

The Mediator

A Journal of Holiness Theology for Asia-Pacific Contexts



ASIA-PACIFIC NAZARENE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Bridging Cultures for Christ
1 Timothy 2:5

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PREFACE

The papers presented in this issue of *The Mediator* confront us with this fundamental question: what difference does Jesus Christ make in our individual lives, churches, and institutions? How we answer this question will determine a great deal about our direction and mission. Our answer will also say something about our view of the religious, political, and economic problems confronting us at every level.

Won Keun Oh sets out for us the fundamental problem—sin. Sin separates us from God, resulting in alienation. As Paul writes, “Sin entered the world through one man [Adam], and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.” A Rabbinic proverb goes, “We each have become our own Adam.” Paul puts it this way, “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). The fallen state impacts not only our relationship with God but our relationships with creation. Robert Donahue offers a compelling look at racism. Sin causes us to devalue other humans, seeing others as “things” or objects to be used or discarded.

Donahue’s answer to racism is anchored squarely in scripture—reconciliation. God’s solution to alienation is healing. Reconciliation describes the healing and restoration of broken relationships. Paul reminds the Corinthians in 2 Cor 5:18, “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ.” Verse 19 then says, “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ.” We on our own power cannot heal brokenness. We need outside, divine help. A good definition of reconciliation is given in Romans 5:8: “For God demonstrates His own love for us in this: while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Donahue ends his article by drawing attention to the real solution to racism: it is a change of heart by the sanctifying work of God. God transforms us through Christ who became sin for us, taking upon Himself our guilt and shame. Through His death and resurrection, the influence of sin is broken.

We sell the Gospel short when we say that Jesus died simply so that we can be forgiven of our sins. The Good News of the Bible is that Jesus Christ not only took upon Himself our fleshly sins, but that He took upon Himself the heredity of sin. God made His own Son to be sin that He might make the sinner a saint.

This blessed hope impacts all our lives. It will transform how we view our possessions (see Jojit Uy's interpretation of the Parable of the Rich Fool), and how we can use these possessions to help others (see Jerry Porter's sermon on Ministry to the Poor). We become the instruments of God in the world so that others can experience this new relationship. 2 Cor 5:20 reads, "We are Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us." The essential element to being effective bearers of the divine message of hope is our own intimate fellowship with Christ, allowing Him to guide and control our lives through total submission to Him.

This message of holiness of heart and life can guide the mission of the church. Cynthia Datu challenges readers to offer this message of hope and holiness to middle-class Filipinos. Larnie Sam Tabuena reminds us that in a shifting age, we must place our confidence boldly in the Truth, Jesus Christ, who offers the answer for which the world is seeking. Satish Manmothe addresses one of the more intriguing questions of theology: the fate of the unevangelized. The Wesleyan optimism of grace gives hope of transformation to all people, but people must respond to this grace with openness. Hitoshi Fukue's sermon looks to the future, which for those who are being transformed by this Gospel of Grace, is optimistic and bright. Readers of this issue will be challenged to view their worlds with a new awareness of the transforming grace of God.

David A. Ackerman, *Editor*

THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF RACISM AND RECONCILIATION

Robert C. Donahue

Introduction

“Racial and ethnic hostility is the foremost social problem facing our world today . . . our world seems caught up in a tidal wave of racial and ethnic tension. This hostility threatens the very foundations of modern society” (Graham 1993, 27). In the former Soviet Union there is a powder keg of ethnic hatreds that run deeply in the souls of millions. Violence is just brewing under the surface or in some instances the violence has already spilled over. Some of these ethnic hatreds are manifested in full scale warfare such as in Chechenya between local rebels and the Russian government or Nogorno-Karabakh between the Azeris and the Armenians. Russia alone has twenty-one autonomous republics and eleven more autonomous regions; almost all of these are based upon ethnicities (Johnstone 1993, 466-471). Most of these republics and regions have conflicts within them and with their neighbors. Similar hostile situations exist all over the world.

The Christian church, the Body of Christ, is caught up in the racial, ethnic and class conflicts and hostilities that engulf our world. Little has yet been heard from the evangelical Christian church on the subject of racism, and even less reconciliation has been demonstrated by the evangelical Christian church in the way of solution. To be in the midst of such tremendous racial and ethnic turmoil and not to lovingly address the hostility in the reconciling power of the gospel of Jesus Christ is at best a gross omission. John Perkins’ observations may be right on target: “Something is wrong at the root . . . I believe we have lost the focus of the gospel—God’s reconciling power, which is unique to Christianity—and have substituted church growth. We have learned to reproduce the church

without the *message*. It is no longer a *message* that transforms” (Perkins 1993, 18).

Racism and the Christian Ethic

Racism, defined as an attitude or disposition of prejudice based upon emotion and employing unreasonable judgment, is diametrically opposed to the Christian ethic. The Christian ethic is a valuation of human conduct grounded upon divine revelation or to put it another way: Christian ethics is about how we should live in light of what the Bible teaches. The New Testament teaches that the Holy Spirit produces a Christlike character in the life of the believer (Romans 5:5; 8:1-14; Galatians 5:22-23). “This transformation of men by the inner dynamic of the Christ Spirit of one of the central motifs of Christianity . . . The other is . . . the imitation of Christ . . . defining its inmost meaning as having ‘the mind of Christ’ (1 Cor. 2:16; Phil. 2:5) . . .” (Elwell 1984, 377).

Racism is an attitude or disposition of prejudice. It implies an unreasonable judgment against some other race of persons. Feeling and not fact forms the basis for the prejudice. Mendell Taylor has noted prejudice is: “weighing the facts with your thumb on the scales” (Appleby 1986, 54). Racism is bound together with pride, arrogance, discrimination, ethnocentrism, hostility and hatred.

Racism demands a double standard of its adherents, especially of those who profess the Christian faith. This Christian faith rests upon great historical facts of ultimate salvation significance: the coming of Christ to earth as man; the death of Christ for human sin; the resurrection of this same Christ from the dead. Being based upon fact, the Christian faith has about it a certain reasonableness; it is not determined by nor carried about upon the wings of mere emotion. Racism suffers from this very malady: it has no facts to rest upon, no empirical data to support it, nor is it a reasonable notion.

Racism especially opposes Christianity at its very heart. Love is the heart of Christianity as seen in the words of Jesus and the summation of the commandments (to love God and to love one’s neighbor). Love seeks the good; ultimately it seeks God who is the Supreme Good. Racism, however, does not seek another’s good. It seeks rather, in its crude form, to destroy, to humiliate and to hurt one’s neighbor.

“Any examination of the teaching the New Testament on [racism] must begin with a careful look at the solution of the primitive church to [racism] among Christians in the first century” (Tilson 1958, 79). The early church faced a very real problem of racism just as we do today. Their

issues involved Jews and Gentiles, Samaritans and Gentiles, and slaves and freemen. Racism knows no bounds; while it is discriminating, it is indiscriminate in its hostility, fear and hatred.

Handling Racism

Christians are confronted with a challenge. How do Christians handle racism? The problem for the Christian is that one must respond to the prejudice of racism by opposing it with positive, loving actions (based upon the teaching of Christ) or else ethics faces a compromise with something less than a Biblical standard. If the Christian should compromise ethics, the veracity of the entire Christian gospel is brought into question. If the gospel does not break down the walls of hostility between different groups of people, and if the professing believer's attitudes have not been so changed by the gospel, then is that gospel able to do anything worthwhile for any person? And is there then not a contradiction between the life lived by the believer and that indicated in the New Testament that Jesus Christ lived and commanded His disciples to live?

On the other hand, the real life situations in which the Christian believer may be found does not present themselves for any easy solutions. At this point the Christian may finally decide to do nothing. This is a state of co-existence in which racism is not opposed outwardly, neither is the Christian ethic allowed to operate explicitly. This puts the Christian believer in the position of at least implicitly giving approval to racism. Neutrality is not an option. "If we do not attempt honestly to apply the Christian spirit and Christian principles to race relations, how can we expect others to respect our Christian claims or to hear and accept the message we proclaim?" (Maston 1957, 95).

Hatred of others on account of race (or neglect or indifference because of ethnicity), pride because of race or class, and greed manifesting itself in people taking advantage of others of another race through the power of majority social pressure, can, and should in the light of Biblical Christianity, be cleansed from the life and experience of the Christian community. In the more conservative evangelical churches which tend to take the Bible literally and seriously it would seem ethnic prejudice and racism would have little place. Unfortunately this is not true. "Race prejudice has been one the persistent problems of society . . . Notwithstanding the high ideals and clear teachings of the equality of man and the unity of the body of Christ, the Church has not infrequently stood self-condemned as a result of her racial attitudes that have closed the doors of the Kingdom of God to the souls of men" (Carter and Earle 1978, 145).

Many incidents of prejudice in action could be mentioned within my own denomination. “Honesty compels admission that the sin of snobbery is almost universal in the Church today . . . Dr. P. F. Bresee . . . felt his former denomination was too committed to seeking the upper middle class . . . It is the poor who are neglected. James shows no hesitation in naming this kind of discrimination *evil*” (Purkiser 1974, 142). Often our racism and discrimination has resulted from neglect or indifference, but sometimes from our unresolved fear, hostility or pride. Tony Evans reminds us,

The net result of this benign neglect is that the gospel is either hindered or rejected, as people view as untenable a message that seems to have little effect on how people relate to their neighbors. This leaves the Christian community with a theologically accurate message but an empirically deficient model (Perkins and Rice 1993, 8).

It is sad, but true, that conservative evangelicals who take their Bibles seriously are the very ones who tend to be more racist than their more liberal counter parts. This certainly includes holiness church groups which teach and profess such a high state of Christian living.

“Sociologist Rokeach declared: ‘My research reveals that the more conservative one’s theology is, the more bigoted and prejudiced one is likely to be’” (Appleby 1986, 55). This is a situation with which evangelicals need to come to grips. Repentance is certainly in order. It is not the kind of accusation evangelicals should attempt to excuse or deny.

Further understanding about how conservative evangelicals in general apply their Biblical knowledge and their theology might prove helpful. There are emphases within this group which reveal two very different camps. All that is called “Christian” or “holiness” or “godly” or, indeed, truly “evangelical” needs to be understood in the light of at least two major categories or systems of thought and practice which may not be apparent to many.

Gordon Allport’s research discovered that increased bigotry and prejudice among theological conservatives is true only of what he termed “extrinsic” conservative church people. This part of the evangelical church is most interested in religious comfort, getting things, rules, and outward appearances. “He points to ‘intrinsic’ conservative Christians as those who manifest interest in challenges, giving, people, and inward condition. Allport further points out that intrinsic conservative Christians tend to be far less prejudiced” (Appleby 1986, 55).

It is the condition of the “heart” which is all-important. The Bible says about a person: “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he . . .” (Proverbs

23:7). Jesus indicated that the issues of life flow out of the inner being of a person (Mark 7:21-23). Those who emphasize outward conduct will run the risk of becoming preoccupied with rules and regulations, and may well miss the vital importance of the inward attitudes and dispositions.

The Christian cannot be governed in the actions of real existence solely by culture. There are points at which culture may be in open conflict with the very heart of the Christian ethic. The Christian ethic is of higher rank than the cultural ethic. "There is too much 'cultural Christianity' these days. Such Christianity is respectable, decent, lovely, indulgent, and sentimental, but is as weak and ineffective as adolescent daydreams" (Gilmore 1971, 68). While Christianity must speak to all cultures or to any culture to be relevant to humankind in its real existence, it need not become a "cultural Christianity." This type of situation implies that the content of Christianity is determined by the culture it is in or that it is significantly modified to accommodate any given culture. The culture may modify the mode of expression of the Christian ethic, but it must not modify its essence. Christ is the one who can change our cultures at their points of failure.

Love That Changes

According to Augustine, "Christ is the transformer of culture. . . in the sense that he redirects, reinvigorates, and regenerates that life of man, expressed in all human works, which in present actuality is the perverted and corrupted exercise of a fundamentally good nature . . ." (Niebuhr 1951, 109). A change of heart is essential to bringing about ethnic harmony and to eliminate racism. The Christian gospel contains the remedy for this heart change. To say that a change of heart is the answer alone is not complete. The heart change must produce a change in the outer social structures if it is to be of real value. Racism can only be dealt with successfully, and ethnic harmony can only come from a heart change which brings about a change in the ways we relate and act toward one another (Beach 1969, 166).

The love ethic of Christ transcends every culture and every personal situation and in so doing produces right relationships and peace. "Dr. E. Stanley Jones once asked Mahatma Gandhi, 'What can we Christians do to help India?' Without hesitation Gandhi replied, 'Live like Jesus lived. *Don't adulterate or tone down your religion. Make love central*'" (Seamands 1981, 56). The Christian ethic of love for God and love for neighbor—whoever that neighbor may be—commands true love from the Christian believer even if his cultural or society ethic, mores or taboos demand prejudice toward some certain neighbor or group of neighbors.

The sad alternative to a love ethic is essentially racism. Racism circumvents the love ethic. Christian believers can get caught up in the use of power, manipulation and discrimination.

Thus the racist, who is also a Christian, says in effect to the outrace person, 'Meet the criteria which I prescribe and relate to me on precisely the terms which I dictate and I will love you.' Accordingly, neither the racist nor his victim are ever able to commune as fellow Christians. Racism is 'interposed' between them so that Christian faith cannot find fulfillment. The terms of meeting are not love, but power and submission. The neighbor never comes to be regarded as a member of God's universal community of creation or the Body of Christ. He never becomes a Thou; he is permanently It (Kelsey 1965, 148).

This degrades both persons and is a contradiction of the love ethic of Christ.

The corporate body of Christians, the church, is a community of brotherly love grounded in the love ethic of Jesus Christ. In a sense the church is Christ's representative on earth today. It should thus represent to the total community of humankind the love that Christ manifested. This is at once both a grand opportunity for the church to demonstrate its validity and the truth of its message, and, on the other hand, a danger if it fails to reflect the attitude and actions of Jesus. "The church does not cease to be the church because it errs or because its members continue in sin. The institution may be able to neglect its mission and remain the church. But there is real doubt that it can both neglect its mission and deny its very nature and yet remain the church" (Campbell 1962, 10-11). This is the danger: that the church may allow racism to keep it from the mission Christ gave it and cause the very essential love in the church to become ineffective or inoperative, and therefore, a non-functional dynamic as far as both the church and the world are concerned. Unless the church faces the issue squarely, it may be possible that future historians will write that the present day church did little to bring about harmonious race relations through their supposed love, while others for money did very much for improvements (Maston 1959, 41-42).

The Scripture tells us that the Holy Spirit fills the life of the Christian believer with God's love (Romans 5:5). Since this is so, that love of God must both be experienced by the individual person, and by the community in which he lives out his life. "The observable characteristic of love between Christians, particularly love across racial lines (according to

Colossians 3:11-13), is one way we authenticate God's power in our lives" (Washington and Kehrein 1993, 212).

