passive and inactive because they cannot access classroom interactions or are ignored and forgotten. The wrong labels are because of different cultures.[28]

Additionally, students might feel embarrassed if there is no positive feedback from their teachers.[29] Therefore, a lack of confidence in speaking in the classroom is common among Chinese students. According to Wang, the reason why Chinese and Western students are different is because of different learning styles.[30] The author compared the learning styles of Socrates and Confucius to illustrate the different phenomena. For Socrates, learning is through discussion, but for Confucius, it is to recite what the teacher said. However, it has been recently noted that there is a misunderstanding about one of the texts of Confucius' education.[31] Nevertheless, to help students interact in classrooms, schools should provide language laboratories for classes, including newspapers, magazines, and journals, to build an environment of interaction. Small group discussions are a better method of encouraging students to speak.

Overcoming Cultural Difference

It seems obvious that the environment of Chinese and Korean students differs from that of Western students because of cultural differences. Yu

[28] Jinyan Huang and Peter Cowden, "Are Chinese Students Really Quiet, Passive and Surface Learners?–A Cultural Studies Perspective," *Comparative and International Education* 38, no. 2 (December 1, 2009), doi:10.5206/cie-eci.v38i2.9137, 78.

[29] Bob Fungula, "Oral Corrective Feedback in the Chinese EFL Classroom," *DiVA* thesis, 2013, https://www.diva-ortal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A693017&dswid=5712, 15.

[30] Liumei Wang, "Foreign English Teachers in the Chinese Classroom: Focus on Teacher-Student Interaction," *The Journal Of Asia Tefl* 8, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 73–93, 81.

[31] Charlene Tan, "Beyond Rote-Memorisation: Confucius' Concept of Thinking," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 47, no. 5 (February 14, 2014): 428–39, doi:10.1080/00131857.2013.879693, 436.

and Zou tried to understand how a local student would act differently in an intercultural environment.[32] They found that the students who participated in the class in an international environment were more active than in the local circumstances. Hypothetically, the authors considered a variety of difficulties because of different languages and cultural barriers. However, they figured that culture and language were not the issue. If all the students are in an open and trusting international environment and they are encouraged by their teacher to speak, then they will actively express their own opinions. In the class structure, if a teacher provides an opportunity to speak, like a report within a group, students will actively report, even if not in their first language. Practicing skills with the instructors and peers also plays a big role when a student studies in intercultural circumstances. Therefore, the main difficulty for teachers in an international environment in the classroom is creating an open and trusting environment and encouraging students to speak. The insights here can be related to the theories of Parker Palmer, "The Circle of Trust,"[33] and Jack Mezirow, "Ideal Teaching Environment,"[34] which can be applied to create a trusted and open environment.

Mehra suggests that in the classroom, teachers should let students nurture several managerial behaviors that can be used in the global business market and help overcome cultural differences.[35] Researchers recognize that

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[32] Tracy X. Zou and Janet Yu, "Intercultural Interactions in Chinese Classrooms: A Multiple-Case Study," *Studies in Higher Education* 46, no. 3 (2019): 649–62, doi:10.1080/03075079.2019.1647415, 660.

[33] Parker J. Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life: Welcoming The Soul and Weaving Community in a Wounded World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass), 2004, 147.

[34] Jack Mezirow, "An Overview on Transformative Learning," essay, in *Lifelong Learning: Concepts and Contexts* (London: Routledge, 2006), 90–105, 92.

[35] Satish Mehra and Munsung Rhee, "On the Application of Quality Management Concepts in Education," *International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management* 26, no. 4 (2009): 312–24, doi:10.1108/02656710910 950324, 320.

the goal for students is to be nurtured as persons who can actively cooperate within their supply chains. This cooperative model helps develop students' skills and quality management. A teacher must understand the importance of cooperation, teamwork empowerment, and facilitating management.

According to Mehra, cooperative learning has two concepts: cooperative behavior and motives, which need cooperation and participation to act cooperatively. This method needs students' passionate engagement, cooperative responsibility, and the teacher's care about competency development according to the student's learning style. Several types of research on these concepts not only resulted in students' feelings, motivation, and actual achievement, but also the fruit of the cooperative approach lies in the collaboration on the system alignment and improvement of the delivery process. Mehra concluded that there are four themes after the pilot research: empowerment to decide the learning process, creation of a teamwork environment, self-management teams, and self-confidence and teammate trust. His research between US and Korean students shows empowerment in deciding the learning process. US students prefer to be in charge in the early stages, but Korean students like to build emotional ties before building a team. When it comes to creating a teamwork environment, US students feel capable once they bond in a friendly manner, unlike Korean students, who have a cautious approach.

Regarding self-management of teams, US students seek to evaluate teams from time to time because of the apprehensiveness of their teammates, which leads to good or bad in the team's long-term stability. If a manager shows continuous learning and coaching in a team's operation, Korean students feel satisfied, which indicates eagerness to learn. As for self-confidence and teammate trust, on the one hand, US students show confidence towards their teammates. However, they have wrong assumptions that might be because of the loose approach of the team members. On the other hand, Korean students show confidence in getting to know others' needs and prefer peer-based evaluation. All these are the findings of the teaching methods in the business classroom, including those of both undergraduate and graduate students.

<div align="center">Assessment</div>

In his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire argued that learning should start with reflection and action in what he called praxis. Freire also mentioned the "Banking Model of Education," which means teachers recognize students as knowledge receivers who only gain knowledge from the teacher. In this model, the relationship between the teacher and students is top-down.[36]

In 1 Corinthians 13:13, Paul proclaimed faith, hope, and love. Freire also mentioned these three essential themes in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*:

> Faith is *a priori* requirement for dialogue; feeble faith cannot create trust. No dialogue exists without hope; hopelessness is a form of silence. Love is the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself. Oppression, overwhelming control, is necrophilic; it is nourished by the love of death, not life.[37]

Interestingly, most students in Korea and China recognize that receiving knowledge from the teacher, like in the top-down banking method, is common. It is like "Spoon-Feeding Education" from the perspective of Joseph Raelin and requires knowledge to be transferred to current or future users.[38] Control of teachers over students in Chinese and Korean classrooms is normal based on their cultural background. This approach is like Freire's "Banking Model of Education" and prevents liberation in both the classroom and society.[39] Freire recognized that the classroom is a place where teachers and students together reflect the present problems in the status quo, and the model of the classroom mirrors a model of society. The school's responsibility is to nurture students who can lead themselves or the organization in which they are involved in liberation. The

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[36] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 72.

[37] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* 77, 89, 91.

[38] Joseph A. Raelin, "The Practice Turn-Away: Forty Years of Spoon-Feeding in Management Education," *Management Learning* 40, no. 4 (August 27, 2009): 401–10, doi:10.1177/1350507609335850, 402.

[39] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* 73.

process of liberation is to understand where oppression comes from, reflect on it, and provide the resolution to overcome it. The ideal way to liberation is to utilize dialogue to resolve the problem caused by oppression instead of pouring out presuppositional knowledge to the student.

The outcomes of Freire's theory and the classroom in Chinese and Korean contexts are quite different. Regarding the Korean and Chinese environment, the goal is to pass the exam for acceptance at a better college because students can then find a decent job. For example, in Korea, the SKY (Seoul University, Korea University, and Yonsei University) are important for Korean teachers and parents. In China, Tsinghua University and Beijing University are among the best universities. Most parents and teachers prefer that their students go to a better university.