The love must be greater than any individual's person love. This love must have a dimension which surmounts the affects of sin upon the human condition. Naturally it is relatively easy for most people to love those who like them or those who are like them. It is naturally quite difficult for most people to love those who hate them or to love those with whom they have little or nothing in common. The love that is required is the divine love.

Respect and love should characterize our every attitude. . . This love is more than just our puny, finite love . . . It is the divine . . . love of Christ operating with us and flowing through us into the lives of others. This sort of love is not natural to us, neither can it be self-generated. It has to be received as a gift from God and poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us (Rom. 5:5) (Seamands 1981, 56).

Reconciliation

Reconciliation is the bringing together of God and man, and man and man. It is the repairing or healing of broken relationships. Reconciliation is the primarily the work of God through Christ to us. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19). "Reconciliation is a biblical word. It is *our* word, and its ministry *our* enterprise" (Pannell 1993, 136).

Love is what makes reconciliation possible. The first love is God's initiative. God's love becomes operative in the believer's life and is the power which enables reconciliation to take place between persons. "Reconciliation initiated by the love of God, has man as its object. It is man, not God primarily, who needs to be reconciled . . . This is the objective phase . . . A whole new set of spiritual and ethical relationships prevail . . . hostility is gone and loving submission is generated. This is the subjective phase of reconciliation" (Purkiser, Taylor and Taylor 1977, 404-405).

The work of reconciliation of person with person in this divided and often hostile world is given to Christian believers. Can a Christian leader effectively affect reconciliation among competing ethnic groups unless he is able and willing to enter into those cultures and come to understand some of the symbols, aspirations and problems of those of differing ethnicity? The answer is no (Herrera 1992, 10). There must be a willingness to have empathy with others.

Anthropologist, Paul G. Hiebert, suggests empathy as the first of four solutions for ethnocentrism (I think we may safely consider racism, ethnocentrism, and classism as having common features and as bound together with favoritism, pride, and hostility in general):

The solution to ethnocentrism is empathy. We need to appreciate other cultures and their ways. But our feelings of superiority and our negative attitudes toward strange customs run deep and are not easily rooted out. One way to overcome ethnocentrism is to be learners in our ignorance of others. Another is to deal with the philosophical questions raised by cultural pluralism. If we do not examine them, we will be unconsciously threatened by accepting another culture, for to do so calls into question our implicit belief that our own culture is right and others are wrong. A third way to overcome ethnocentrism is to avoid stereotyping people in other cultures, but rather to see them as human beings like ourselves. The recognition of our common humanity bridges the differences that divide us. Finally, we need to remember that people love their own cultures . . ." (Hiebert 1985 98-99).

These suggestions may well help us toward a solution for ethnocentrism, and even racism. However, even more is needed. Reconciliation is needed. "He has committed to us the message of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:19b). The message Christian believers have is reconciliation through love. This love must characterize the believer's person; he must be a loving person, not just do loving things. The love in the person will motive the person to act out love through promoting reconciliation as a personal ministry. Doing is not the most essential thing: being is the most essential. "Instead of demanding, What can the Christian *do* . . . we should be asking, What must the Christian *be*?" (Campbell 1968, 4). The answer is obvious: we must be authentic Christians full of God's love.

Spencer Perkins and Chris Rice have suggested three critical steps to the reconciliation process:

Admit the Problem. The first is to *admit* (that separation exists, that the relationship is uneasy, that it misrepresents what God intended for his people).

Submit to One Another. The second is to *submit* to one another (especially by building loving relationships across ethnic and racial barriers). This is a difficult thing to do for many, but it is essential if reconciliation is to be a reality.

Commit to a Lifestyle of Love. The third is to *commit*, especially to an intentional lifestyle of loving our ethnically different neighbors as ourselves (Perkins and Rice 1993, 18-19). These three steps are excellent guides for an individual or group to use to bring about reconciliation. Without recognition of broken relationships and hostilities we will do nothing about reconciliation. Submitting is a two way street. “The old fight of racial equality did not require any give and take. It demanded change only from Whites. But reconciliation is more costly; it demands change of us all” (Perkins and Rice 1993, 237).

Commitment is essential to bring about reconciliation. Reconciliation is more than just a nice idea; it is the crying need of our world. The key is *intentionality*. Christian believers must *intend* to bring about reconciliation if they are to be personally involved in it happening. Reconciliation will not happen automatically. Christians must be personally committed to involvement. “Intentionality is the locomotive that drives racial reconciliation. It must become part of our attitude. We must want to know the other race, to contribute to the other person’s spiritual, social, and emotional growth” (Washington and Kehrein 1993, 127).

The results of the Holy Spirit renewing a life in Christ Jesus is a “new birth” (John 3:3-8). God’s purpose is not individualistic, but community in nature. Ephesians 2:14b reads: “His purpose was to create in Himself one new humanity from the two, so making peace”

Howard Snyder has defined the Church in terms of individuals and community. He says, “I believe the most biblical definition is to say the Church is *the community of God’s people*. The two key elements here are the Church as a people, a new race or humanity, and the Church as a community or fellowship—the *koinonia* of the Holy Spirit” (Winter and Hawthorne 1981, 119). God creates a new kind of loving humanity out of the old hostile humanity. This new loving humanity is the Christian Church, the Body of Christ. “Is God content merely to end hostility? Never. There is a second step, ‘. . . that he might create in himself one new man’ (Eph. 2:15) . . . In the church there is neither Jew nor Gentile . . . both bring what they are . . . they discover . . . a oneness, a fellowship, a union, a beautiful relationship . . . a sense of belonging to one another . . .” (Stedman 1976, 158-159). Reconciliation finds its fulfilment in transformed lives that shed hostility and become part of a new living organism and deep and wide sharing known as the Body of Christ.

Holiness is the Answer

God does not necessarily destroy the cultures, but he refines them and filters out the elements of hostility, animosity and hatred which have penetrated them all. “Ministers must teach that God does make a difference in our lives when we are converted. The Holy Spirit at work in us can permeate to the deepest attitudinal levels. However, we must realize that prejudice (though built on sinful attitudes) is taught largely by culture” (Appleby 1986, 55). We must not stop here as though sinful culture is some insurmountable obstacle beyond the power of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps for too long many have spoken and acted as if this were true.

Even some who have professed a sanctified life have excused racism and ethnic hostility on cultural grounds rather than yielding these areas to the transforming power of God, and rather than personally entering into the ministry of reconciliation committed to believers by Christ. The truth is that the Christ not only justifies the believer through faith, but through the Holy Spirit Christ also sanctifies the believer through faith. The Christlike life, the holy life, is the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer. This sanctification is both the privilege and the obligation of every believer.

The reality for the Christian believer is that he has become a new *creation*. In Christ we are not our old selves; we have become someone new. Part of this newness is a new attitude toward Christ, and consequently toward others. It was His love which touched us and made us new persons; that same love propels us toward others. Christ died for all so that he might reconcile us to Himself and to God, and reconcile us to each other. This ministry of reconciliation is given to us to share with others just as we have received it. “In New Testament theology reconciliation is both a completed act and a yet-to-be-actualized reality. . . . Furthermore, reconciliation is both present and future” (Dunning 1988, 341). Christ has completed reconciliation on the cross; it is yet to be actualized by those yet to believe on Him; Christ is presently reconciling the world unto Himself, and all things are yet to be reconciled in a complete way in Christ.

Sanctification is the miraculous work of God which transforms the individual and remakes a new humanity. There is “the reality of new life in Christ and what that new life can bring about when people are willing to put . . . Christ before culture . . . The truly amazing thing, however, is that in the process, one’s race, culture and background are enhanced because they are sanctified” (Perkins and Rice 1993, 8). The humanity is not destroyed but brought back to a more purified, sanctified state. The enhancement which takes place is a result of the refining which takes place—a removal of sinful, unloving strains, so that the new humanity may appear.

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are

Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:28-29). Divisions are divisive no longer in Christ. The promise to Abraham is fulfilled in Christ. "For Paul, the gospel is not a culmination of what had begun with Abraham; Jesus' death is not just a climactic event in salvation history . . . God's dream is not realized in the history of Israel, but in the community of Jews and Gentiles whose faith-trustful obedience is like Abraham's" (Ogilvie 1982, 8:61). The old categories become meaningless for Christians. There is a unity of purpose and spirit, and a unity which transcends all else. "The universality of the Church is rooted in the work of Christ as inclusive of all persons" (Dunning 1988, 532). The statement by Paul is powerful. It sweeps away the barriers humans have erected and turns them into nothing. Things are different: "for in Christ all social stations, all cultural labels, all races and nationalities are made of no account in the economy of God" (Ogilvie 1982, 8:79).

Christ is making a new humanity in Himself. "The Christian church should have no barriers of nationality, race, education level, social standing, wealth, gender, religion, or power . . . Nothing should keep us from . . . accepting into our fellowship any and all believers . . . Christians should be building bridges, not walls" (Barton 1991, 2166).

The Christian community through the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit is the answer to ethnic hostilities all over the world and at all levels. "Holiness, as an ethical reality, does not make one less human, but more fully so" (Dunning 1988, 499). In fact, the reconciling ministry of Christ makes us into what God intended us to be as human beings - active, participating members of a transformed humanity.

Additional Resources

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TO RIGHT THE WRONGS OF THE AGES

Beverly Gruver

Background of the Problem

Jennifer Gratz applied for admittance to the University of Michigan—never thinking but that she would be accepted. Why wouldn't she? She was a good student in her suburban high school. She was active in leadership and school spirit. She was twelfth in her class with a GPA of 3.79 and a solid score on the ACT. So confidently she filled out one application for one college and waited along with her classmates for the letter to arrive to tell her that she would be admitted to the college of her choice. And then her unthinkable happened—she was “wait-listed” and a couple of months later rejected for admission. She answered the Center for Individual Rights' search for a candidate to challenge the admission grids that the University of Michigan used in determining who would be admitted and who would not. The CIR was looking for a strong candidate to work to change the diversity policy of the University of Michigan (Belkin, 1998).

So what is this really about? Is this a case of someone being discriminated against? Is it just an unlucky break for someone? Is there a problem that needs to be addressed? Yes, indeed there is a problem to be addressed, but it is far deeper than one unhappy college girl. It is a problem of society that cannot be “fixed” by legislation or a law suit or a demanding of rights.

Natural State of Humankind

The problem that the University of Michigan and other institutions is seeking to address is one of inequity. The roots of this problem are deep. They are deeper than slavery and oppression and colonialism and imperialism. They are as deep as human nature itself. In her book on historical theology, Leclerc (2001) has traced the roots of an untransformed life to two formats. One is the Augustinian concept of this nature as being pride, arrogance, self-interest and other forms of exaggerated self-esteem. While this has been a standard theological concept for centuries, Leclerc's

definitive work has assigned this form of the natural, non-transformed nature of humankind predominately to the male gender. Her work concludes that it generally does not fit a woman's nature as women are self-giving and often suffer from too little self-esteem. Instead, the untransformed nature in the feminine context is one of dependence on others for one's own self definition or a lack of a personal identity. Leclerc calls both of these strands of non-transformed human nature **idolatry**.

I would agree with Leclerc's ideas but I would like to alter her assignment of these concepts to gender. It seems to me that the Augustinian form can be assigned to persons who are the definitive norm of their culture. Because they are the norm in their culture, they do not suffer from a lack of an identity. I would broaden the second category beyond that of the feminine gender to include any who suffer under the arrogance of the normative of the culture. This would include minority groups as well. This is roughly stated for western culture as it currently presents itself. Eastern cultures gather around these two assignments in different ways because of the socio-psychological makeup of their societies. But it seems that the two concepts remain—though perhaps assigned differently in different contexts even for the same person.

Historical Perspective

The logical conclusion of this condition of an untransformed humanity is that those who suffer from pride and arrogance, self interest and other forms of exaggerated self-esteem have succeeded in forming the normative of the society and have created systems of inequity and intimidation. As we look through history, we have example after example of this happening. Feudal systems throughout the world in centuries past exemplify this as well as slavery, colonization and subsequent mistreatment or murder of indigenous peoples, and the continued defining of society based on a normative culture which has an inflated view of itself—and probably does not even realize that it is only one amongst many identities. The voices of histories echo with atrocities of such inequities and it is not the purpose of this paper to recount history. One has only to listen to the voices to understand how insidious the misjudgments that have been leveled on others are.

As the World Turns—The Present

So how does a society go about changing the inequities that exist? How does a society become transformed? Historically, there have been

two means of egalitarian reform. One of these is a bottom-up approach while the other is a top-down approach. Let's look first at the bottom-up approach. This involves many forms of affirmative action. According to McWhirter (1996) affirmative action is at least three things—affirmative recruitment, affirmative fairness, and affirmative preference. He indicates that three reasons have emerged to justify affirmative action. The first of these is the need to compensate for specific instances of race and gender discrimination in the past by particular organizations. The second reason to justify affirmative action is the need to remedy societal discrimination suffered by particular groups in the past at the hands of society in general. The third reason given to justify affirmative action is the need to create more diversity in a particular organization.

Steps of affirmative action include grassroots organizing against injustices. The Civil Rights movement with the marches and boycotts are an integral part of this bottom-up approach. The normative culture would have continued oblivious to [the kinder version] or impervious to injustice if their lives had not been disrupted by those who called attention to the need for justice. The labor strikes against the steel industry, the railroads, and the coal mines also produced laws that allowed laborers the right to form unions. Rubio (2001) outlines wave after wave of injustices where minorities effected some measure of change but all at great cost. We are familiar with Gandhi and his non-violent protests against injustices in India.

The top-down approaches to effecting change in society have come mainly in the form of legal or legislative action to enact laws to promote equality. Some of these included executive orders for dialogue, standards, and mandatory teacher in-service training (Eden & Ryan, 1999; D Souza, 1996; Halford, 1999; Pullen, 2000). From such documents as the Bill of Rights, to the Emancipation Proclamation, to Truman's executive order creating the Fair Employment Board, to Kennedy's executive order requiring federal contractors to take "affirmative action" to hire more minorities, to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, to Carter's Public Works Employment Act, to court cases on all sides of these issues with majority and minority opinions, the top-down approach has endeavored to superimpose what must come from within.

Both the bottom-up approach and the top-down approach to justice and fairness and equality have their limitations. Freire's (1970) caveat is that the oppressed may tend to become the oppressor when liberation occurs for this is their model of humanity. The limitation of the top-down approach is to want to withdraw affirmative action as per California's vote, and say that the laws are in place for equality so what more do we need to do?

The Conclusion of the Matter

So in my opinion, neither of these is really the answer—as good as they may be insofar as they go. It is my belief, however, that a society cannot really be transformed unless individuals are transformed. A spiritual transformation of the individual is what must take place. That will involve either the finding of an identity not defined merely by dependence on others or it will involve a transformation from the pride, arrogance, and self-interest of those who look only to their own interests—or perhaps some combination of the two. For this transformation to occur, the individual must be drawn by the power of the Holy Spirit to have a personal encounter with Jesus Christ and be reconciled to God. The transformation is not of the individual's own doing, but is accomplished by the cleansing and indwelling power of the Holy Spirit through the renewing of one's mind (Romans 12:2), letting the peace of Christ rule in their hearts and the word of Christ dwell within richly (Colossians 3:15-16), becoming a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), for by grace are we saved (Ephesians 2:8). The transformed person is God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10).

The real answer to righting the wrongs of the ages comes when the transformed come together and form community. When minority has an identity and can lay aside expectation, and when the transformed normative culture lays aside its privilege—when it is no longer an “us” and “them” mentality, then we can become community. When we talk to one another, but more importantly, when we listen and hear one another; when we acknowledge who we are and when we find out who the others are around us; when we purposefully go beyond our insulated spheres and seek to know those beyond—then we will begin to make progress in eliminating injustices.

Because I am a White woman, I must look at solutions from my own perspective. I have walked the course of our young college woman who didn't get the placement she wanted. When a Black woman was hired for the teaching job I applied for, did I feel discriminated against? My father thought I had been discriminated against. But I understood the need for the affirmative action that was taken—and because no other teaching jobs were open to me at the time, I worked as a secretary. I grew through the experience and it was the beginning of a long journey of understanding what it means to be “my brother's keeper.”

I am inspired by the examples of those who have laid aside their privilege to serve their fellow human beings. In laying aside privilege, it is not to ever deny who one is—but to lay it aside and focus on others—that

is the key. Two people who exemplify this lifestyle for me will serve as examples here. One was the son of a prosperous twelfth century merchant. It was expected that he would take over his father's business, but instead, after experiencing a transformation, he laid it all aside and lived his life in poverty, simplicity, and piety—serving others. This was Francis of Assisi. The second example that inspires me is a woman from Yugoslavia named Agnes Gonxha Bojaxiu. Her transformation led her to love the poorest of the poor and to change her world. She was given the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 and we know her as Mother Teresa. One life that lays aside privilege and truly forms community with the people around them can literally change the world.

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FEEDING THE SOUL WITH MATERIAL THINGS

The Parable of the Rich Fool

(Luke 12:13-21)

Jojit M. Uy

Introduction

The Gospel of Luke is hailed as “the most beautiful book in existence”¹ because, for one, its literary style is excellent. From his prologue, one can discern that Luke wrote his own version of the gospel very carefully, in an orderly fashion, and tried to be as accurate as possible. He chose his materials or sources very well and used them creatively to serve his intent. This is evident especially in the parables.² Among the gospels, Luke has the most number of parables, and two of them—the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son (which may be found only in Luke)—are among the world’s best-loved stories.³

Luke made good use of parables to convey theology.⁴ One of the theologies Luke emphasizes involves the Christian attitude towards earthly possessions. Stein says, “No other books in the NT are as concerned about the Christian’s relationship to material possessions.”⁵

¹By Renan, quoted in Ralph P. Martin, *New Testament Foundations: A Guide for Christian Students*, Vol.1, *The Four Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 251.

²Frank Stagg, “Luke’s Theological Use of Parables,” *Review and Expositor* 94 (Spr 1997), 215.

³Charles L. Childers, *The Gospel According to St. Luke* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1971), 422.

⁴See Stagg, 215-229.

⁵Robert H. Stein, *Luke* (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 45-56.

Passages such as Lk 3:11; 6:20-21a, 34-35, 38; 8:14; 11:41; 12:13-33; 14:12-14; 16:1-15,19-31; and 19:8 all have something to do with Christians and material things. Not only in his gospel does Luke deal with this subject but also in Acts (see Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-5:11). Here, Luke portrays the positive results of generosity and seeking first the Kingdom of God: blessings for the individual and growth for the church (compare Joseph in Acts 4:36-37 and Ananias and Sapphira in 5:1-11; see also Acts 2:47; 6:7). The Parable of the Rich Fool, which is also unique to Luke, is one of the sources he used to highlight Jesus' teaching about being a disciple and material possessions. This paper will interpret this parable and draw out eternal truths on how to handle wealth or earthly possessions as disciples of Jesus Christ.

This parable is very straightforward and simple. Jesus told the story to illustrate the point He made in verse 15: "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." Jesus, on the surface, dealt with the problem of covetousness, but He had a much deeper message: one cannot find life or hope or security in wealth but rather in God. What, then, are people to do with their money and resources? Jesus' implicit answer through this parable (and other related passages and parables in Luke [see references above]) is to share them with others; give to the needy. This way people will be providing for themselves not only in this life but also in eternity.

Context

The parable is part of the so-called travel document comprising Lk 9:51-18:14. It is set as one of Jesus' discourses while traveling to Jerusalem. Now, this is not one of Jesus' trips to Jerusalem. This is the journey that will eventually lead Him to the cross. The events narrated here, scholars say, cover the last six months of Jesus' life before being crucified. Luke tells us that Jesus "steadfastly set his face" (9:51, KJV) towards Jerusalem. Jesus was resolved to fulfill His mission. Stacy describes the mood surrounding the events as "'crunch time,' with high anxiety all around."⁶

Much of the content of this document is unique to Luke and/or Matthew, also known as non-Markan material. Martin regards this section of Luke's Gospel as the most important unit because it is here that the

⁶R. Wayne Stacy, "Luke 12:13-21: The Parable of the Rich Fool," *Review and Expositor* 94 (Spr 1997), 285.

Gospel's distinctive features come out. This section is primarily didactic, "even the parables in this section have a didactic-paranetic flavor."⁷

Jesus addressed the parable primarily to His disciples (Lk 12:1) but also to the swelling crowd that was following Him. In the context of chapter 12, He was teaching them how a disciple should live in the Kingdom of God. Stacy divides the discourse into three areas: persecution (vv.1-12), possessions (vv. 13-34), and the parousia (vv.35-48).⁸ Jesus just came from a meal in a Pharisee's house and was proceeding on His journey, giving various warnings and encouragements to His disciples, when one from the crowd asked Him to settle an inheritance dispute between him and his brother. Jesus found the request a very good springboard to teach about the right attitude of Kingdom citizens towards wealth or material possessions. He told them the story of the rich fool.

Historical and Cultural Details

In the ancient Mediterranean region, sibling rivalry was typical, and inheritance would not be an uncommon source of contention.⁹ The Jewish law on inheritance is laid out in the Torah in Deut 21:15-17 and Num 27:1-11; 36:7-9. According to the Torah, the firstborn son of the family is entitled to a double portion of the inheritance. The rest of the sons are to divide the remainder among themselves. If the father has no sons, the inheritance shall go to the daughters, as in the case of the daughters of Zelophehad. The inheritance shall remain within the tribe of the family and must not be transferred from tribe to tribe. Thus, the daughters of Zelophehad, in order to retain their inheritance, had to marry within the tribe of Manasseh, the tribe to which their father belonged. Ancient Jewish custom also allowed inheritance to be distributed among the heirs even if the father were still living if a son demanded it.¹⁰ This was the case with the prodigal son.

Apart from his request, Luke did not give any more details about the man. Was he duped out of his inheritance? Was his proper share not given to him? Or did he want more than what he received?

⁷Martin, 251.

⁸Stacy, 285.

⁹Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 359.

¹⁰Malina and Rohrbaugh, 359.

The man was not really out of order in bringing the problem to Jesus because it was common in that day for people to ask religious teachers or rabbis to settle their disputes.¹¹ The reason behind this is that the law of the land was embodied in the Torah, and since Israel was a theocracy, who was in a better position to settle disputes than the authorities on the Scriptures—the rabbis?¹² And Jesus, having been recognized by this time in His ministry as a rabbi or one who spoke on the Scriptures with great authority (Lk 4:32, 36; Mt 7:29), was approached by the man with his family problem.

With this in mind, it is interesting to note that Jesus refused to help the man. Why did He object to being the arbitrator? Luke did not tell us the reason. One can only surmise. Probably, though Jesus was looked up to as a rabbi, He did not immediately assume that it was proper for Him to be a judge, not having been formally recognized by the religious hierarchy as a rabbi.¹³ Or perhaps because it was not part of His mission to try to change the structure of the civil laws of Israel as embodied in the Torah. He said He came to fulfil the Law, not to abolish it (Lk 24:44; Mt 5:17). Jesus also said that He came to seek and save the lost (Lk 19:10). He did not come simply to settle civil disputes; He had a much higher calling. As Stacy asserts,

The brother in Luke 12:13 is not a poor, disaffected person whose cause Jesus can step up to champion. The dispute is about money, not persons, and Jesus seems to have very little interest in money *per se*. Jesus' belief in the Kingdom of God and the radical reorientation of life it brings was so central to his teaching that he regards disputes over furniture and dishes and silverware as irrelevant.¹⁴

The Lord saw the man's real problem. "What this individual needed was not some casuistic legal ruling by a religious teacher but a basic understanding of how possessions relate to the purpose of life."¹⁵ The

¹¹William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke* (Rev. ed., Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), 164; Stacy, 286.

¹²Stacy, 286.

¹³Stein, 351; Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Luke*, fifth ed. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1981), 322.

¹⁴Stacy, 286; cf. Stein, 351; Childers, 521.

¹⁵Stein, 350.

Lord also saw the real motive of the man. He was consumed by greed.¹⁶ “Greed is to be rejected, for the meaning and purpose of life is not found in the accumulation of wealth and possessions.”¹⁷

John Nolland offers a very good insight on the reason why the Lord refused the man’s request. He says it is most likely that Jesus turned down the man’s appeal because he was usurping Jesus’ authority for his personal gain. In other words, he was attempting to use the status and authority of Jesus to satisfy his covetousness.¹⁸ The pronouncement in verse 15 confirms this. Malina and Rohrbaugh hold that behind this verse is “the traditional peasant assumption that greed is invariably the underlying motive of anyone able to gain a surplus.”¹⁹ This is due to the fact that in ancient Palestine, the people’s idea of goods is that they are limited, and have already been distributed. Therefore, if one acquired more, it meant that someone’s piece of the pie got smaller. The individual enjoyed a surplus at someone else’s expense; thus, he was not being fair. “An honorable man would thus be interested only in what was rightfully his and would have no desire to gain anything more, that is, to take what was another’s.”²⁰ That is why to be rich in those days said a lot more about one’s morality than one’s economic status. Commonly, people thought of the rich as greedy.²¹

Literary Structure and Exegesis

Verses 13-14 set the stage and provide the setting for the narration of the parable. As mentioned above, Jesus used the occasion as a springboard to teach the disciples about the right attitude towards wealth or material possessions. Verse 13 also links the following discourses to the preceding discourse (vv.1-12), making it part of the larger context of chapter 12. It is interesting to note in verse 13 that the word used in Greek for “tell” is

¹⁶Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 2 Vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1981), 969.

¹⁷Stein, 351; thus, the proverb in verse 15.

¹⁸John Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34* (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 685.

¹⁹Malina and Rohrbaugh, 359.

²⁰Malina and Rohrbaugh, 324.

²¹Malina and Rohrbaugh, 324-325, 359.

εἶπεν. This is in the imperative. Therefore, the man is commanding Jesus to actually order his brother to divide the inheritance with him. He did not make a request that Jesus act as judge; he was giving a command to the Lord. It was ironic because the fact that he approached Jesus with this issue tells the readers that in a way, he respected the authority of Jesus. However, the way he spoke to Jesus was anything but respectful. In answering the man, Jesus uses the vocative of ἄνθρωπος,” which is ἄνθρωπε. According to Fitzmyer, “it is a rebuking term, implying aloofness.”²²

Verse 15 is the transitional statement of the parable. Many scholars believe that this passage was not really Jesus’ own statement, but was a Lukan addition.²³ Nevertheless, one can say that this is Jesus’ main point in the parable. Knowing the man’s real motive, Jesus warns the disciples and the multitudes against greed. He reinforces this by saying that it does not follow that if one has an abundance of goods, one’s life is secure, and that he or she will enjoy a meaningful and fulfilling life. The statement is very profound and it is quite difficult to understand at first. That is why the parable was given.

In verses 16-21, Jesus illustrates the teaching of verse 15. The story qualifies as a tragedy. The similarity of its theme with some OT passages, namely, Eccl. 2:1-11; Job 20:20; 31:24-28; and Ps 62:10, enabled Jesus to immediately connect with the people because it was familiar to them.²⁴

Verse 16 is the introduction. It presents the main character—the rich man—and his situation. He had a farm and it yielded an abundant harvest. The plot of the story begins at verse 17. A situation is brewing. Harvest is coming and the barns are not sufficient to hold all the produce. Apparently, it was a good year for the man. His farm is going to bring forth more than the usual, and he had no place to store it. “What shall I do?” he asks himself.

The plot is developed in verses 18-19. This part is the body of the story. One can sense that the story is moving towards a climax. The rich man, concerned only with himself, opts to keep all the produce for his future needs. In the modern context, it would be like investing money for his retirement. The preponderance of the first person singular pronoun in

²²Fitzmyer, 969. Plummer makes the same comment, see Plummer, 322

²³Nolland, 684-685; Fitzmyer, 968.

²⁴Malina and Rohrbaugh, 359.

these verses shows the man's self-centeredness. Plummer holds that the fact that the word **καθελῶ** (the future of **καθαίρω**, meaning "I pull down") is placed at the onset of the sentence emphasizes the eagerness of the man to tear down his old, small barn in order to build a bigger one that will hold all the fruits of the harvest for himself.²⁵ At the end of verse 19, there is some suspense. Implicitly, this question is posed: Did he do the right thing? What is going to happen to him now?

Verse 20 is the climax of the story. Apparently, the man made the wrong decision. He took the wrong turn, now he is trapped; he is in a dead end. The Lord called him a fool. All the things he has stored for himself are of no use to him now because his life is going to be taken from him.

Stacy provides an insightful observation of the original words in this verse *vis-à-vis* most translations in the Bible. In most Bible translations, it is not very clear who took the man's life. Readers get the impression that God did it but Stacy holds that in the Greek, the subject of the sentence is implicitly in the third person plural—that is, "they." And "they" refers to the produce of the land, the things the man had been so concerned to keep for himself alone that he had to build bigger barns in order to store them all. Therefore, the proper translation, according to Stacy, should be: "*They* are demanding your very life from you."