Most Chinese and Korean universities use presuppositional methods in their classes by using an obstructive and theoretical approach to students instead of trying to solve real or authentic problems. Eastern and Western cultures differ in education because, as some scholars say, teachers have authority over students in Confucianism, and most Western teachers use a Socratic approach in the classroom.

However, according to the study, Chinese or Korean students are not uncomfortable or are unaffected when teachers use the top-down relationship according to their culture. They recognize that the most important thing is the relationship between the teachers and the students. In Chinese and Korean culture, the closer the relationship is, the better the outcome will be in the classroom. But this kind of point could be a problem for Paulo Freire because if a student or a member of society carelessly builds close relationships with teachers or dictators, making close relationships with them is a way to become an oppressor, which leads students or a member of society to oppression and dictation instead of liberation.[40]

Culture plays a significant role in class. For example, when an American teacher teaches in a Chinese class, it is difficult to start the interaction. However, a study shows that when Chinese students study in an

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[40] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 62.

international context with other international students around them, they will interact with others if they are well encouraged and guided and the learning environment is open and trustworthy.

Conclusion

Paulo Freire's theory can help improve different teaching methods in Chinese and Korean contexts. The study shows that the relationship between student and teacher affects the educational results in a classroom. Korean and Chinese students will be encouraged if they have closer relationships with their teachers. Culture also plays a significant role in teaching and learning in the Eastern context. Collaborative learning can be one of the methods used in the international environment. Therefore, in application to my context, setting up an open, safe, and comfortable environment for students and building close relationships with students are significant roles as a facilitator of learning.

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A Theological Perspective of Incarcerated Inmates as *Imago Dei*

Irene Yang

Every human being is created in the image of God, and this includes those mentioned in Isaiah 61:1-2 and Luke 4:18-19: the poor, the captives, the blind, the prisoners, and the oppressed. Jesus claimed in the Lukan passage that the Spirit of the Lord had anointed him to proclaim the good news to these groups of people. Since Christians are his followers who have received the Greatest Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 to go and make disciples of all nations, to baptize them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and to teach them to observe all that he has commanded us, this means Christians should also preach the good news to these groups of people. Hence, there is a need to learn to look at them through the eyes of Jesus with compassion and love. Among the groups are prisoners who have committed a crime and hurt others and society. In the eyes of the law and of people, they deserve to be punished. However, Jesus included them among those he loves and cares for, which can be a challenge for his followers.

This article intends to establish the connection between restoring incarcerated inmates and God's compassionate nature of extending his grace and mercy to restore fallen humanity to his original design. It discusses the theology and the psychology of personhood, the theology of the Kingdom of God, the role of the church in jail and prison, and the role of the jail and prison ministry. All the names of the inmates quoted in this article were withheld by mutual agreement.

Theology and Psychology of Personhood

The first section of this article discusses the theology and the psychology of personhood, intending to integrate both studies to understand human beings. Hence, it is important to know the definition of both terms. The *Zondervan Dictionary of Bible and Theology Words* defines "theology" as

"the study of God" (DeMoss and Miller 2002, 241). According to Kirwan, "psychology is the science of mental processes and behavior" (1984, 24). Since God is the Designer of human beings, including their mental processes and behavior, it is worth understanding human beings from both perspectives. For this article, the term "personhood" refers to "human beings."

The Theology of Personhood

The average citizen considers prisoners as outcasts of society with no hope for a new life. They regard these criminals as inferior human beings who deserve to rot in prison. However, God has a different way of looking at these incarcerated inmates. God created them in the same way he made everyone. Therefore, the theology of personhood that applies to the average citizen also applies to the incarcerated inmates.

Imago Dei is Relational

The Bible tells us (Gen 1:27) and every Christian is aware of the fact that humanity is created in the image of God or the *imago Dei*. According to Balswick, King, and Reimer (2005), *imago Dei* connotes the idea that humanity possesses some qualities of God, particularly his relational quality as manifested in the Trinitarian relationship (31). Genesis 2:18 says, "It is not good for man to be alone," suggesting that even before the fall of man, God already singled out the importance of man's social needs" (Kirwan 1984, 38). Therefore, humans as *imago Dei* are relational, and they are a unique creation living in a relationship with God and with others. Furthermore, God's goal in creating humans is for them to establish a relationship with him and with other humans. "We were intended to be related to our Creator and other human beings in a unique and fulfilling way" (Kirwan 1984, 38). Therefore, if humans are to live according to the intention and design of God, they must strive to build a good relationship with God and with others. Thus, forming relationships is the goal of human development.

According to De Mesa (1991), the description of a lowland Filipino's inner self (*loob*) depends on how he or she relates with others. He or she is said to have a good inner self (*mabuti or magandang loob*) if he or she

relates well with others. Hence, the inner self (*loob*) "is a relational under-standing of the person in the lowland Filipino context" (45). Likewise, an incarcerated inmate, as *imago Dei*, is also relational and needs to build a good relationship with God and with others.

Free Will

Balswick, King, and Reimer (2005) acknowledge the consistent belief of Albert Bandura that human beings do not simply react passively to external stimuli but can think reflectively and plan their actions with his model of the reciprocating self (80). From this point of view, we can assert that when God created humans, he gave them the free will to choose to obey or disobey him; therefore, humans are active agents, having the capacity to make choices and decisions. Given this, humans are responsible for the consequences of their choices and actions. They will be personally accountable to God for these choices and actions. The reason why God allows humans the freedom to choose and to decide is for them to engage their free will actively in responding to God and not as mechanistic robots programmed to accept God's love and mercy. God desires to establish a meaningful reciprocal covenant relationship with humans. Hence, in application to incarcerated inmates, humans are free to choose whether to resort to criminal activities or not.

Fallen Nature

Adam and Eve's choice of disobedience in the Garden of Eden indicates humanity's weakness and fallen nature. Hence, Christian theology supports the concept of sin and depravity and that mankind is born with the original sin and needs salvation (Clouse 1993, 362). According to Pazmino (1997), humans' fallen nature affects their reasoning capability and other faculties, such as the cognitive and the affective, that ultimately influence the course of their actions (199). Hence, the average citizen and criminal possess the same kind of fallen nature. In terms of relationships, Kirwan (1984) claims, "After the fall, not only was the need for close relationships magnified, but the relationships which remained had become severely distorted" (38).

Restored by Grace

Although humans have fallen short of God's glory and broken their relationship with their Creator, they still have the chance to restore such a relationship through the gracious act of Jesus Christ. "When Adam and Eve fell, they lost their sense of identity. Nevertheless, God had a plan to restore it. The Scripture unfolds this plan of redemption, which culminates in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ" (Kirwan 1984, 93). A positive response to what Christ had done for humanity, dying on behalf of their sins, will lead to the restoration of humans' identity and their relationship with the Creator. Through the response of faith to the person and work of Christ on the cross, humans can recover their lost identity. If there is no such response of faith, any attempt to recover human identity will prove futile (93-94).

Capable of Transformation to Forgive, Heal, Rehabilitate, and Reconcile

Even though humans are by nature sinful, they are capable of experiencing conversion and transformation into the persons God designed them to be (Pazmino 1997, 192). This applies to everyone, both criminals and non-criminals. Balswick, King, and Reimer (2005) believe that there is an internal tension in humans with their being *imago Dei* struggling against their sinful nature (86). Psychology gives a very clear explanation of how internal tension brings about transformation within a person. According to Loder (1998), the human spirit has a transforming potential (55-59). This transforming capability is due to its complex being, which includes the cognitive (head) and the affective (heart) aspects. Both these aspects are actively functioning within a person and must be in balance with each other or be in a state of equilibrium. A state of disequilibrium between the two results in internal conflict or struggle. Though this is a psychological explanation, it remains a fact that it is very much part of God's creative design, and it is God who built into humanity the aspects of the head and the heart with the capacity to strike a balance between them. Kirwan tries to explain the connection between cognition and emotion by presenting these physiological facts.