Hence, the point here is that "all the 'stuff' the rich man thought he owned actually owns him!" His wealth controlled him. The rich man worked hard to gain all he could and save all he has gained so that in the future he could enjoy them. But no sooner then he got all these things, his life became no longer relaxing and fun. He had to embark on a new construction project for bigger barns, and while these were being built, he had to think of how to secure them for the meantime. And when everything was done, he had to think about how to improve the security, and other concerns.²⁶ The things he thought were blessings became a curse because of his wrong attitude towards them. He would not have had to bother himself with these if he had only seen them as an added opportunity to bless others. Stacy believes that the main message of the parable is to teach about life and what secures it. He says we were not made to "run on" wealth or material possessions but rather to "run on" God. Our life and security are in God not in our savings account or investments.²⁷

²⁵Plummer, 324.

²⁶Stacy, 288.

²⁷Stacy, 289-291.

The last verse is the application. Jesus strengthens the point He made in verse 15. Indeed, if people will try to find life and hope and security in things or wealth, they will be disappointed. They will reap pain, suffering, and even destruction.

Message For Today

In the modern world, which is characterized by ever increasing secularism, individualism and materialism, George Hubbard's perspective of the message of the Parable of the Rich Fool speaks powerfully. He asks this question: what made the rich man a fool in God's eyes? Or why did God call him a fool? If we look at him using today's modern standards, we could call him a practical man. After all, he worked hard; he did not gain his wealth through illegal or immoral means. In fact, his farm provided jobs for others. And he was wise to save for his future. Yet, he was a fool before God. Why? Because he wisely provides for his body but not for his soul. Hubbard puts it so simply yet effectively:

He was wise to secure himself against material want for the time which would probably be his. There was no folly in this. There was every probability that he would live for many years, and he was wise to prepare for that. But while that was only a probability, there was the positive certainty that his soul would live through all eternity, and he was a thrifless fool to make no provision for that... Wise to foresee and supply the needs of the body; fool to imagine that the soul can be fed with corn and wheat.²⁸

In our world today, it is very easy to get caught up in the race for more and more things. People think that there is life in the acquisition of wealth because it provides security, hope and fulfilment. But what is life? Is it the life here on earth or is it the life beyond? Jesus says eternal life is knowing God (Jn 10:10); security is in giving (Prov 11:24); and true hope and fulfilment are in God (Jer 17:7-8; Ps 146; 1 Chron 4:10; Eph 3:17-19). Jesus says, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?" (Mt. 16:24-26; Mk. 8:34-36; Lk. 9:23-25).

²⁸George H. Hubbard, *The Teachings of Jesus in Parables* (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1907), 436-437.

This parable also teaches us about the function of wealth or possessions in our life: they are not only for us, not for our benefit alone; our wealth and possessions are meant for others as well (1 Chron. 29:3-4; Mt.6:1-4; 19:21; Acts 2:45; 4:32-36;11:29). We work hard not because we want to enrich ourselves with material things but to provide for the needs of those who depend on us: our families and loved ones; other people—the needy, the disprivileged, the disabled, the poor in our community. God wills that we help these kinds of people with our resources, even financial resources (Mk. 10:17-31).

Another lesson the parable wishes to teach disciples of Jesus today is to have a heavenly perspective of life here on earth. Indeed, true disciples of Jesus Christ understand that the lives they live here have eternal repercussions. They do not live for this life only but also for the life beyond death, which is what really matters the most. They understand that they are just pilgrims here on earth. Their real home and treasures are in heaven not in this world.

The value of savings is also put in perspective here. If we think that the best investment is in the businesses of this world, we are mistaken. Rather, it is in God's business. Stocks, bonds, treasury bills, and savings accounts will indeed give us earthly dividends but our investment in God's business (helping the poor and the sick, missions, and compassionate ministries) will yield us eternal, heavenly blessings.

Indeed, this parable is a treasury of eternal truths and lessons. And it speaks significantly and relevantly to the people of today, who have been caught up in materialism more than any generation in history. We will all do well to draw from this spiritual storehouse and feed our souls with spiritual food than with material things. May we all heed and obey God's Word for us in this wonderful parable.

MIDDLE CLASS REDEMPTION

Cynthia C. Datu

Introduction

I attend a middle-class church. I know it is middle-class because it was meant to be one. Our American Founding Pastor had a clear vision for the indigenous church he was instructed to build in the Philippines, and it was to be no shopfront affair. He rented space in a building in the Greenhills area alongside EDSA, from which the blaring sign “FAITH FELLOWSHIP” called to thousands of commuting office workers daily. His initial congregation, naturally, was made up of the working class.

Later, as our denomination grew and made the push northward to Central Luzon, the board decided to establish churches primarily in urban centers, and preferably in buildings close to the town plaza. There were times when circumstances forced the pastors to choose either to move to a smaller place (such as a house or a room over someone’s garage) or dissolve the church. Without exception, our Superintendent (the same Founding Pastor) counselled them to close shop rather than to downsize. It was obvious that his vision was for our denomination to be a ministry to middle class folk, and he was not prepared to compromise that plan. Now there are local denominations (like the Church of the Nazarene) that focus on the rural areas, and some (like the Greenhills Christian Fellowship) that cater to the rich. Ours, although we welcome everyone, is home mostly to blue- and white-collar workers, middle managers, and small entrepreneurs who are blessed to know what it is to earn their keep.

Why is this significant? Well, because this sector has been either maligned or overlooked by Filipino theologians for far too long. The fact is that the middle class was responsible for the people power “revolutions” in 1986 and 2001 that transformed this country and gave us a sense of national pride and identity. To disregard the middle class is to ignore a force potent enough to create social change and build a nation.

I. The Dilemma of the Middle Class

I belong to the middle class and I understand the relentlessness of the daily grind. We do not fall below the poverty line and therefore are not demographically “poor,” yet neither do we have enough to identify with the demographically “rich.” Those two sectors know who they are. They have either woes or wealth; we are somewhere in between. We minister to them and we work for them, but we are left to amuse ourselves. And as it goes, they receive the surplus of social attention. We are the doers; they are the objects of our doing.

We in the middle class—specially the lower middle class—have dreams. Wishes and plans and aspirations to improve our lot. However, we also have responsibilities. We are the ones who religiously pay bills we cannot weasel out of or evade. We are the ones who have had enough of an education to know what decency is and to have no excuse for wrongdoing. We are blamed by the poor for siding with the oppressive rich, and we are disdained by the rich for being “lower class.” Our question really is, who are we? And following that, where do we belong? What do we want out of life?

Many of us spend more than we can to live out middle class fantasies; we wallow in pretense and pretentiousness to escape dreary reality. And so we buy American pop music CDs and dress like J-Lo and dye our hair; but then we go home and cook anything but beef because it costs too much. We struggle to keep out of poverty and struggle to attain the comforts wealth brings. We want a better life than this, but do not know where to get it. We hope but sometimes find the effort too taxing to keep up.

Does religion help? That is hard to say. We fill the Catholic churches in superstitious compliance with the theology of retribution. Many of us have sought answers by going deeper. We have joined Couples for Christ and Singles for Christ and participated in the Parish Renewal Experience (PREX), and emerged as Bible-reading “renewed Catholics.” Others among us have become born again and found spiritual wealth and liberation. However, this faith dimension has marginalized us further from mainstream society, and we now have to deal with a “dual life”—one in the safe confines of our Christian community, and another in the rough-and-tumble world we are commissioned to evangelize. But how are we to reach them if we cannot identify with them? Who are we, and where do we belong? What do we want out of life?

We might find some answers in history.

II. A Brief Look at History

The late '70s and early '80s was a period of political and theological foment in the Philippines. The country was held in a stranglehold by Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos, who exhausted all means to remain in power. They not only gagged the opposition, they also milked dry every economic resource available to them for personal gain. Much of their activity was common knowledge yet only a handful had the courage and the means to challenge them. Filipinos were immersed in *ban*,¹ and the ghosts of assassinated political opponents and their families wailed for vindication.

Already regionally fragmented, the Philippines crumbled further as ideology and the pursuit of mammon rent the established political parties asunder. Social commitments were ignored and promises left unfulfilled; people lived practically at the pleasure of the regime. In the face of this disintegration, people found balance, as usual, in their "in-groups"—family and friends with whom they primarily identified.²

Anthropologist F. Landa Jocano has described the in-group as the traditional normative source of values in Philippine society.³ Locano claims

¹According to Korean *minjung* theologian Suh Nam-Dong, *ban* is "the suppressed, amassed and condensed experience of oppression caused by mischief or misfortune so that it forms a kind of 'lump' in one's spirit." Another *minjung* theologian, Hyun Young-Hak, describes *ban* as "the sense of unresolved resentment against injustice suffered, a sense of helplessness because of the overwhelming odds against, a feeling of total abandonment ('Why hast thou forsaken me?'), a feeling of acute pain of sorrow in one's guts and bowels making the whole body writhe and wiggle, and an obstinate urge to take 'revenge' and to right the wrong all these constitute." Feminist theologian Chung Hyun Kyung says it is the "typical, prevailing feeling of the Korean people." (Cf. Chung Hyun Kyung, "'Han-pu-ni': Doing Theology from Korean Women's Perspective," *Frontiers in Asian Christian Theology: Emerging Trends*, R.S.Sugirtharajah, ed. [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994], 55.)

²Rodrigo D. Tano, *Theology in the Philippine Setting: A Case Study in the Contextualization of Theology* (Quezon City: New Day, 1981), 39.

³F. Landa Jocano, *Filipino Value System: A Cultural Definition* (Manila: Punlad, 2000), 53-57. Jocano identifies this groupthink element as *asal*, which, "as a standard, refers to sets of dominant and commonly shared values and norms which Filipinos use as points of reference in expressing themselves, interpreting the actions of others, and in regulating interpersonal and intergroup relations... Good character is known as *mabuting asal* and right conduct is *magandang asal*... Both aspects of the concept reinforce each other in defining the parameters of what is

that whereas Filipinos have a general idea of the true, the good and the beautiful, we determine specific values relativistically; thus, the idea that “what is right for one group may not be right for another” is, for us, a perfectly normal principle.

Locano asserts that in the Philippine setting, there is hardly any idea formed in individual minds that was not originally fostered by a group mentality. For good or ill, one’s personality, pattern of behavior, values, and modes of thinking are determined by what the group thinks and does and cherishes.⁴ This group-centeredness worked both for and against the Filipinos under martial law. It was behind the evil impulse that kept us subjugated, yet it was also the very reason why many of us survived.

The Church attempted to address this socio-political travesty theologically. It happened that elsewhere in Asia, voices were also being raised against oppressive social structures with colonial roots; the Philippine situation was a remarkable but not extraordinary experience. Theologians such as Aloysius Pieris (*An Asian Theology of Liberation*), Tissa Balasuriya (*Towards the Liberation of Theology in Asia*), and Henriette Marianne Katoppo (*Asian Theology: An Asian Woman’s Perspective*), among others, were exploring the path trailblazed by Latin American liberation theologians, and the Philippine Church was listening.

Spearheaded by Jesuit scholars, theological reflection in the Philippines began in earnest. In 1979, a group participated in the Asian Theological Conference in Wennapuwa, Sri Lanka and contributed treatises that influenced the crafting of the conference’s Final Statment.⁵ In a later study on Philippine Theology, Dr. Rodrigo D. Tano profiled the five leading Filipino theologians of his day (1981) and concluded that Catholics Carlos Abesamis, Catalino Arevalo, Edicio de la Torre and Protestant Emerito Nacpil (with the exception of Fr. Vitaliano Gorospe, who focused

good, true, and beautiful. In this way, we are able to distinguish the different levels of importance (sic) of things, events, feelings and actions. This distinction, in turn, allows us to eliminate those negative impulses from our choices and *to reject behavior which tend to work against our ideas (or those of the group) of the desirable. ...Without asal-based points of view, it would be difficult to express ourselves in concrete behavior because there are no standards of “rightness” to observe and no ethical or moral norms to follow*” (italics supplied).

⁴Locano, *Filipino Value System*, 53-57.

⁵Virginia Fabella, ed., *Asia’s Struggle for Full Humanity: Towards a Relevant Theology* (New York: Orbis, 1980), 8-10.

on moral rehabilitation), identified the liberation of the poor from oppression as the principal theological task of the moment.⁶

With slight differences of approach and perspective (some veering toward Marxist dialectic), the Filipino theologians in resonant self-recrimination and abasement decried society's indifference to the plight of the poor, calling such apathy sin and moral depravity. They railed against their middle-class theology, born of middle-class privileges and middle-class longings,⁷ and vowed to divest themselves of this shameful mindset. The demand was for praxis; the call, for commitment.⁸

In an era where the line between oppressor and oppressed was so clearly drawn, identifying the victim was not so hard. Everyone felt victimized (except, of course, the victimizers), and the demarcation between social classes was no longer as clear.

On one side were the regime and the rich associated with the regime; on the other side was every one else—rich, middle class, and poor. The political situation was such a cathartic experience that it brought our common denominator as Filipinos and human beings to the fore and, significantly, forced the “apparatus” of our social existence (factors which we now considered inessential or secondary such as class and status) to the periphery.

Oppositionist Benigno Aquino's assassination on August 21, 1983 gave voice to the middle class. He was one of us, and we unitedly decried the violation of our in-group. Individuals from the middle class—unheard of and unthinkable as political leaders—took to the streets and mobilized both rich and poor in their communities. Soon, the protest movement was beyond quelling.

On February 23, 1986, after the mock elections that spuriously validated Marcos, a midnight call over Radio Veritas (a Catholic radio news station) sent hundreds of thousands of the middle-class to stand vigil at EDSA with the poor and the rich for the protection of liberty. In spite of the fragmentation of Philippine society, a bond was formed under the leadership of the middle class, which had found its identity in the

⁶Tano, *Theology in the Philippine Setting*, 87-142.

⁷Carlos H. Abesamis, “Reflections from the Philippines” in *Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity: Towards a Relevant Theology*, Virginia Fabella, ed. (New York: Orbis, 1980), 136.

⁸Abesamis, “Reflections from the Philippines,” 136.

quintessentially Filipino concept of *bayanihan* (community). We were suddenly one large in-group at EDSA, individuals with a common enemy, with a common aspiration for freedom, with a common sense of goodwill toward each other. This was the vaunted “Spirit of EDSA” that was first felt among the risk-taking middle-class as they rallied in the streets in the early days of the movement.

Theologian Evelyn Miranda-Feliciano describes this phenomenon from a Christian perspective:

My question on where to situate myself as a Filipino Christian in the context of what was happening in my country was answered dramatically. It was at Gate 2 of Camp Aguinaldo, fronting Camp Crame, the two camps which became the center of the four-day revolution against the dictatorial regime of Marcos. ...

It was awesome. ...