The brain's role regarding our feelings is complex. The human being is the only member of God's creation with frontal lobes, which give us the

unique ability to reason logically, worship, and pray. Frontal lobes, with their capacity to reason, are dependent on the involuntary or limbic system of the brain, the center of our feelings. The rational part of the brain, the cerebrum, overlays and is dependent on the lower part of the brain, the limbic system, and the brain stem. The reason for belaboring these physiological facts is to show that the cognitive and the emotional or affective aspects of the brain are inextricably bound to one another. "Facts" and "feelings" are part of the same process. The brain does not separate feelings from facts or facts from feelings (Kirwan 1984, 50).

Loder (1998) explains that when the inferior aspect strives to pull alongside the dominant aspect, it will cause people to realize that there is a need to reevaluate their actions (55-59). It is after self-evaluation that they can accept healing and thus encounter God. An illustration would be the crime of murder. When a person is provoked to anger, his or her affective aspect fires up, making it the dominant one, which influences his or her choice of committing murder. Only when the inferior aspect, in this situation, the cognitive, catches up does the person rationalize the consequences of his or her action. As a result, the person is capable of admitting his or her misconduct, maintaining clarity of mind, understanding the situation, forgiving his or her aggressor, accepting healing, and pursuing reconciliation.

Moreover, Loder also contends that it is important for both the head and the heart to be in balance with each other to avoid false visions. When the cognitive aspect is too strong, the person may only accumulate head knowledge without personal experience, which will lead to genuine transformation. The person may only know and remember the facts without any significant relevance since there is no personal encounter or situation that will validate the information that he or she has obtained. On the other hand, if the affective aspect is too strong, the feeling has no firm foundation or basis to stand on. Such feelings may be subjective and may just come and go. This may lead the person to develop false faith. The outcome can be a temporary transformation, and people may tend to switch back to their old ways when they face a crisis that is beyond their capacity to bear. Consequently, the cognitive and the affective need each other. Moreover, there is a need to hook both the head and the heart on God's Word for a stable transformation.

In conclusion, since "human uniqueness in God's creation is primarily due to the capacity for covenantal relationships" (Balswick, King, and Reimer 2005, 24), people can transform and reconnect with God and with others through the process of forgiveness, healing, rehabilitation, and reconciliation. Thus, transformation takes place when people encounter God and are capable of restoring relationships.

Encountering God

A person can achieve an authentic process of transformation only through an encounter with his Creator—our almighty God. "Those whose *loob* (inner self) is pure, serene, and controlled have 'special powers' granted to them by Christ" (De Mesa 1991, 46). It is through going back to the Creator's original intention and design of creation that one can live with real peace and harmony with God, with the self, and with others.

Loder (1998) suggests four subdivisions for spiritual development that process transformation, focusing on a person's internal condition. The first process is *awakening* to the fact that there is a gap between people and God due to the fallen nature of humans. This process takes place when people realize that they need God in their lives. The second process is *purgation,* or the dying of oneself to move closer to God. This process liberates people from their blindness before their awakening. The third process is *illumination,* when people start to develop faith in God and accept his gift of salvation. At this stage, a person becomes secure in God and willingly becomes what God has called him or her to be. The last process is *unification* or the spiritual union with Christ, which becomes people's ultimate longing (48-54). Slobodzien (2004) and Kirwan (1984) refer to Loder's first and second processes of *awakening* and *purgation,* respectively, as the stage of justification. They identify the third stage of *illumination* as the stage of sanctification and the final process of unification as the stage of glorification.

Restoring Relationships

The process of transformation that Loder (1998) suggested unifies humans with God (48-54). However, the process does not end there because the stage of unification also aims to restore human relationships. God's concept of relationship is both vertical and horizontal. Matthew 25:35-46 records that God made it clear that we cannot have a vertical relationship with him

without a horizontal relationship with our brothers and sisters (Smarto 1993, 116). Hence, a person is supposed to reciprocate not only with God but also with fellow human beings. For Balswick, King, and Reimer (2005), a healthy reciprocating relationship must respect diversity in unity (31). This means that each person must have the space to be who he or she is and to express his or her uniqueness yet be in a harmonious relationship with each other, promoting unity. The Holy Trinity is the best model since each member of the Trinity is distinct from the other as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, yet they are one and in unity. Concerning God's relationship with humans, God allows humans to enter into an intimate relationship with him where they can freely admit both their strengths and weaknesses and accept his healing. Despite human weaknesses, God continues to initiate an unconditional covenant with him and waits for him to respond. God strengthens the covenant relationship by extending his mercy and grace to humans. God models the four elements that nurture reciprocal relationships for us to imitate: unconditional covenant/commitment, grace, empowerment, and intimacy.

Personhood and the Incarcerated Inmates

Theology contends that the sinful nature of humans weakens them in resisting the temptation to sin. Instead of giving regard to the standards of God, humans reduce their sense of morality to their personal preferences (Colson 1999, 61). This is what is happening in today's society. The "what makes you feel good" subjective standard now replaces God's objective standard for right and wrong. In government, "what is legal" becomes the right thing to do. Society has set aside moral and biblical issues. Divorce, homosexuality, premarital sex, abortion, etc. become the norm. For this reason, we are today witnessing broken families, negligent parents, abandoned children, jobless people, and all sorts of societal illnesses. People trapped in these harsh situations most likely end up committing criminal activities to survive. Hence, crime is a result of human sinful nature.

Despite their sinful nature, God created people to be transformative and extends his grace and mercy so they will have personal encounters with him, rebuild their broken relationships with him, and undergo the process of transformation, restoring God's original design for them. Some inmates stated,

I thank the Lord for accepting me despite my past so that I may have a second chance to live my life according to his teachings. I do not regret my arrest because I deserve this. I am not in a hurry to get out of prison because I know that while I am still here, the Lord is still working on me and preparing me for my release.

When I get out of here, the first thing that I will do is look for a church so that I can continue to grow and change for the better. I will also come back to the Correctional Institute of Women to help the Association of Baptists for World Evangelism in ministering to the other prison inmates just like how they ministered to me.

I now realize that if it was not because of imprisonment, I could not have known Christ.

The Psychology of Personhood

God created man and woman in his image and loves and established an intimate relationship with them, yet the fall of man and woman led them to bear a sinful nature for which God extends his grace to redeem his image in them. "Through the fall, Adam tainted the destiny of all who would follow him. A significant result of the fall is mental and emotional suffering, formally labeled psychopathology" (Kirwan 1984, 38). However, the relationship between God and people can be restored through the death of Christ, and his resurrection brings to us a message of healing and hope.

However, not everyone responds positively to God's act of redemption; therefore, his or her self-image remains distorted. Consequently, it is the task of Christian ministers and educators to help incarcerated inmates acknowledge their need for God's redemption to transform back into the image of God and to restore their relationship with their Creator.

Psychology as a Tool for Understanding Development of Self-Image

Although genuine transformation can only take place through Christian conversion, we must not discount the importance of psychology as a tool for understanding and identifying factors affecting a person's self-image so

that Christian ministers and educators can know how to approach incarcerated inmates in helping strengthen their inner selves. Kirwan (1984) also maintains, "Identifying the unique factors which have shaped a troubled individual's psychological makeup, knowing precisely where that person is, will help the counselor determine which theological points fit the particular situation" (189). Furthermore, Kirwan suggests that God includes the psychological aspect in the design of his creation.

Similarly, in discussing our meaning, purpose, and responses to God, the Bible assumes those principles of psychology that are essential to the definition and understanding of human personality. Studying psychology, which is a God-created category, is therefore legitimate and proper, provided one remembers that it is part of a much larger whole of spiritual laws governing humans that encompass far more than psychology (37).

The Issue of Nature versus Nurture and Human Development

As early as the sixteenth century, several proponents of child development emerged. The theories of John Locke and Jean Jacques Rosseau gave rise to the issue of nature or genetics versus nurture or environment. Locke believes that children's minds are like blank slates that need input from the environment to learn, while Rosseau believes that children are born with the capabilities to create and to learn but that the environment can hamper their creativity and abilities. Both Locke and Rosseau have their adherents who later followed through each of their works, developing several theories on human development (Berk 1996, 10-11). For the sake of looking into the interplay between the environment and the individual self, we will look at some of these theories.

Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory of Human Development

According to Berk (1996), Bronfenbrenner suggests that children "develop within a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment" (27). The innermost and immediate is the microsystem, where all relationships are bidirectional and reciprocal, which means that the environment affects a child's behavior and vice versa. It consists of the home, school and peers, playground, and religious institutions. The next is the mesosystem, which refers to the connections among the

microsystems. The next level is the exosystem, which is the social setting that does not contain the children but that affects their experiences in the immediate setting. These are the extended family members, parents' workplace, family social networks, neighbors, mass media, and community services. The outermost level is the macrosystem, which refers to the values, laws, customs, attitudes, and ideologies of a particular culture. Though the macrosystem is the outermost level, the changes in this system are particularly important because they affect all the other levels (27). Lastly, the chronosystem refers to the dimension of time as it influences the child's environment. This can be the time of the parent's divorce or a parent's death. Children can respond differently based on the age they are in when the incident occurred (Berk 1996, 23-38). Another example of a chronosystem is the worldview the child is taught as the norm, such as the generation he or she is born into.

Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Theory of Human Development

Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory presents the eight stages of human development. According to him, every person encounters an inner conflict at each life stage. The ability of the person to resolve this inner conflict positively or negatively at each stage depends on the individual's interaction with his or her environment. A positive environmental experience will lead to a positive outcome, while a negative environmental experience will lead to a negative outcome (Berk 1996, 17-18).

Hence, Bronfenbrenner and Erikson recognize the crucial role of social interaction in the development of self-image. De Mesa's view also agrees with this contention. "*Loob* (inner self), as man's core, is also an appropriate concept to describe a person in relationship to others because it provides an insight as to what kind of person one is" (De Mesa 1991, 57). Given this, there is a need to develop one's ego strength and moral reasoning ability to counter this effect. Hence, there is a need to explore the work of psychoanalysts Sigmund Freud and Erik Erikson for the building of ego-strength, as well as Lawrence Kohlberg on the development of moral reasoning ability.

Sigmund Freud's and Erik Erikson's Psychoanalytic Theory of Human Development

Sigmund Freud's psychosexual theory presents three portions of the human

personality: the *id, ego,* and *superego. Id* is the largest portion of the human mind, is present at birth, and is the source of basic biological needs and desires. *Id* operates on the pleasure principle and seeks to satisfy a person's instant impulses. The *superego* is the seat of the conscience aiming to conform to the demands of society. The *superego* develops from social interaction and as a person matures. It is at the other end of the continuum and is always in conflict with *id*. The *ego* is the conscious and rational part of the human mind and serves as the mediator between the *id* and *superego*. The task of the *ego* is to make sure that the gratification of the *id's* desire follows reality and is socially acceptable (Berk 1996, 16-17). In their book, *The Problem of Evil*, Colson and Pearcy (1999) also acknowledged the contribution of Sigmund Freud.

In Freud's theory, people are not so much rational agents as pawns in the grip of unconscious forces they do not understand and cannot control. A committed Darwinist, Freud proposed an evolutionary scheme in which our primitive impulses (the *id*) belong to the oldest, most animal part of the human brain, while the rational mind (the *ego*) is a later development from the more highly evolved cerebral cortex (47).

There are times when the *id* must dominate; otherwise, life would be so stiff, rigid, and dull, leading to obsessive compulsion. On the other hand, in some cases, the *superego* must dominate; otherwise, this world would be without order if everyone were free to go his or her own way all the time. Hence, the development of the *ego* must be healthy and strong. Extending the work of Freud, Erikson proposes that negative or positive social experience at each life stage determines healthy or maladaptive development of ego strength (Berk 1996, 17).

Lawrence Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development

However, developing a person's rational portion of personality alone is not enough. It would be best if such reasoning power could progress alongside the advancement of moral understanding. Hence, we recognize the work of Lawrence Kohlberg on the theory of moral development. Kohlberg extended Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development by providing a more complete description of the changes that occur in moral reasoning from childhood to adulthood. According to the theory of moral development, the

same factors that promote cognitive growth also affect the development of moral understanding. He believes that when a person actively struggles with moral issues and notices the weaknesses in his current thinking, it will promote the ability to reason morally. Likewise, when a person advances in perspective-taking skills, he or she will be better equipped to resolve moral conflicts in more complex and effective ways. He or she focuses more on how to reason out his/her moral judgment (Berk 1996, 592-593).

Integration of Psychology and Theology in the Development of Self-Image

From the above discussion, both theology and psychology stress the importance of the self-image. Theologically, God's image created in man and woman is the ideal self-image that everyone is supposed to have. Kirwan (1984) states,

> Let us note Adam and Eve's mental and emotional condition before the fall. At first, they had a clear sense of their own being or selfhood. To put it another way, we could say that they had a strong self-image. Self-identity is basically each person's answer to the question "Who am I?" (74)

Another requirement for establishing a strong sense of self-identity is a frame of reference through which the self and the world can be accurately viewed. The particular framework within which Adam and Eve had been created enabled them to see God, the world, and themselves perfectly. For they had been created in the image of God, God was their reference point in everything (76).

Unfortunately, the fall of man and woman distorted their original image of God. According to Kirwan (1984),

> Adam and Eve lost their sense of self because they rebelled against God. They were no longer united with God in fellowship and love. God's image in them was defiled, although it still existed. God expelled them from his presence, and so they lost God as their reference point. They had to look to themselves for some kind of integration. Their egos became the axis

> around which their thinking, feelings, and actions revolved. Their identity, no longer God-centered, became self-centered. The human being instead of God became their standard of truth. Such truth is only assumptive at best, not absolute (78).

After the fall, Adam and Eve's perceptions changed. No longer did they have an absolute knowledge of reality; their vision of reality was blurred. The distortion was both external (what they saw) and internal (how they felt); it encompassed everything (79).

Psychologically, Bronfenbrenner and Erikson claim that a human's social interaction with the environment affects his or her self-image. The environment, as a reflection of one's self-image, is most likely a distortion. From the psychological perspective, rationalization is a way of changing and correcting a person's belief system. We can acknowledge the contribution of Kohlberg's moral reasoning theory and the Psychoanalysts' (Freud and Erikson) suggestion for strengthening the rational ego part of personality.