The awesomeness lay not only in the numbers—estimated to be 2.5 million by noontime that day (Feb. 24)—but in the unity of spirit and the concern for one another. It seemed that in fighting for a just cause, people turned to one another in common humanity. The sophisticated rich gladly held the shoulder of the grimy, rubber-sandaled poor to form one endless line to make human traffic possible.

It was as if, to a man, the entire Filipino nation had stood up to say decisively: “We can do it together—through prayer, by our collective presence and our willingness to die. We will bring this dictatorship to its knees—not by arms, but by reconciliation; not by violence, but in peace.

In those fearsome but glorious days, people of all religions, classes and kinds drank from the same plastic cups, slept on the same cold streets, hushed each other’s fears and apprehensions and inspired each other to heroism. Never the like has been seen before.⁹

Indeed. However, even in the recollection of such a glorious moment, the deferential attitude of the middle class becomes evident. It will be noticed that Miranda, though she spoke of rich and poor, omitted mention-

⁹Evelyn Miranda-Feliciano, “Dictatorship and Revolution: Our Philippine Experience” in *Emerging Voices in Global Christian Theology*, William Dyrness, ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 159-160.

ing the middle class in her comments, as if we do not exist. She did this most probably because she belongs to it. She did this because—like servants at a ball—we in the middle class do not often call attention to ourselves.

In January 2001, a second call to EDSA was sounded, this time through cellphones, the newest middle-class gadget, and against President Joseph E. Estrada. The enemy was not a dictatorship as before but, as the middle class had it, immorality personified. This uprising was called a moral revolution, again led and manned by the ubiquitous middle class (no longer to be confused with the poor masses, who were ostensibly absent and held their own version of People Power some weeks later). While this did not equal EDSA 1 in magnitude and nobility, it still marked the moral leadership of the middle class and their ability to foment social action when and where required.

Towards a Middle-Class Theology

Why has the middle class been ignored, theologically? It was originally due to the call for commitment to the poor and the challenge to *immerse* oneself in their milieu that the middle class identity was surrendered and ultimately forsaken. There was a conscious effort among theologians *not to be* middle class, *not to think* middle class, and *not to act* middle class because it was viewed as insensitive to suffering sensibilities.¹⁰ In theological circles at the time, the middle class identity was taboo.

The theology was based on the concepts of *kenosis* and service, so that Abesamis could speak of the need to be “remodeled or converted from the petty-bourgeois to a truly liberated grassroots consciousness and lifestyle.”¹¹ Yet even as the ATC Final Statement looked forward to the formation of a theology “liberated from its present race, class, and sex prejudices,” it declared that “to be truly liberating, this theology must arise from the Asian poor with a liberated consciousness.”¹² If this is not a class bias, then nothing is. A good theology addresses needs where they are found. Spiritual needs are not the monopoly of a particular class but are discovered in any class, any sex, and any nation. Part of the task of the Church is to

¹⁰“The Final Statement,” in *Asia’s Struggle*, 157.

¹¹Abesamis, “Reflections from the Philippines,” 138.

¹²“The Final Statement,” 158, 156.

recognize these various needs and endeavor to succor the needy as best it can.

Times have changed. The monsters in Philippine society are no longer hideous and are harder to recognize. The present struggle is for economic survival, and in the existential strain, values are lost.

The rich have options. They go abroad to escape the heat; and when that is not auspicious, they build expensive, centrally air-conditioned, Western-style malls to remind them of other places and climates. The poor are subtly intimidated into staying away from these centers, and so they do. They cluster instead in enclaves of poverty where the Church has massed with them in empathy and charity. The middle class, however, is drawn into the lairs of the rich and given more fodder for fantasy. We are left alone to find our way through the maze of false solutions in our search for meaning and peace.

And yes, we seek our identity. We know we do not belong in such places, that though we are free to enter and shop and gaze and enjoy, it is not home to us. The environment is wonderful but the people, though nice, are artificial; no real connection is made. Home is somewhere else, more native, more Filipino.

Once in 1986, and again in 2001, the middle class found its identity in crisis—as it rose to the challenge of community over individuality—and triumphed. In the in-group feeling, the middle class is at home, wherever it may find itself. We bond with others like ourselves and drop all pretenses to be thoroughly honest and open. A theology of the middle class must help it to connect with that identity. A theology of the middle class must help it use that identity to be a force for social transformation.

A striking characteristic of today's middle class mentality is loneliness and a search for purpose. We are seeking friends, people who will understand our struggle to make ends meet, who will recognize the victory we experience daily just by coming home with spirit and body intact. We seek a transcendent reality which tells us that all this hardship will make sense someday, perhaps in the afterlife; and if we endure, we will overcome. The Church tells us to pray and persevere, that Jesus is Lord and that He died to save us. But, as Fr. Pieris says, we need more than a doctrine, we need a message.¹³

¹³Aloysius Pieris, "Two Encounters in My Theological Journey" in *Frontiers in Asian Christian Theology: Emerging Trends*, R. Sugirtharajah, ed. (New York: Orbis, 1994), 145.

Christians have a message to deliver. The Bible tells us that Jesus is that friend, the One who sticks closer than a brother. He understands and rejoices that we have made it this far. He assures us of the happy afterlife if we trust in Him; and if we give Him our friendship, He will make sense of our here and now.

But who will tell the middle class this message? Do we pronounce it from the pulpit and then no more? The Church itself must reach out in friendship to the lost and lonely middle class—through small groups and informal Bible studies, through casual fellowships and fun encounters—in order to embody the kind of love Jesus the Best Friend offers.

Quite often we Christians approach people mainly with “an eye for the kill.” We are so bent on racking up numbers that we formulaically mouth the Gospel and expect immediate converts. Can we wait for the love of Jesus and the Holy Spirit to work in our “prospects”? Do we have that kind of patience? The poor are ministered to in their own way—their existential needs give us an easy entry into their world. The rich too, have their own special handle. However, with the middle class, it is friendship and honest love; and sometimes it takes time. Do we have the tenacity to wait? This ministry is sacrificial and forbearing. And yet John tells us that there is no greater love than the kind which lays its life down for a friend.

However, we bear a deeper message for middle class people who welcome Jesus as a friend. We must remind them of their potential, of their own ability to transform society, of their power to create order out of chaos. We must give them that identity by telling them of Jesus’ love for them and how it must be translated into love for others (Matt. 22:37-39, 1 John 4:7-21). In this—Jesus’ love, and their own altruistic love for others—they may find true meaning and purpose in life. The growth of fraternal love as a result of promoting a common cause is so naturally Filipino that it is quite easily communicated. The common cause this time, would be the Gospel and its revolutionary effect on society. If the born again middle class truly wants a better life, it must reach out in friendship with the Gospel to those who, like it did, are still floundering in loneliness and lostness.

Conclusion

If another political crisis hits the Philippines, it is quite likely that the frontrunners in the popular response would be the members of the middle class. We must prepare them even now for that moment. In a day when values are eroding and people are preoccupied with individual concerns, what a formidable force the ennobled, Jesus-bolstered middle class would

be. As leaders of a gigantic in-group, the sanctified middle class would effortlessly establish the norm for morality and ethics in society and emerge as small group facilitators all over the metropolis. What potential for a harvest!

Without negating the need for dedicated ministry to the poor and the upper classes, it must be stressed that the middle class must receive attention it has not previously enjoyed from the Church. It has been seen as individuals—as errand boys and girls, as congregation, as evangelistic targets—but not as a class with special needs, and not as partners in ministry. The times have changed, and the Church needs to hear the silent longing of the middle classes without delay. To understand the middle class and reach out to its members with the love of Jesus in order to save it from lostness and loneliness would be to develop a truly relevant theology for this important yet neglected sector of Philippine society. It would be extending a hand to a friend.

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AN AGE OF TRANSITION

Matthew 28:20

Larnie Sam A. Tabuena

Introduction

An attempt to reconstruct and analyze sequences of historical movements seems to be a formidable task, thus by no means probable without the indispensable aid and intellectual tutelage of a certain know-it-all professor, universally known as “TIME,” professor Time. Its unending lectures to the students of the “University of Life” in the successive chains of generations reveal the essence of human history, that is, “*the enduring recurrence of significant transitions.*” Professor Time said, “I observe the meaningless cycles of birth, maturity, and decay in the rhythm of natural created order. I watch the rise and fall of nations, the survival of the fittest and the elimination of the weak. Nevertheless, I discern a predetermined pattern, intelligible accounts, interconnection of events, and the unification of divergent movements in a meaningful whole under the direction of divine providential sagacity and rationality. I recognize in the development of human destinies the interplay of the ‘contingent and the unforeseen.’” And then fixing his piercing eyes upon us asks, “In this world of dynamic transition, constant change and unprecedented innovations, where are you going?”

The promised presence of Christ in His great commission reflects the basic premise that the Greek word *aion* by extension connotes perpetuity of duration. Classical minds believed that the only permanent reality is process itself. The world is constantly in a state of flux. It is always changing. Heraclitus, whose profound thoughts is said to have essentially influenced the cognitive framework of the New Testament writers, pioneered the idea of the logos-governed cosmos. He is known to the ancients as “the Obscure” due to the fact that his philosophical formulation

A Sermon preached in the APNTS Chapel Service, January 28, 2003.

is difficult to decipher. He asserted that “you can’t even step in the same river twice.” The moment you withdraw your foot and put it where you think you had previously placed it, it would be a different river. According to him, common sense is mistaken on two accounts: primarily in thinking that the world is stable, as well as in thinking that the world consists of things—reality is movement, process, and change.

The Idealists affirm that the process is “inherent contradictions” propelled by opposing forces, which proceed *ad infinitum*. Opposition of unique and different ideas finds synthesis virtually indicating tentative cessation in the form of impasse or peace. However, in the course of time, the accepted idea will be challenged by new emerging antithesis and thereby the dialectic confrontation between the established thesis and current antithesis will consequently usher into another synthesis.

On the other hand, anthropologists have labelled the changing social phenomena as mobility. It is the movement of people from one status to another. People’s status quo in any case never retains permanence in a grand scheme of things and duration.

Ours is an era of radical transition from myth to modernity to postmodernity. Today, the growing sense of dissatisfaction with established/institutionalized systems has led to the accommodation of the new approach to and understanding of reality. It is technically called a *paradigm shift* by way of scientific revolutions. The existing model is riddled by anomalies and is unable to solve emerging problems. Therefore a new model should be created to face the changing times and situations.

Postmodernism is generally understood as innate incredulity to any metanarratives. It is indeed a defiance of whatever which is attributed as objective truth or fact claims. Complexity, indecision, dehumanization are the prevalent propensities of this transitional age as well as the natural product of technological development. The film entitled “Matrix” explains the fact that technology seized our sense of reality. What is real? The real is an electrical signal interpreted by your brain. In the postmodern age, the singular consciousness of humanity is conditioned to respond to machine, or more accurately, dependent on machine to survive. The matrix is a computer-generated dream world. It is a neural interactive simulation keeping us under control to change human beings into battery. As long as it exists the human being would not be free.

Our world has experienced sweeping, revolutionary changes. We live in a global society that is filled with fear, doubt and uncertainty. In such unstable milieu, deprived of intellectual, social, and spiritual certitude, how could we determine the *foundational constants* that will secure our Christian

faith against the vicissitudes of time? How can our existence and ministry be turning points of history?

The Great Commission unveils eternal truths to encourage us with the passion of a mission driven zeal. Christ said, “teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20).

There are three fascinating insights in this verse:

FIRST FOUNDATIONAL CONSTANT: *“The Truth, who is Jesus Christ, is a never changing Word/Message in the midst of shifting paradigms.”*

Postmodernism denies ultimate truth on the basis of uniquely different worldviews. Each fragment of phenomenal actuality represents the whole reality. Scientific truth is a correspondence between the ideas in the mind and the existing state of affairs. It is the final conclusion reached by collective scholarly community by means of critical thinking, rigorous arguments and series of experimentation. The result can always be verified and falsified in the course of time.

Studies have shown that the halfway point of all human knowledge is located less than ten years ago; that is man’s knowledge has doubled within the past decade. Every sixty seconds, two thousand typewritten pages are added to man’s knowledge, and the materials produced every twenty four hours takes one person five years to read. It necessarily implies that we never have access to the bulk of information the world offers. It is beyond our capacity to know every single truth in the universe. However, we are supposed to be acquainted with the “ultimate truth” that has significant bearing to our existence or non-existence. Indeed, it is our ultimate concern.

A very intelligent theologian finally completed his magnum opus, a five-hundred volume written work entitled, “A complete definition of God.” Elated by his achievement, he advertised the opus and boasted that his work could explain the complete mystery of God. All that wants to know about God is in my book.

An angel appeared to him and said, give me a copy of your work. God wants to read it. The theologian gave the angel a copy, and the angel left. In less than a minute, the angel was back, returning the book to the theologian. Did God read my book? The theologian asked. Yes, the angel answered. What did God say about it? God will sue you for libel, the angel replied.

He said that everything you wrote about him in your book is not true. No one knows everything about God.¹

In biblical Christianity, the truth is personal. It is not the product of arguments and experiments. Jesus Christ did not say I will teach you the truth, but He said, “I am the Truth.” It is not something to be attained but someone to be accepted. The Truth, Jesus Christ, is the living incarnated Word, message of God.

Without any sense of superiority or air of arrogance, Paul tells the Ephesians that he is a man who knows a secret. He says, “You may perceive that I understand the secret of Christ.” Christ is more than a historical figure, He is the principle of unity toward which all history is moving. God’s ultimate goal for his whole creation is that the whole universe, all in heaven and on earth, might be brought into a unity in Christ. The existential encounter with that truth produces transformation of beings, perspectives, vision, and mission. This knowledge is never acquired. It was by revelation that His secret was made known to us. Human beings in their religiosity reach up heavenward to discover truths. God descends to our very level to reveal Jesus Christ, the Ultimate Truth of God. As the lyric of the song goes,

Everything is changing everyday, there are things we
thought would last forever, that will fade and slip away.

You can set your feet upon this rock that will not move.

You can trust all your tomorrows to this never changing
Truth.

Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever.²

SECOND FOUNDATIONAL CONSTANT: *“Our call to be something different is an ever-binding commitment as witnesses, catalysts, and ambassadors of the king of kings.”*

How would you like to be the turning point of history? Prior to Thales, the Greek conception of the world, its organization and operation, was predominantly theocentric, anthropocentric, and supernaturalistic. The world was as it was and did what it did because of the will of gods. To every question you ask, you get but a single answer, “the gods willed it.” For

¹Andrew Maria, *Vestiges of Wisdom, Vol 11: An Anthology of Anecdotes* (Manila: St. Paul, 1993), 23.

²Claire Cloninger, “Yesterday, Today, and Forever.” Maranatha Music.

instance, if lightning struck, ordinary Greeks have in mind that Zeus, the highest god of Olympus, had hurled another thunderbolt. When the sun moves around the heavens all knew that Apollo was driving it in his fiery chariots. It is usually taken to be 585 BC, for about that time Thales offered distinctive and different explanation of the world and phenomena. He saw natural processes as subject not to the whims and caprices of human-like gods but rather to the order and rationality of a law-governed world. He radically broke the prevailing worldview of his time. This crisis event credited him as the father of Western philosophy as well as the birth of the Greek miracle.

If you are called to be something different to represent Christ culture and kingdom values to the world and you lack the boldness to do so, then you cannot be the turning point of history. You cannot be the father and the mother of faith. Kings' ambassadors are not compromisers, they model heavenly culture and dictate fashion to the world rather than being dictated by the mold of this world. "You are in the world but you are not of this world."

We can pray, work, and give confidently toward the completion of His great commission knowing that whatever we invest will surely yield eternal dividends. No bank can provide those guarantees that will beat the return you will get for investing in eternal promises like those found in Christ's great commission. Just as an eagle stirs up her nest, flutters over her young, to excite them to fly (Deuteronomy 32:11), so Christ stirs up His disciples to disperse them to go into all the world to effect transformation in the lives of those who might sense the uniqueness of spiritual vitality ensuing from the difference Christians can make in their being and doing.

THIRD FOUNDATIONAL CONSTANT: *"God's kingdom, the dynamic community of faith, is a never-ending fellowship that edifies, transforms, renews beings by instilling into them direction, meaning and purpose after the Will of God."*

In a caterpillar, an embedded purpose is present that gives direction into a creative metamorphosis. There was once an ugly, creepy, creature limited by space, time, and speed. After undergoing long painful processes of incarceration inside the cocoon, it is transformed into a beautiful butterfly unbounded by space and time. It now enjoys the considerable freedom it possesses.

Likewise, God's kingdom, the church, is a living organism that continually evolves into higher forms to adapt changes. God has planted a purpose that guides its development and progress in changing situations until it reaches the highest metamorphosis. Jesus told his disciples, "I will be with you." His presence gives direction, strength, power, guidance, and

determination in a changing age. Through loving fellowship, the members of Christ's body grow in grace and knowledge of Him. The members are molded, recreated, renewed by the exchange of spiritual energies.

The African impala can jump to a height of over 10 feet and cover a distance of greater than 30 feet. Yet these magnificent creatures can be kept in an enclosure in any zoo with a 3-foot wall. The animals will not jump if they cannot see where their feet will fall. Faith is the ability to trust what we cannot see, and with it we are freed from the flimsy enclosures of life that only fear allows to entrap us. The body of Christ as the recipient of God's commission has been endowed with proportionate capacity to transcend the confines of meaninglessness and earthbound existence. This collective entity can rise above its circumstances to pursue considerable growth by exercising personal optimism of faith. Faith does not operate in the realm of possible. There is no glory for God in that which is humanly possible. Faith begins where man's power ends. God engages the community of faith organically through divine-human mentoring enterprise for the edification of the saints and equips them for the works of service.

Conclusion

It is seldom the immediate pressure of the task that causes us to falter, but the vexing uncertainty of changing times, when we begin to doubt and question the rightness or purpose of what we are doing as well as the stability of principle constituting our noble vocation. Upon embracing a new calling, our courage to go on despite the intricate journey of our commissioned responsibility should be grounded in the truths of regulative spiritual constants. James Michener, in his novel *The Covenant*, tells of a remarkable Bantu Custom. When lack of rain and green pastures forced Bantu to move great distances to find new watering spots and hunting terrain, the women joyfully carried large eggs containing their essential water supply. While the eggs were full and heavy, the women walked with light step. But as the days dragged on and their physical burden became lighter, their hearts became heavier and their gait slower. For with the lightness of their physical burden, their hope of survival slowly ebbed away. Similarly, we can have light hearts even though the burden is great in the midst of perpetual change, radical transition, and escalating innovations. This has something to do with the a sense of purpose, meaning, value, commitment in spite of and as well as Christ's Promised Presence with us when He said, "I will be with you even in changing modes of time."

A WESLEYAN RESPONSE TO RELIGIOUS PLURALISM: EVALUATION OF JOHN WESLEY'S THEOLOGY

Satish Robert Manmothe

Introduction

Ramakrishna Paramhansa (1836-1886), a Hindu priest, was one of the most influential religious figures in India. He once said¹:

A lake has several ghats. At one the Hindus take water in pitchers and call it *jal*; at another the Musalmans take water in leather bags and call it *pani*. At a third, the Christians call it water. Can we imagine that it is not *jal*, but only *pani* or water? How ridiculous! The substance is one under different names, and everyone is seeking the same substance; only climate, temperament and name create differences.

A statement such as this represents the Hindu thinking that all the world religions are equal and valid ways to perceive the same ultimate reality. This thought, popularly called *Religious Pluralism*, has become a growing challenge to the exclusiveness of Christianity today. It says that no particular religion can claim its exclusiveness in the light of others. It is arguing against what in traditional evangelical Christian theology is the idea that Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation and that God's salvific grace is active only within the Christian faith. Therefore, the non-Christians or the unevangelized are bound to hell. As a consequence Christian theology is feeling the intense pressure of defending its uniqueness.

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¹M. M. Thomas, "India: Toward an Indigenous Christian Theology," in *Asian Voices in Christian Theology*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1976), p. 16, citing *The Gospel of Ramakrishna* (New York: Ramakrishna Vivekananda Center, 1942), p. 35.

In response to this situation, scholars from different Christian denominations have tried to answer this challenge of religious pluralism in various ways, yet it seems an appropriate response from the Christian church has been slow in coming. Evangelical Christians especially, says Dean Flemming, “have been relatively slow to grapple with the theological issues raised by the reality of religious pluralism.”² As a consequence, there may not be an adequate evangelical theology of religions on the scene. What the Christian church, (in particular the evangelical wing of the church), probably needs today is to formulate such a theology which could answer questions satisfactorily about the salvation and the eternal destiny of the unevangelized or those who heard about but choose not to accept Christ as their Saviour. (This does not, in any way, suggest that the satisfactory efforts have not been made yet.)

Therefore, it is appropriate to undertake this important study here and *attempt* to create a proper Wesleyan response to the delicate issue of religious pluralism.

I. Pluralism and the Bible³

A suitable definition of religious pluralism would be that all world religions including Christianity are equal and valid ways to human salvation. Gnanakan defines pluralism as, “an attitude that will accept equal validity for all religions.”⁴ Therefore, Christianity is not the only way to God’s kingdom as traditionally understood. It proclaims that every one including Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist has an equal access to heaven. In other words, one does not have to be necessarily believing in Jesus Christ for one’s eternal salvation. Thus the truth claim of Christianity that Jesus is the only way, the truth and the life becomes null and void.

However, this phenomenon of religious pluralism is not a new one. The Christian Church has been endeavouring to deal with it since its

²Dean Flemming, “Foundations for Responding to Religious Pluralism,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 31:1 (Spring 1996): 52.

³Flemming has written a very good paper on the issue of religious pluralism mentioned in the Bible. Therefore, the entire discussion here is taken from his article: Dean Flemming, “Foundations for Responding to Religious Pluralism,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 31:1 (Spring 1996): 52.

⁴Ken Gnanakan, *The Pluralistic Predicament* (Bangalore, India: Theological Book Trust, 1992), p. 2.

beginning. Historically, Christianity has faced challenges from Greco-Roman mythology and philosophy, various religious controversies and conflicts within itself, and rise of Islam. And this, “exposure to other religions gained through these contacts helped to rekindle a diversity in theological evaluations of the availability of some knowledge of God apart from the definitive revelation of Christ.”⁵

But still the roots of religious pluralism go as far back as to the biblical times. In the Bible itself we find the tension between the exclusiveness of Yahweh’s religion and the pagan religions.

The Bible seems to picture the God of the Bible as very exclusive. For example, in the Old Testament, He warned His people not to follow the pagan religious practices of the Canaanites (Deut. 12:31). One of the ten commandments required people not to have any other gods besides Yahweh. Even the prophets of Israel repeatedly denounced and mocked the worship of false gods made with human hands (e.g., Isa. 40:19-20; 44:9ff.; Jer. 10:1-16; 51:17-18; cf 1 Kings 18:27ff). Thus in the Old Testament we find a negative evaluation of human religions and a strong reaction against the worship of other gods.⁶

In the New Testament the theme of exclusiveness continues. The writers and apostles stressed the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. Peter, referring to Jesus Christ, said in Acts 4:12, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (NIV). Speaking within a context of religious pluralism in Corinth, Paul said that the gods of the pagan world were in fact non-existent beings and affirmed that there was only one God and one Lord Jesus Christ (see 1 Cor. 8:5-6). He went on to warn the believers in Corinth not to participate in feasts of idols because these idols in reality were demons and therefore their worship was demonic (1 Cor. 10:18ff). The church in Pergamum (a center of religious pluralism in Asia Minor) accommodated the pagan teachings and practices which in the book of Revelation are compared to Israel’s being led astray by Balaam into idolatry and immorality (Rev. 2:14ff).⁷

⁵Randy L. Maddox, “Wesley and the Question of Truth or Salvation Through Other Religions (Presidential Address),” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 27:1/2 (Spring-Fall 1992): 9.

⁶Flemming, “Foundations,” p. 55.

⁷Ibid., p. 60.

Thus we assume that both testaments (Old and New) are against the worship of other gods and that the God of the Bible warned His people not to follow the pagan ways. As Flemming says, “The New Testament nowhere contradicts the Old Testament understanding of human religions as idolatrous, distorted by sin, under satanic influence and unable to save.”⁸

However, we also find that the same God who demanded separation of His people from the pagans has not limited His self-revelation to the community of Israel only, rather He has extended it outside this sphere. For example, in the Old Testament, He called Abraham out of a pagan Semitic culture. He revealed Himself to outsiders such as Abimelech, king of Gerar, and Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, in the form of a dream (Gen. 20:3; Dan. 4). Balaam, the pagan Mesopotamian diviner, was used by God to speak His word of blessing to Israel (see Num. 22:18-20 & 23:3ff). Job from the land of Uz, was spoken to by God directly and was called by Him as His servant and “a blameless and upright man who fears God and shuns evil” (Job 1:8).⁹

Also, in the New Testament, Jesus commended the “great faith” of the Roman centurion (Matt. 8:5-13) and of the Canaanite woman (Matt. 15:21-28). Both of these were gentiles and “outside the stream of God’s special revelation to the Jews.”¹⁰ But later on at the end of the passage in Matt. 8:5-13 we see that Jesus was implying the inclusion of both Jew and Gentile in the messianic banquet in the kingdom of heaven (8:11). Also, in Acts 17:16ff, Paul had called the Athenians as very religious people and recognised that there was something genuine in the religious life of these pagans.¹¹

Thus, we see that the Bible seemingly reveals the tension between exclusiveness and inclusiveness. On one hand, both testaments (Old and New) appear to be showing the exclusiveness of Yahweh, yet on the other they seem to be painting Him as an inclusive God. They indicate God’s inclusiveness in calling and bringing in the gentiles and using them for His purpose and glory. They also show us God’s grace is not limited to the Jewish community only, rather is at work outside among the gentiles leading them and their cultures toward God. There were people in the

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., pp. 56-57.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 62.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 62-65.

Bible who, although “outsiders,” yet had an authentic relationship with the true God. Based on this discussion, it seems that the Bible gives us both pictures about God: He is an exclusive God in a sense that He does not want other gods to be worshipped; and He is an inclusive God as far as His calling of various people is concerned. One more observation might be assumed here is that the Bible views other religions, “positively as sources of insight and as preparations for faith in the true God.”¹²

II. John Wesley and Religious Pluralism

When we come down to the Wesleyan era, we notice that John Wesley was not totally ignorant of the issue of Christianity’s relation to other religions either. However, it would be interesting to note that whatever ultimate attitudes he had toward other religions he developed them over a period of several years.

Maddox suggests that Wesley had gone through three main periods as far as his theological thinking was concerned: the “early Wesley” (1733-38), “the middle Wesley” (1738-65) and the “late Wesley” (1765-91).

Earlier in his life Wesley characterised “all religion of those who have no revelation of Christ as demonic.”¹³ The reason for this conclusion was his disappointing missionary work among the native Indians in Georgia (1736). Before he left for Georgia he had high hopes about the native Americans. He thought that these people possessed “a moral and religious clarity free from the distorting sophistications and ambitions of advanced culture.”¹⁴ This understanding was based on the fact that he considered these people to be innocent “as little children, humble, willing to learn and eager to do the will of God.”¹⁵ As a consequence, he assumed that they

¹²Ibid., pp. 58-59.

¹³Maddox, “Wesley and the Question of Truth,” pp. 14-15

¹⁴Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁵Wesley in his letter to a friend (October 10, 1735) writes his motives for going to Georgia. Obviously this letter was written before his departure to Georgia: “My chief motive . . . is the hope of saving my soul. I hope to learn the true sense of the Gospel of Christ by preaching it to the Heathen. They have no comments to construe away the text; no vain philosophy to corrupt it; no luxurious, sensual, covetous, ambitious expounders to soften its unpleasing truths, to reconcile earthly-mindedness and faith, the Spirit of Christ and the spirit of the world. They have no party, no interest to serve, and are therefore fit to receive the Gospel in its

would “immediately discern if his doctrines were authentic or not.” However, later on in his actual encounter with them he was disillusioned and disappointed. He realised that he had unrealistic expectations of these people which resulted in his classifying their religion as demonic.¹⁶ This disillusionment following 1738 caused him to give his most negative evaluations of initial universal revelation¹⁷ of God. He did not deny it, but he saw it as nearly empty. However, by 1757 he believed that some knowledge of God was available to all only that it was not effective in producing virtuous (i.e., holy) lives. Later on between 1765-91 there was a shift in his thought about other religions. At this time he suggested that God might have taught some heathens all the essentials of true religion (i.e., holiness) by an “inward voice.” In this period, he claimed that the initial universal revelation enabled people to infer that there was a powerful and merciful Creator.¹⁸

There could be two limitations which hinder a more detailed exploration about John Wesley’s (more particularly the “late Wesley”) views on his attitudes toward other religions. *Firstly*, because of the little reliable information that was available in the 17th and 18th century England on other religions Wesley was unfortunate to be able to deal with only Judaism, Islam and Paganism of his day. *Secondly*, in Wesley’s days religious pluralism might not have been a major concern to the church. As a consequence Wesley did not write more on this topic. Therefore, it further restricts our discussion on this issue on an extensive level.

simplicity. They are as little children, humble, willing to learn, and eager to do the will of God; and consequently, they shall know of every doctrine I preach, whether it be of God.” (John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 13 vols. [Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, n.d.], 12:38.) Hereafter cited as Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*.