From the theological perspective, Christian conversion must be the foundation for the development of the self-image involving the processes of justification, sanctification, and glorification. The process of justification (repentance and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior) restores the image of God in a person and his or her relationship with the Creator.

Therefore, the contribution of psychology can help Christian ministers and educators understand the factors affecting self-image, such as one's environment, and how to help the person build healthier ego strength. Understanding these factors helps Christian ministers and educators plan how to approach the person and what method of evangelism to use to help change one's belief system. The lifetime journey of sanctification (transformation into Christ-likeness) is a lifetime of training on how to deal with one's sinful nature, such as anger, bitterness, jealousy, revenge, and immorality, based on a Christian rationale. Understanding that one's moral reasoning ability depends on cognitive maturity encourages Christian ministers and educators to consider the cognitive level of a person and how to help the person advance to the next higher level of moral reasoning based

on biblical teachings, thus developing the ability for Christian moral reasoning. This will enable Christian ministers and educators to know how to journey with incarcerated inmates as they undergo discipleship and counseling. The process of glorification serves as the reward for a person's effort to sanctify him or herself, giving him or her the hope of eternal joy.

Hence, religious therapists show interest in integrating psychology and the Bible to help people cope more effectively with their emotional problems. "Through this conversion experience and subsequent Christian Psychotherapy, incarcerated believers are able to receive enough security in the love of God and significance in God's plan for their lives to overcome their past feelings of inferiority and inadequacy for healthy self-image and a future free of crime" (Slobodzien 2004, 48).

Even though theology has considered psychology as a tool to understand human personality, it is still a part of the spiritual laws that govern the human being, as suggested by Kirwan (1984). Therefore, psychology alone is not enough to bring about real transformation because absolute authority and truth are still found in the Kingdom of God. Hence, there is a great need to explore the Kingdom of God.

The Theology of the Kingdom of God

It is important to note four important questions concerning the Kingdom of God. The first question is, *what* is the Kingdom of God? The word *kingdom* indicates sovereignty; hence, the Kingdom of God means the *reign or rule of God.* It is, therefore, the complete submission and surrender to the authority of God. Furthermore, according to Stassen and Gushee (2003), the Kingdom of God is about God's performance and people's participation in God's work. It is active and not passive (20-21). This means that God is actively reigning in his Kingdom and that his subjects actively participate in joining him in his reign.

The second question is, *when* is the Kingdom of God? Jesus began his preaching by telling the people to repent because the Kingdom of God is near (Matt 4:17, Mark 1:15). This means that the Kingdom of God has been inaugurated at the birth of Christ, yet its consummation will take place in

his second coming. Therefore, we are living between the inauguration and the consummation of the Kingdom of God, which means that it already exists and is nearby. It is not yet perfect or fulfilled but is in the process of perfection and fulfillment.

The third question is, *where* is the Kingdom of God? A kingdom requires a territory; where, then, is the territorial sovereignty of God? The world is the creation of God. Therefore, his reign is supposed to be in the world, which means that the Kingdom of God has started since the beginning of creation. However, when evil entered the world, it became contaminated, and thus, the Kingdom of God ceased in certain ways to be in the world. In Romans 12:2, Paul commanded us "not to conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." God's reign is absolutely holy and pure; as a result, his Kingdom cannot be of this world, that is, of this worldly order. Since God's Kingdom already exists, it exists in the hearts of his people, who acknowledge his sovereign authority over them. Thus, when these people gather to be involved actively in God's reign, his Kingdom is established. In summary, the Kingdom of God is the reign of God already in process where God's people, in complete submission, respond to his call to participate actively and join God in building his Kingdom.

After establishing the first three questions concerning the Kingdom of God, the last question would be to ask *how* we could build God's Kingdom in a prison facility for the inmates. When God's justice expands throughout society, his Kingdom will also expand. Hence, God's Kingdom can expand in jail and prison by making the conditions of inmates bearable.

Calling for People of God

From the perspective of the prophet, Isaiah 61 is about the restoration of Zion; however, Jesus quoted it as referring to his mission (New American Bible, 1991). Verses 1 and 2 call for the people or servants of God to continue the ministries of Jesus. Verses 3 and 4 listed several caring ministries and mentioned the rebuilding of communities, respectively. Among the caring ministries of Jesus that God's people must continue is to release the prisoners from darkness. Hence, there is a mandate for the people of God

to help the incarcerated inmates see the light through caring for them and rebuilding them, just as how God cares for us and is constantly rebuilding us. The attainment of personal salvation through God's forgiveness and redemption should serve as the starting point in bringing the inmates out of the darkness, transforming them, and leading them to the Kingdom of God (Col. 1:13-14).

The loving care of God's people allows the incarcerated inmates to experience the loving care of God that will lead them to acknowledge their need for God and to accept his redeeming grace, resulting in an intimate relationship with him. Their encounter with God and their experience of a loving faith community will help enable and empower them to rebuild their self-image, find hope for transformation, and allow God to reign in their hearts, establishing God's Kingdom in them. For this reason, the active participation of God's people in the kingdom-building activity of God through transformation is relevant and is a mandate.

God's Performance and Man's Participation

When God created the world, he did not simply create and leave it alone. He sustains his creation by developing and engaging himself intimately with it. Furthermore, God's act of grace after the fall did not simply end with redemption. Instead, he continues to work in us by sanctifying and restoring the world to bring it to perfection. Hence, as God's people, Christians are to join God in his work by building the church and the human community. There must be an integration of evangelism and social action. This entails long-term commitment, just as how God is committed to sustaining his creation eternally. The implication is for jail and prison ministers and workers to integrate their evangelistic mission by paying attention to the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs of inmates. Moreover, the caring ministry to the incarcerated inmates must be a long-term and sincere commitment.

The Role of the Church in Jail and Prison

Pope John Paul II, in the Roman Catholic Council document *Redemptoris Missio,* dated December 7, 1990, has a Latin title, *Ad Gentes,* which means

to all peoples, implying that salvation is for all people (169). It argues,

> Nevertheless, there must be no lessening of the impetus to preach the Gospel and to establish new churches among peoples or communities where they do not yet exist, for this is the first task of the church, which has been sent forth to all peoples and to the very ends of the earth (172).

Likewise, the evangelical document *Lausanne Covenant* (1974) also claims, "We believe that the gospel is God's good news for the whole world, and we are determined by His grace to obey Christ's commission to proclaim it to every person and to make disciples of every nation" (253).

Biblical Response to Sin and Crime

Holt (1993) maintains that God's grace releases us from a life of crime and punishment (141). Therefore, it is crucial to bring God's message of grace and mercy to offenders and nurture the growth of their faith in God, which will set them free from the bondage of sin and crime. This will require the church to engage in a process of evangelism and mentoring. The church's role is to plant the seeds of God's love and word through sharing about God's gift of salvation and to mentor them through follow-up, counseling, Bible studies, etc. However, only God has the power to rehabilitate people because he changes and reforms them from the heart. His love brings hope to the hopeless inmates. This is more effective than building prison cells and thus reduces the crime rate (Colson 1979, 216). In addition to this, the church can help empower the inmates with skills to face the issues of their reentry into society.

The Church's Calling

Nieves (1993) considers Philippians 2:5-8 as the passage that sets forth the essence of biblical compassion, which is to suffer with those who are suffering (67). Nieves also cited passages where Jesus taught compassion in Matthew 18 and Luke 10:33 (69-70). Jesus did not just teach but demonstrated compassion in Mark 1:41, 5:19, 6:34, and 8:2; Matthew 15:32 and 20:34; and Luke 7:13. Therefore, it is an all-encompassing mandate for the

church to be compassionate as well as to do justice because the two go together.

The way Christian workers view and treat inmates will either manifest compassion or aloofness. Christian workers who treat inmates as people who are hopeless and from an inferior class would be aloof to them. However, those who look at inmates as their fellow creations of God in his image but with sinful nature, just like everyone else, will treat them with compassion. There is a need to learn from Jesus as the model of compassion. They must be like an elder brother and sister to the inmates and not act overbearing or use political power over them (Colson 1979, 211). These inmates need not only professionals but also friends who will listen to them and care for them.

The Role of Jail and Prison Ministry

For transformation to take place, Christians need to participate actively in helping address societal issues instead of just sitting comfortably in the church listening to the preaching of the pastors or studying diligently in seminaries and libraries. Moreover, commitment to societal concerns must be long-term and sincere to bring about transformation. Hence, there must be focused effort and energy in ministering to prison inmates. For this reason, the role of the jail and prison ministers is very crucial.

To Evangelize and Mentor

Smarto (1993) promotes the crucial role of jail and prison ministry in addressing the root cause of crime, which is spiritual drought (165). The author presented two principles for effective jail and prison ministry that Perkins advocated. First, there must be indigenous leadership development, and second, there must be Christian community development. The purpose is to address the needs of inmates upon their reentry into society. There must be a Christian community ready to meet their needs and take care of their wounds (117). Moreover, the role of jail and prison ministry is not just to evangelize but to disciple as well. For mentoring to be possible, there is a need to provide halfway houses and transitional living facilities for inmates upon their release. This will allow the opportunity to pair an inmate with a Christian volunteer inside and outside the jail or prison facility to

boost spiritual growth. Therefore, there is a need for different volunteer groups to work together in evangelizing and mentoring (166-67).

To Educate

The hope of the nation lies at the heart of education. Education prevents people from committing a lifetime of mistakes due to ignorance. Juvenile offenders are most likely to have irresponsible and negligent parents who are ignorant of their parenting roles. Without a nurturing environment to grow up in, these youngsters look for parental love and care elsewhere that usually ends in the arms of deceiving crime syndicates who teach and affirm their performance of criminal activities. Education develops in us the skills to observe, think, analyze, critique, compare and contrast, reflect, evaluate, and create. Therefore, with proper education, people would think twice before plunging into marriage, premarital sex, or criminal activities as they analyze and reflect on the consequences they must face afterward. On a larger scale, they would realize the domino effect of their actions could affect the well-being of a nation. However, the term *education* does not confine itself to the four walls of a formal classroom. Education becomes meaningful when it is relevant to the lives of the people. Hence, jail and prison education must look into what is essential in transforming the inmates. Programs must actively engage the inmates in the learning process through application and ultimately prepare them for reentry to society.

To Equip Christian Volunteers

According to Smarto (1993), Christian volunteers need to understand human nature. They need to admit their sinful nature to enable them to empathize with the inmates and to develop compassion for them (166). Furthermore, this will help them be aware of the inmates' needs for love, support, friendships, respect, and esteem besides the physiological ones. Hence, Christian volunteers need to love and respect the inmates as fellow human beings created in the image of God. However, for volunteers to practice these principles, they need training and equipping. Volunteers must have the proper credentials to work with inmates. In addition to this, they need to be accountable to a proper authority.

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2023-24 APNTS Thesis and Dissertation Abstracts

delos Santos, Roldan. "Clothing to Cover Nakedness: A Comparative Analysis of Genesis 2:25, 3:7, 3:10-11, and Genesis 9:21-23." Master of Science in Theology Thesis, 2024.

The book of Genesis records the origin of human clothing. In the account of this book about the beginning of creation, Adam and Eve created clothing made of sewed fig leaves to cover nakedness. Likewise, a second instance is narrated in Genesis, where Shem and Japheth took a garment or piece of clothing to cover the nakedness of their father, Noah. From these two significant narratives, this study draws attention to the purpose of clothing to cover nakedness.

Nakedness is defined etymologically and contextually from the narrations. Shame, fear, and sin were the identified reactions to nakedness. These three associated effects are expounded in this study based on how the narrators and characters perceived them with God's illuminating revelations. An intertextual approach and narrative criticism were applied to analyze the components, usage, and replacement of clothing. The clothing or coverings used by Adam and Eve, Shem and Japheth, and God to cover nakedness were compared in this study to formulate not only a comprehensive but also a collaborative analysis of nakedness in relation to the feeling of shame, a sense of fear and the admission of sin. Comparative analysis is used to produce layered presentations of nakedness, shame, fear, and sin. The sewed fig leaves for Adam and Eve and the garment placed over Noah were initially used as coverings for shame and fear, respectively. But then, God altered the fig leaves with coats of skin to cover the body and deal with sin.

Hence, the conclusion of the study reveals that the purpose of clothing to cover nakedness is to cover shame, fear, and sin. It is finally discovered that determining the form of clothing, the function of clothing, and the ownership of the body are significant considerations in selecting the

appropriate and suitable clothing to cover nakedness.

Gique, Jeanoah Dulay. "Designing a Contextualized Reading Curriculum for the Adult Dumagat of Tala, Mamuyao, Tanay, Rizal." Master of Arts in Religious Education Thesis, 2024.

This thesis delves into the intricate process of designing a specialized reading curriculum tailored specifically for Adult Dumagats residing in Tala, Mamuyao, Tanay, Rizal. Through an in-depth exploration, it uncovers the multifaceted challenges hindering this demographic from acquiring reading literacy skills and underscores the imperative role literacy plays within their community. Moreover, the study thoroughly formulates learning competencies aligned with the Indigenous Peoples Education Curricular Framework (IPED) and to the available resources for the literacy of the adult Dumagats to ensure the curriculum resonates with the cultural context and educational aspirations of the adult Dumagats.

The Contextualized Reading Curriculum for Adult Dumagats aims to promote cultural relevance, empower learners through literacy, contribute to community development, preserve indigenous knowledge, and foster a lifelong love for learning. By addressing these objectives, the curriculum aims to facilitate positive educational outcomes and enhance the overall well-being of the Dumagat community.

By employing a participatory action research methodology, the study actively engaged with the community from September 2023 to April 2024 and utilized qualitative techniques such as focus group discussions and interviews. These methods are complemented by descriptive analysis techniques, enabling the researchers to glean rich insights and perspectives from the participants. The interpretation of gathered data went beyond mere observation, aiming to capture the nuances of the adult Dumagats' experiences through member check and peer review. Member check and peer review can significantly improve the credibility and dependability of a tailored reading program for adult Dumagats. Member check engages adult Dumagats in the curriculum creation, ensuring it suits their needs, cultural background, and language skills, thereby boosting its credibility. Peer

review involves experts evaluating the curriculum for accuracy, relevance, and efficacy, ensuring it meets educational standards and utilizes suitable teaching methods, thus enhancing its reliability. Integrating member check and peer review into the development process can make the reading curriculum more culturally sensitive, linguistically suitable, and educationally efficient, ultimately enhancing its credibility and dependability.

In crafting the curriculum, careful attention is paid to its organization, drawn upon the principles of Rigorous Curriculum Design, integrated with the K12 Curriculum Template, informed by the IPED, and the available resources for the literacy of the adult Dumagats. Furthermore, the curriculum's lesson plans are meticulously structured based on Gagne's Nine Events of Instruction and the Marungko Approach in Reading, integrating both pedagogical excellence and cultural relevance.