¹⁶When we compare Wesley’s letter to his friend (10 Oct. 1735) (Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 12:38) with his interview with five Chicasaw Indians as mentioned in his journal on 20 July 1736 (Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 1:37-8), we find the difference between Wesley’s initial impression of the Indians before he went to Georgia and the actual state of these people when he came in contact with them. Therefore the reason for his disappointments.

¹⁷Initial universal revelation of God means all knowledge of God. The major source of this knowledge Wesley identified was inference from God’s creation. Maddox, “Wesley and the Question of Truth,” p. 14.

¹⁸Maddox, “Wesley and the Question of Truth,” p. 15.

But even whatever information was available to Wesley, later in his life he had been able to show maturity in his thoughts and attitudes toward other religions. He addressed the issue of religious pluralism through a few of his sermons although not using this term in a specific way. Concerning the discussion on non-Christian religions, he heavily depended upon the work of John Fletcher and in the process endorsed his thoughts. More particularly, he used Fletcher's "*Treatise on the various Dispensations of the Grace of God*" in one of his sermons—"On Faith"¹⁹—to reveal his position on this issue.²⁰ Based on this "Treatise" Wesley was able to see other religions or faiths that he knew in his days (the Materialist, Deist, Muslims, Jews) as

¹⁹Preached on April 9, 1788.

²⁰John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed. 12 vols. (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1979), 7:195-98. Hereafter cited as Wesley, *The Works*. Following discussion is taken from Wesley's sermon: "On Faith." Fletcher believed that there were four dispensations (the heathen, Jewish, John the Baptist, and Christian) which were distinguished from each other by the degree of light which God vouchsafed to them that were under each. He had organised these dispensations in a hierarchal order, the heathen (who received a small degree of light) being at the bottom of the ladder and the Christians (who received more light than any other) at the top of the ladder. Because of the small degree of light they received the heathen simply believed that there was a God who rewarded those people that diligently seek him. Next to the heathen dispensation were the Jews who were entrusted with the grand means of light, "the oracles of God" which helped them to have, "a clear and exalted views of the nature and attributes of God; of their duty to God and man" (p. 195). Above both the heathen and Jewish dispensation was the dispensation of John the Baptist whom a clearer light was given because Jesus himself affirmed that John the Baptist was greater than any man who was born of woman. However, above all these dispensations was the Christian dispensation. A Christian who was under this dispensation had received the Spirit of adoption whereby the Spirit of God witnessed with his spirit that he was a child of God. Further elaborating these points Wesley pointed out that there were several sorts of faiths and gave a few examples of them. He arranged them into ascending order. First, the Materialist who believed God to be material. Second, the Deist who believed in the existence of God but did not believe the Bible. Third, the heathen who received a light up to some degree. Wesley divided the heathen into two categories: the ancient heathen and the modern heathen (for example the Muslims). Fourth, the ancient Jews who lived between the giving of the law and the coming of Christ and believed in the coming of Messiah but had not had a chance to see him come. Fifth, the Roman Catholics who believed all that God had revealed as necessary to salvation. Sixth, the Protestants whose faith embraced only those truths as necessary to salvation and which were clearly revealed in the Bible.

worth respecting. He did not disregard the non-Christians and dismiss their religions as without any truth. On the contrary he had sympathetic attitudes towards them because he saw a possibility of some light in them albeit perhaps obscured. For instance commenting on the Islamic faith, he said that the Muslims might have been taught by God all the essentials of true religion by an inward voice.²¹ Also, Maddox comments that Wesley, “held out a significant hope that many of the heathen, in all of their variety, might have found a saving relationship with God by responding to the light that they have received.”²² This indicates that in Wesley’s mind the source of human salvation was God and not any religion. However, Wesley never equated Christian faith to any other faith. He believed that the Christians were more privileged because they received more light from God than the heathen, the Jews and even John the Baptist.

What made Wesley to say that the Islamic faith had all the essentials of true religion or the heathen have the obscured rays of light, therefore hope for salvation? The answer to this question lies in the heart of the doctrine of Preventive Grace.

III. Preventive Grace

Wesley was not the first theologian to use this term *preventive grace* but, “it seems to be more determinative for Wesley than any other teacher.”²³ “Preventive” literally means “going before.” Therefore, preventive grace means, “‘the grace that comes before’ and refers to God’s activity prior to any human movement toward God.”²⁴ Wesley believed that this grace—to which he sometimes referred a “natural conscience”—was possessed by every human being to a greater or lesser extent.²⁵ As a consequence every human being has the basic knowledge of God and also the ability to respond to His invitation. As Wesley says, “Something of this is found in every human heart, passing sentence concerning good and evil, not only in all Christian, but in all Mahometans [*viz*], all Pagans, yea, the vilest of

²¹Ibid., 7:197.

²²Maddox, “Wesley and the Question of Truth,” p. 12.

²³H. Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology*, (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1988), p. 338.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Wesley, *The Works*, 6:512.

savages.”²⁶ Thus, prevenient grace can be seen as all-inclusive in a sense that it does not discriminate or exclude human beings simply because they belong to different cultures or religious background. If God has created every human being then He must have given them the ray of light by which they would come to know their Creator. Wesley himself wrote that, “even the heathens did not remain in total darkness. . . . Rays of light have in all ages and nations gleamed through the shade.”²⁷ Therefore, the doctrine of prevenient grace excludes the possibility that some people, for instance the heathen in remote places, would die without any knowledge of their Creator or supernatural being. Similarly, if prevenient grace is possessed by every human being, then it must also be present in every religion—either be it Hinduism, Buddhism, or Islam—which provides basis for the spiritual life of these human beings.

However, Wesleyans also believe that this grace is not there by accident but has been provided because of God’s revelation in Christ. It is grounded in the atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross providing a universal benefit “to all men and women, extending backward in time, to the Hebrew patriarchs, as well as forward, to present-day Hindus or Buddhists with no knowledge of Jesus.”²⁸ Therefore, the basis for all human salvation becomes Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. As a consequence, Christ can be seen at work in all people, cultures and religions of the world. But this does not in any way mean that Christ is hidden within non-Christian religions accomplishing the salvation of their devotees without any commitment or trust in him. The salvific benefits of His atonement are not automatically applied to the followers of non-Christian religions.

Hence, prevenient grace is limited and it cannot be a saving grace in the sense that it is able to save a person.²⁹ Wesley pointed out that

²⁶Ibid., 7:345.

²⁷Floyd T. Cunningham, “Interreligious Dialogue: A Wesleyan Holiness Perspective,” in *Grounds for Understanding Ecumenical Resources for Responses to Religious Pluralism*, ed. Mark S. Heim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 194, quoting Wesley, “Walking by Sight and Walking by Faith,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Albert C. Outler, bicentennial ed., vol 4 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987), pp. 51-52.

²⁸Ibid., p. 192.

²⁹In other words, prevenient grace cannot be automatically considered as identical with saving grace. In making this distinction clear, Wesley used Mr. Tucker’s thoughts and claimed his words as his own in the “Principles of

prevenient grace did not offer salvation to any one nor did it mean that every one would be saved automatically because of its presence and benefits. For him, “the light of prevenient grace was far short of divine revelation and assurance of salvation.”³⁰ He simply saw it as the grace which went before salvation and only created both awareness and capacity in an individual to accept salvation. Therefore, even though the nature of prevenient grace is all-inclusive, yet its role does not go beyond leading a human being to Christ.³¹ It does not interfere in any way in an individual’s decision whether to accept or reject God’s saving grace. Hence, God’s saving grace still becomes resistible in a sense that it gives people a choice whereby they can either choose to respond to it or they can reject it.³²

But at the same time, however, Wesley did not view this grace as essentially different from or discontinuous with saving grace. The reason for this is that in Wesleyan understanding there are not many kinds of God’s grace. Prevenient grace can be a saving grace when a person responds to or exercises it. In other words it is the same grace applied depending upon the kind of human response.³³

Methodist”: “For the preventing grace of God, which is common to all, is sufficient to bring us to Christ, though it is not sufficient to carry us further till we are justified.” (Wesley, *The Works*, 8:373.) Along the line of Wesley, Dunning also points out that even though prevenient grace, also called as the general revelation of God to humankind, “provides for the possibility of salvation not limited to the accidents of birth (place and time), it is still incomplete in both its subjective and objective aspects. It does not provide a true picture of God’s relation to fallen man, and it does not lead in any significant way to salvation. Thus general revelation points beyond itself and drives toward special revelation.” (Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*, p. 170.)

³⁰Cunningham, “Interreligious Dialogue,” p. 195.

³¹The role of prevenient grace is to grant man the gracious ability to respond to the call of the gospel; to give power to human being for moral decisions as well as to say no to sin “even before any conscious entrance into the way of salvation.” (Cunningham, “Interreligious Dialogue,” pp. 192-93.) See also William M. Greathouse and H. Ray Dunning, *An Introduction to Wesleyan Theology*, (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1989), p. 72.

³²Allan Coppedge, *John Wesley in Theological Debate* (Wilmore, Kentucky: Wesley Heritage press, 1987), pp. 136-37.

³³See H. Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology*, (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1988), p. 339. Prevenient grace is not different or discontinuous with saving grace. As Wesley says: “Salvation begins with what is

Certainly, the doctrine of prevenient grace puts Wesleyans in the category of inclusivism. However, even though Wesleyan theology leans more toward the “inclusivist position”, yet it should not lead us in any way to conclude that the Wesleyans support some of the theories on “inclusivism” put forth by some leading theologians today (for example, Karl Rahner’s “inclusivism” and his theory of “Anonymous Christians”). Rahner believed that God’s grace could not be confined to Christianity only; rather it was present in all non-Christian religions and was in operation *anonymously* to qualify them as vehicles of salvation.³⁴ In other words, the non-Christian religions are sufficient for the salvation of their adherents without any conscious efforts and proper commitment to Christ.

IV. Who will be Save?

Based on the above discussion the question arises: then who will be saved? This is not an easy question to answer. Some point to the fact that everyone will eventually be saved while others say that there is an automatic salvation available because of the gracious and merciful nature of God. However, Wesleyan theology makes it clear that people are not automatically or eventually going to be saved simply because of God’s love for humanity and His grace given to them regardless of their religious beliefs. There is a human response required by God for a person’s salvation. And that response could be through faith³⁵ in divine action. Because of the

usually termed (and very properly) prevenient grace; including the first wish to please God, and the first dawn of light concerning his will, and the first slight transient conviction of having sinned against him. All these imply some tendency toward life; some degree of salvation; the beginning of deliverance from a blind, unfeeling heart, quite insensible of God and the things of God.” Wesley, *The Works*, 6:509. Also, the Wesleyan understanding makes it clear that there are not different kinds of grace accomplishing different kinds of results. God’s grace is one in nature. Simply there are “varying kinds of appropriations on man’s part of the benefits of grace.” (Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *Foundations of Wesleyan-Arminian Theology*, [Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1967], pp. 97-98.) Therefore, prevenient and saving grace are seen simply two movements of the same gracious activity of God.

³⁴Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism*, (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1983), p. 47.

³⁵Wesley defines faith in his sermon “On Faith”: “It is a divine ‘evidence and conviction of things not seen;’ of things which are not seen now, whether they are visible or invisible in their own nature. Particularly, it is a divine evidence and

nature of prevenient grace, every human being has faith in some sort of “God” either more on a superficial level or on a deeper level. The “superficial level faith” is not sufficient for human salvation. Wesley called it simply an *intellectual faith* and defined it as a mere conviction of certain truths (such as everyone believing in the existence of God). The faith which actually brings an eternal salvation of a human being is the *saving faith* which is a divine conviction of God and the things of God.

When we consider the meaning of the term “salvation” in Wesleyan theology, it has deeper meaning than one may think. It seems that Wesley himself divided the process of salvation in two parts. One was *initial salvation*³⁶ and the other was *proper Christian salvation*.

In *initial salvation* two things happen. *Firstly*, a person becomes aware of his sins against God; and *secondly*, he repents for those sins. This is due to the work of prevenient grace and convincing grace respectively. In *proper Christian salvation* a person is saved by faith through God’s grace. And this salvation consists of justification and sanctification.³⁷

If we consider this broader meaning of “salvation” then it is *possible*³⁸ that the non-Christians such as the Hindus or Buddhists maybe accepted by God for *initial salvation* provided that they “truly fear God and work righteousness.” But they have not completed the stage of *proper Christian salvation* yet. There is a support for this assumption in Wesleyan theology. Wesley himself developed a theory about the “Faith of a servant” and the

conviction of God, and of the things of God.” (Wesley, *The Works*, 7:195.)

³⁶In *initial salvation* Wesley had two steps: prevenient grace and convincing grace. According to him salvation begins with prevenient grace. The work of this grace at this stage is to arouse the wish to please God, to convict a person of his sins against God and to create sensitivity in heart for God. Convincing grace or repentance is the next step whereby a person receives a larger measure of self knowledge and experiences “a farther deliverance from the heart of stone” (*The Works of John Wesley*, 6:509).

³⁷According to Wesley in justification a person is “saved from the guilt of salvation, and restored to the favour of God.” And in sanctification a person is “saved from the power and root of sin, and restored to the image of God” (Ibid.).

³⁸The word *possible* is in italics here to emphasise the fact that it is just a possibility and not a reality.

“Faith of a son.”³⁹ According to this theory, he believed that the non-Christians (the Hindus, Buddhists, or Muslims) or the unevangelized (people who never heard of Jesus), if they had a saving faith and if they truly fear God and work righteousness could be the “servants” who had believed in God and were thus accepted by Him based on the degree of light they had received.⁴⁰ However, they were not yet called to be sons of

³⁹In explanation of this theory, in Wesley’s understanding there were degrees or levels of saving faith that could be gathered generally into two categories—the faith of a servant and the faith of a son. The servants were those who received a small degree of light, (for instance the non-Christians), and had been vouchsafed the small measure of faith. Their faith according to Wesley was the “faith of a servant.” Wesley put all the non-Christians in this category. The sons were those whose faith was, “. . . a divine conviction, whereby every child of God is enabled to testify, ‘The life that I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.’ And whosoever hath this, the Spirit of God witnesseth with his spirit, that he is a child of God” (Wesley, *The Works*, 7:199). Such a faith according to Wesley was a “faith of a son.” He saw born again Christians in this category. The main difference between these two faiths, according to Wesley, was that the “servant” lacked full assurance regarding the witness of the Spirit of God to his spirit. As Wesley says, “‘He that believeth,’ as a child of God, ‘hath the witness in himself.’ This the servant hath not” (Wesley, *The Works*, 7:199-200). Wesley had a reason to believe in this theory. His conviction was based on his own experience prior to his *Aldersgate experience*. In later years of his life, reflecting on his pre-Aldersgate experience, he could not conceive that he, or others in similar states, living faithfully and sincerely as servants of God, would be lost—even if such lacked the assurance of being “found” (Cunningham, “Interreligious Dialogue,” p.197). He believed that prior to his *Aldersgate experience* he had the faith of a servant which involved, “. . . the heathen honesty, the form of godliness, the sincerity of a real desire to serve God (to use the description of an “almost Christian”) but slightly more than that, I had, even then, a divine conviction which enables one to “fear God and work righteousness” (the faith of a servant)” (Robert G. Tuttle, Jr., *John Wesley: His Life and Theology* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978], p. 198).