To evaluate the efficacy of the developed curriculum, a pilot study employing purposive sampling was conducted, involving adult Dumagat participants. This comprehensive evaluation process ensured that the curriculum not only met the educational needs but also resonated with the cultural values and aspirations of the target community. The culmination of this research endeavor was the emergence of a contextualized Reading Curriculum for adult Dumagats, accompanied by thirty-one crafted Session Guides with Learning Resources included. These educational resources were uniquely designed to address the distinctive educational requirements and cultural context of the adult Dumagat community, thereby fostering a sustainable and inclusive approach to literacy development.

Recommendations play a crucial role in guiding the implementation and future directions of the Contextualized Reading Curriculum for Adult Dumagats of Tala, Mamuyao, Tanay, Rizal. They offer practical strategies for effectively integrating the curriculum within the Dumagat community's cultural context and advocate for broader policy changes to promote culturally responsive pedagogy in education. Furthermore, recommendations highlight the importance of continuous research to assess the curriculum's impact and identify areas for improvement, such as exploring

additional Dumagat cultural materials and translating resources into Filipino for broader accessibility. Future researchers are encouraged to delve deeper into the Dumagat language, literacy rates, and literature and develop additional Indigenous Peoples Education (IPED) curricula tailored to Indigenous communities' specific needs. Ultimately, the impact of the curriculum extends beyond professional satisfaction, fostering a profound sense of purpose and empowerment within the researcher and the Dumagat community as they collectively strive for positive change and celebrate their cultural heritage.

Grijaldo-Pantano, Mary Jubelyn. "The Beliefs of Selected Filipino Christian Nurses Working in Norway on Integrating Prayer in Giving Medical Care to Patients." Master of Arts in Intercultural Studies Thesis, 2024.

This study's primary goal is to explore the beliefs of the selected Filipino Christian nurses regarding the integration of prayer in giving medical care to their patients. The respondents believe that prayer helps patients meet their biological, psychological, social, and spiritual needs, and despite challenges, there are factors encouraging this integration. The study involved ten Christian nurses from the Philippines working in Norway. It investigated the integration of prayer into patient care.

The study utilized Florence Nightingale's holistic person framework (Nightingale 1860; adapted from Dossey et al. 1995) and Beebe, Beebe, and Ivy's self-concept components (2016), employing both qualitative and quantitative data as its design principle. It used focus group discussions (FGD) and survey questionnaires to address four research questions, along with member checks and triangulation to ensure validity and reliability. The survey questionnaire data was analyzed using a weighted arithmetic mean, and MAXQDA software was used to analyze the FGD interview.

Research question one provided the respondents' demographic profile. The study involved six females and four males, aged between thirty and fifty, with a range of employment in Norway spanning two to eleven years.

Research question two examined respondents' beliefs about prayer and patients' biological, psychological, social, and spiritual needs. Respondents believe integrating prayer into patient care will help meet their patients' biological needs, improve the nurse-patient relationship, and fulfill their duty to pray for patients.

Research question three explored the challenges nurses face in integrating prayer in clinical settings. The respondents indicated that religious differences, language barriers, inadequate spirituality training, unanswered prayers, spiritual dryness, and time constraints are some challenges they face in integrating prayer into patient care.

Research question four investigated factors influencing prayer integration in clinical settings. The research participants identified personal testimony, patient appreciation, spiritual training, religious surroundings, and workplace rules and regulations as factors that influence prayer integration into patient care.

Finally, based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were formulated: (1) To the nurses: respect patients' cultural and religious beliefs, respect professional boundaries, understand workplace ethical guidelines, and use translation tools for effective communication. Nurses should also learn the local language, understand Norwegian culture, and use translation apps when interacting with non-native speakers; (2) To the academic community: integrate spirituality and prayer into the nursing curriculum, provide faculty training, and offer spiritual support services for students, including opportunities for prayer, meditation, and reflection; (3) To missions agencies: offer training programs for Christian nurses interested in mission work, focusing on cross-cultural communication and spiritual care, and pair them with experienced mentors for guidance and practical advice; (4) To local churches: facilitate prayer groups for nurses, offer individual or group prayers before or after shifts, and facilitate sessions where nurses can come together to pray for patients, colleagues, and the community.

Grunwald, Sheryl Mae. "Participation, Empowerment, and Spirituality in Armenian Early Adolescents Involved in Community-Based Service Projects: A Case Study." Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation, 2024.

This research explores the interrelationships of participation, empowerment, and spirituality when ten- to thirteen-year-old children who are part of a Nazarene Compassionate Ministries Child Development Center (CDC) in Yerevan, Armenia, engage in community-based service projects. Thirty-two children from one CDC participated in this qualitative research study. Child participation includes involvement in an activity, giving children a voice, or including them in decision-making. The children collaboratively chose, planned, and implemented a community-based service project while the research team observed the process. Then, the children evaluated the projects and their roles in them through focus groups and interviews.

The data showed that when the children were given the opportunity for self-determined community service projects, they were able to participate both by having a voice and being actively involved in every step of the project planning process: choosing the problem, designing the action plan, implementing the plan, and evaluating their work. Using Shier's Centro de Servicios Educativos en Salud y Medio Ambiente (CESESMA) model (CESESMA-UNN 2010; Shier 2015; 2017) as the theoretical framework for empowerment, the study looked at how the research participants perceive empowerment in three areas: development of capabilities and knowledge, creation of conditions and opportunities for empowerment, and personal attitudes and self-esteem.

The children identified capabilities, including practical skills, teamwork, and surprise at what they could accomplish. Conditions included friendships and the support of leaders as they gave the children a voice, guided and redirected them during discussions, encouraged them, and gave them practical support when asked. The children described the changes in their behavior and attitudes and identified the attitudes of happiness, eagerness, initiative, confidence, responsibility, and

accomplishment. Results affirmed the theoretical framework for empowering children in this age group.

Children's spirituality was measured according to Hay and Nye's (2006, 65) categories of spirituality as relational consciousness: awareness sensing, mystery sensing, and value sensing. Awareness sensing was noted through the children's language as they spoke about God's character and their response to God. Mystery sensing was seen as the children spoke of dreams, wishes, or things beyond their comprehension. The children demonstrated value sensing through expressing compassion, kindness, goodness, generosity, gratitude, and love. All three concepts—participation, empowerment, and spirituality—were shaped by doing community service projects. Whether the children spoke of helping others, helping the environment, helping themselves, or helping God, active participation, true empowerment, and spiritual awareness were all present. Cause-effect, rationale, means-end, and attribution relationships were identified. However, the interrelationships were multi-directional, demonstrating there is no simple way to describe them. The concepts co-exist, at times acting independently of one another but at other times woven together.

The study recommends that Nazarene Compassionate Ministries, CDCs, faith communities, and educators be more intentional in including child participatory activities and service opportunities in their programming as a part of holistic development, building awareness, and encouraging children's spirituality in those activities. NGOs and FBOs involved in child participation are encouraged to consider that children are spiritual beings and incorporate spirituality into their conversations.

Thompson, Bradley Gabriel Mark. "Reducing Vulnerability of Young Women Survivors Of Child Sex Trafficking In Kolkata, West Bengal India: A Case Study Analysis." Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation, 2024.

This study aimed to understand the vulnerability of young women survivors of child sex trafficking in Kolkata, West Bengal, India, and to identify effective strategies that prevent re-trafficking and exploitation.

Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological framework was used to understand what factors influence young women survivors to be vulnerable to re-trafficking or re-exploitation and to identify effective intervention approaches to prevent re-trafficking and exploitation of trafficked women. A case study design was used to understand the vulnerabilities of young women survivors of trafficking.

Seven young women aged eighteen to twenty-five years were selected by purposive sampling from in and around Kolkata. In-depth interviews with survivors were triangulated with key informant interviews of NGO leaders and church leaders engaged in anti-trafficking efforts. Interview data was transcribed, translated, coded in NVIVO, and analyzed to provide insight and answer the research questions.

The factors that lead to vulnerability and the trafficking of girls and young women for sexual exploitation include extreme poverty and hardship, a history of early marriage, a history of child labor, lack of safety in the home, lack of education and vocational skills, lack of access to sustainable livelihoods, living in a red-light district, and feeling pressured. In addition, factors like violence in the home, loss of a parent, having a parent in the sex trade, being sold by a parent or family member, and pressure from the family to earn an income by any means. Other community and societal factors add to the vulnerability of being trafficked for sexual exploitation. The COVID-19 pandemic had a severe impact on survivors and their families. Survivors experienced a lack of food, loss of income, loss of jobs, and increased debt bondage, and some were pushed back into engaging in prostitution and were sexually exploited.

Programs need to be prepared for disasters and ready to support survivors in emergency situations. Interventions that survivors said benefited them include vocational training, access to livelihoods, counseling services, family counseling, prosecution of traffickers, community awareness activities to address worldviews and stigma, and efforts to ensure that survivors have access to justice and compensation. There is a need to strengthen access to jobs and post-integration counseling services, organize effective awareness programs, address stigma and

discrimination, sensitize law enforcement, and ensure access to compensation and prosecution of traffickers. There is also a need for ongoing counseling and support groups. Churches and faith-based organizations are engaged in various interventions, including building awareness, rescue efforts, vocational training, job placements, building faith, hope, and resilience among survivors, strengthening their identity and self-worth, and enabling supportive relationships. The organizations are engaged in both spiritual nurture and providing practical support.

Based on the synthesis of the findings from this study and grounded in established theory, the researcher proposed an integrated framework to reduce the vulnerability of girls and young women survivors, building on Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological model. The framework articulated interventions across individual, relational, community, and societal levels. The study highlighted the fact that survivors are vulnerable following the trauma experienced as a result of being trafficked and exploited. They require specific and individually tailored interventions across the various levels of the socio-ecological framework for effective reintegration. Stakeholders must collaborate well to ensure that survivors are protected and thrive.

Tsang, Nonette Garcia. "In Or Out?: Belonging Of Families And Their Children With Special Needs In A Hong Kong Chinese Church–A Case Study." Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation, 2024.

Hong Kong is a fast-paced, densely-populated city where families who have children with disabilities struggle to survive a stressful life with little emotional support. A faith community is a source of help, comfort, and hope for these families. This study examines how a Chinese Hong Kong church with a Special Needs Ministry accepts families and their children with disabilities. The study explores three areas of focus: 1) the qualities of a welcoming church; 2) the understanding of belongingness by parents, their children with disabilities, and ministry workers; and 3) the impact of belongingness in the quality of life on families who have children with special needs.

This qualitative single-case study has three subunits: 1) Parents of children with disabilities; 2) Children with disabilities, all of them with autism, and some with varying co-occurrences; and 3) Ministry Workers (pastor, ministry leaders, and volunteer teachers). The instruments used for data gathering are survey questionnaires, World Café, direct observation, and semi-structured interviews. Qualitative data analysis software was used to analyze the data and find themes and sub-themes.

Belonging is a basic human need. It does not happen spontaneously. The findings of this study showed the factors that foster belongingness: 1) An accepting church where people have a positive attitude towards families who have children with disabilities; 2) The presence of ministry workers who are experienced with or trained in disability, committed, caring, and called by God; 3) Programs that support the needs of parents and their children; 4) Participation of families in church activities to consistently engage with the congregation and establish a lasting relationship so that their presence is felt; 5) Opportunities for families to serve in the faith community that give them a sense of purpose and belonging. A belonging framework was conceptualized (The Stages of Belonging - The 5 P's of Belonging) as a recommendation for churches that want to start a disability or special needs ministry or improve their current one.

Na Daw Sha Pun. "Designing a Christian Education subject for the Master of Divinity program of the Lahu Theological Seminary in Eastern Myanmar." Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation, 2024.

This research aims to design a Christian Education (CE) subject for the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) program of Lahu Theological Seminary (LTS) in Eastern Myanmar. In view of this, it intends to find out, "What is the key approach that should be considered in designing a CE subject for the M.Div. program at LTS in Eastern Myanmar to effectively equip future CE Directors with the necessary knowledge and skills?" In order to answer this main research question, after the research sub-questions, utilizing the framework of Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, were formulated: (1) What are the experiences of the alumni of the LTS alumni serving as CE Directors in the churches; (2) What are the reflections of the alumni of LTS

on their experiences as CE Directors in churches?; (3) What concepts can the alumni of LTS abstract from their experiences as CE Directors in churches?; (4) What learning experiences or activities can these alumni recommend to be included in the CE subject of LTS that will equip its M.Div. students to become efficient CE Directors in churches?; and (5) What syllabus and lessons will be appropriate for designing a CE subject for M.Div. students of LTS to prepare them to become efficient CE Directors in churches? The answer to the fifth sub-research question is the final output that answers the main research question.

This qualitative study employed the phenomenological research method to answer the research questions and used a semi-structured interview protocol to collect data. The sample consisted of eight alumni of the M.Div. program of LTS who are serving as CE Directors in churches within the jurisdiction of the Lahu Baptist Convention (LBC). Eight Senior Pastors from the churches where the eight alumni are serving as CE Directors were also interviewed to validate the data collected. The data was collected, transcribed, coded, and analyzed in Lahu. The researcher looked for emerging themes employing thematic analysis with reference to the literature in Chapter II. Finally, the presentation and analysis of data were translated into the English language.

Findings from this research reveal that there is a need to include the praxis in both formal and non-formal training to equip participants and students to serve efficiently as CE teachers and CE Directors. Hence, it was recommended that theological seminaries provide opportunities for students to integrate and actively experiment or apply their classroom learning in real life or their ministry contexts. Integration tasks and active experimentation can allow the students to have firsthand experience of the theories, principles, and concepts in real time, leading them to engage in reflective observation and abstract concepts from their learnings and conclusions. This will make their classroom learning more meaningful and will lead to transformation through the progress of their class performance. This research led to the conception of a fourth CE subject, "Teaching Methodology for Transformation." The output is a syllabus and lesson plan for one semester consisting of twelve sessions.

Call for Papers

The Mediator provides a forum for dialogue about theological issues related to ministry in Asian and Pacific contexts. In keeping with this purpose, the editorial committee seeks quality papers related to Bible, theology, missions, evangelism, and church growth. Also welcome are reviews of publications, including books and music. Contact the editor for more information.

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5. Papers may be of any length, although authors may be asked to condense longer papers.
6. A list of non-standard abbreviations should be provided.

Information

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Vision
Bridging cultures for Christ, APNTS equips each new generation of leaders to disseminate the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout Asia, the Pacific, and the world.

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1. Provide solid Biblical, historical, and theological foundations and encourage lifelong learning.
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