⁴⁰This indicates that Wesley accepted the fact that every one, regardless of his religious allegiance who exercised the “faith of a servant” but might not have received the pardon from sin yet, was accepted by God and was received into the kingdom because he feared God and worked righteousness and the wrath of God did not abide on him (John Sanders, *No Other Name: An Investigation into the Destiny of the Unevangelized*, [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992], pp. 250-51); see also Wesley, *The Works*, 7:195-99. Therefore, the Hindus, Buddhists or Muslims could be servants of God with a “faith of a servant.”

God (Christians) because they did not have the assurance⁴¹ that was available to Christians through the Spirit.⁴²

So Wesleyan theology seems not to be dismissing the possibility of the salvation of non-Christians or unevangelized but stresses the need of *assurance* of it. However, not having assurance does not make these people completely lost. As Cunningham points out that in later years of Wesley's life, reflecting on his pre-Aldersgate experience, Wesley could not conceive that he, or others in similar states, living faithfully and sincerely as servants of God, would be lost—even if such lacked the assurance of being “found.”⁴³ However, Wesley insisted that the “servants” should strive for becoming the “sons.” He suggested that the only way they could have this chance to receive the adoption of sons is by continued crying to God. If they do so, “They will receive the faith of the children of God, by his revealing his only begotten Son in their hearts.”⁴⁴

Taking into account this discussion we may infer that all the non-Christians and unevangelized are accepted by God for their salvation upon one condition that they must truly fear God and work righteousness, but since they lack the full assurance of the Spirit they haven't received the full salvation yet. Thus the challenge still remains for these people to strive for a proper Christian salvation.

V. The Destiny

One of the most debated issues is the eternal destiny of those outside the Christian faith. Where would the non-Christians end up after their death? Religious pluralism argues against the traditional Christian belief that the non-Christians are bound to hell. At this stage there can be two types of non-Christians. One is those who never heard of Jesus Christ (unevangelized); for instance, tribes who live in far remote places and are untouched by the modern life. The other type is those who heard of Jesus Christ but chose not to accept Him.

⁴¹Cunningham defines assurance as “a seal or guarantee within oneself of present salvation. It is a spiritual assurance from God based on a present relationship with God” (Cunningham, “Interreligious Dialogue,” p. 196).

⁴²Maddox, “Wesley and the Question of Truth,” p. 15.

⁴³Cunningham, “Interreligious Dialogue,” p. 197.

⁴⁴Wesley, *The Works*, 7:199.

Of the Unevangelized

The Bible does not clearly shed any light on the destiny of the unevangelized who did not have chance to hear the gospel. Since the Bible portrays God as the God of universal love it is hard to believe that the unevangelized people who did not have the knowledge of Christ through no fault of their own would be automatically sent to hell. Wesley himself could not comprehend this thought.⁴⁵ He was quite comfortable with the idea that eventually it is God who would decide the destiny of these people. He believed that, “God never, in any age or nation, ‘left himself’ quite ‘without a witness’ in the hearts of men; but while he ‘gave them rain and fruitful seasons,’ imparted some imperfect knowledge of the Giver. ‘He is the true Light that’ still, in some degree, ‘enlightens every man that cometh into the world.’”⁴⁶ Though Wesley considered these lights dim compared to the brightness of the revelation of the Son of God in Jesus, he nonetheless maintained that they enabled God to reach the unevangelized.⁴⁷ In other words, God in His mercy and by His prevenient grace will reach out to the unreached and unfortunate and save them. But this is just a pessimistic hope and does not necessarily include the non-Christians who heard about Jesus but chose to remain non-Christians by not believing in Him. We do not exactly know what is there on the other side of this world. But we can, along with Wesley, be open to the possibility and hope for salvation of the unevangelized. Wesleyan scholar Maddox suggests that Wesley thought that, “. . . some of those who have never heard of Christ may experience a degree of God’s present saving power and enter into God’s eternal saving Presence.”⁴⁸ This leads us to infer that God will judge people according to the light they have received. Especially, about the ancient heathen Wesley said that, “Inasmuch as to them little is given, of them little will be required . . . No more therefore will be expected of them, than the living up to the light they had.”⁴⁹

Of the Non-Christians

⁴⁵Maddox, “Wesley and the Question of Truth,” p. 17.

⁴⁶Wesley, *The Works*, 7:258.

⁴⁷Sanders, *No Other Name*, p. 250.

⁴⁸Maddox, “Wesley and the Question of Truth,” p. 18.

⁴⁹Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 7:197.

What is the destiny of the people who deliberately reject Jesus Christ? Again we cannot pass any judgement on their destiny. It seems that Wesley himself was not quite sure as to how to tackle this issue. On one hand John 3:16 reminds us that those who do not believe in Jesus Christ are going to perish. On the other, Wesley said that he did not have any authority from the Scripture to judge the non-Christians nor did any one have right to sentence “the heathen and Muhammadan world to damnation.”⁵⁰ He was of the opinion that, “it is far better to leave them to Him that made them, and who is ‘the Father of the spirits of all flesh’; who is the God of the Heathens as well as the Christians, and who hateth nothing that he hath made.”⁵¹ Here again he arouses some pessimistic hope for the non-Christians in saying that since God is a God of good creation He will never despise His creation no matter who they are. Wesley confirmed these attitudes of his by giving three examples. Talking about the heathen he positively believed that, “. . . God will judge the heathens with some discrimination after all; not directly in terms of their appropriation or rejection of Christ, but in terms of how they respond to the gracious revelation (light) that they do receive.”⁵² Concerning the modern-day Jews (meaning those who existed after Jesus’ coming and who chose not to believe in Jesus) he said that even though they did not believe in Him, we as Christians still could not pass any judgement upon them. Rather we must leave them to their Master (God). “Any such may be servants, though not yet sons of God and on them the wrath of God does not rest.”⁵³ Writing about the the Muslims, he said that the Muslims, “. . . are rather to be pitied than blamed for the narrowness of their faith. And their not believing the whole truth, is not owing to want of sincerity, but merely to want of light.”⁵⁴

VI. Reflection

⁵⁰Ibid., 7: 353; see also Clark H. Pinnock, *A Wideness in God’s Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), p. 158.

⁵¹Sanders, *No Other Name*, p. 250, quoting Wesley, “On Living without God,” in *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., 14 vols. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1986), 7:353.

⁵²Maddox, “Wesley and the Question of Truth,” p. 18.

⁵³Pinnock, *A Wideness*, p.158.

⁵⁴Wesley, *The Works*, p. 197.

In the light of above discussion, several questions come to mind. Was Wesley indirectly suggesting that all world religions were equal and valid ways for taking their devotees to heaven? Is Wesleyan theology “inclusivist” in its position?

The Bible seems not in any way to allow salvation coming to people through other religions or apart from the grace of God of Israel. And Wesley also appears not thinking of other religions as capable of providing salvation to human beings apart from or independent of Jesus Christ. That is why he emphasised the doctrine of prevenient grace. He believed that because of God’s prevenient grace rooted in Jesus’ atoning work, “God has always and everywhere found a way into the hearts and lives of men and women.”⁵⁵ Nevertheless, this general revelation of God is not enough for eternal salvation. People still need to come into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Therefore, for Wesley this saving relationship depended on divine conviction and eventually adoption into God’s family when the Spirit of God witnesses with the person’s spirit that he is a child of God.

Based on this understanding, Wesley emphasised the need of a saving faith. Under saving faith he placed the non-Christians (only those who fear God and work righteousness) and Christians. But he saw these non-Christians as servants of God with a servant’s faith and Christians as sons of God with a son’s faith. However, Wesley did not look down upon the servants but was confident that they were accepted by God and had a hope that if they continued to cry before God they would eventually be adopted into God’s family. He said:

There is no reason why you should be satisfied with the faith of a Materialist, a Heathen, or a Deist; nor, indeed, with that of a servant. I do not know that God requires it at your hands. Indeed, if you have received this, you ought not to cast it away; you ought not in anywise to undervalue it; but to be truly thankful for it. Yet, in the mean time, beware how you rest here: Press on till you receive the Spirit of adoption: Rest not, till that Spirit clearly witnesses with your spirit, that you are a child of God.⁵⁶

In the light of this, Wesley did not undermine the faiths of others. Because of his understanding of prevenient grace he was able to acknowledge the truth and beauty outside the Christian faith. He said:

Whatsoever good is in man, or is done by man, God is the author and doer of it. . . . Some great truths, as the being and

⁵⁵Cunningham, “Interreligious Dialogue,” p.195.

⁵⁶Wesley, *The Works*, 7:200.

attributes of God, and the difference between moral good and evil, are known, in some measure, to the heathen world. The traces of them are to be found in all nations: So that, in some sense, it may be said to every child of man, 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; even to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.'⁵⁷

Thus, according to him the non-Christian religions have the light of God but to a smaller degree; therefore they are not in a state of offering any kind of assurance to their devotees. Therefore, Wesley never communicated that these religions were capable of saving their devotees. Even though he was in harmony with this view that Christians should have an attitude which respected the faith claims of other religions, yet, in light of the revelation of God in Christ, he could not allow Christ to become one saviour figure among many.⁵⁸

Furthermore, it seems that Wesley was not willing to discuss in detail about the destiny of the non-Christians or unevangelized. He never communicated that the unevangelized were bound to hell neither did he say that they would automatically be saved simply because they did not hear about Jesus Christ. He showed some pessimistic hope for the eternal salvation of non-Christians. Nevertheless, he chose to leave their destiny into the hands of a God who created them.

VII. Wesleyan Theology Today

This further leads us to a question: how does Wesleyan theology today respond to the issue of religious pluralism? Before this question is answered, we must recognize the vastness of Wesleyan scholarship therefore our inability to present a full picture on this topic. This leads us to affirm that it would be unfair to say that the following opinion represents the whole Wesleyan theology on this issue.

The Bible suggests to us that the operation of God's prevenient grace is clearly not limited to the community of Israel only. Rather it has been spread throughout the world and is active in every culture, every religion and every human being. This activity of God and His self-revelation in the cultural and religious context outside of Israel is intended as a preparation for God's historic revelation as Yahweh.⁵⁹ In other words, other religions

⁵⁷Wesley, *The Works*, 7:374& 6:506 .

⁵⁸Joe Gorman, "The Christian in a Religiously Plural World," *The Seminarian*, 19 May 1989, p. 2.

⁵⁹Flemming, "Foundations," pp. 58-59.

are seen as preparatory to the gospel if they reflect moral truth or right action. Therefore, some suggest that there is no discontinuity between Christianity and other faiths. Every religion is seen as “humanity’s sincere response to God and desire to know him.”⁶⁰ Floyd Cunningham says that the “Wesleyan thought . . . agrees with Karl Rahner that, ‘It would be wrong to regard the pagan as someone who has not yet been touched by God’s grace and truth.’”⁶¹ Because of this the suggestion is that Christian theology must not take a negative stance toward everything in other religions. Furthermore, it is recognised by some that whatever truth may be found in other religions is the result of the activity of prevenient grace in its revelatory function. Therefore, the Christians must gratefully accept such truth and use it as a point of contact to demonstrate the fulfilment of those glimmers of truth by the fuller revelation in Christ. “After all, Judaism is a non-Christian religion; and if Christianity is seen centrally to be a fulfilment of its truth as found in the Old Testament, to a lesser degree it could also be validly claimed that other religions also find their fulfilment in Him who is the Apex of all revelatory activity.”⁶²

However, some scholars also understand that *not all religions* can “predispose people to accept Christianity when confronted with it.”⁶³ They can help a person to search for God or they can also become a stumbling block to finding him. Thus, they are seen as the arena of both, “sinful opposition to God and God’s gracious activity that prepares people for the final and saving revelation in the Christ event.”⁶⁴ Because of this reason it would be better to infer that any religion in itself is not sufficient and is not the means of offering eternal salvation.

Regarding the destiny of the unevangelized, the “Bible never addresses directly the question of the fate of the unevangelized.”⁶⁵ It does not give explicit guidance one way or the other. This makes it hard to give any concrete answer to the question of the destiny of the unevangelised.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 66.

⁶¹Floyd T. Cunningham, “Christ, the Word, the Light and the Message: A Wesleyan Reflection on the World Mission,” *Asia Journal of Theology* 5:1 (1991): 106, quoting Karl Rahner, “Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions”, in *Christianity and Other Religions*, eds. John Hick and Brian Hebblethwaite (Glasgow: Collins, 1980), p. 75.

⁶²Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*, p.166.

⁶³Flemming, “Foundations,” p. 67.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 69.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 70.

However, the Wesleyans believe that salvation is still by faith in Christ and because of God's grace. They believe that because God's prevenient grace is active in all human hearts regardless of their religious allegiance, it draws them to God and prepares them for acceptance of the gospel when they hear it. In Wesleyan thought "grace of God" plays a major role. Based on this understanding, we might say that if ever the unevangelized are to make it to heaven, it would be only because of God's grace. Dean Flemming confirms that, "One thing the Scriptures do make clear is that if people are in heaven apart from the preaching of the gospel, it will not be on the basis of their sincerity or their own goodness or devotion to religious observance. It will be because the grace of God was active in their lives through the Holy Spirit, drawing them to Christ."⁶⁶

Conclusion

Based on our discussion, a proper Wesleyan response to religious pluralism, as I think, would be that it is not the religion which saves a human being but it is the merciful God who extends His invitation to all people because of His prevenient grace rooted in Christ's atonement. As a result, salvation is ultimately through Jesus Christ. But people still have a choice to resist God's grace in Jesus Christ. However, to resist that grace is to resist God. If God is the author of human salvation then the only way He has worked out salvation plan is through Jesus Christ and not through any religion or religious figures.

Thus this understanding leads us to assume that Wesleyan theology only sees salvation outside of Christian faith as just a possibility and not a reality. As Dean Flemming points out that up to a certain extent Wesleyan theology is, "sympathetic to an 'inclusivist' position that allows the possibility of salvation among the unevangelized and a more open attitude toward the role of other religions in God's dealings with humankind."⁶⁷ Therefore, the non-Christians should be considered as accepted by God for their salvation if they fear Him. We do not know the way God would save these people. But we can pessimistically hope for their salvation. If Wesley was right then people's eternal destiny depends upon how they responded to God's given light to them. However, in the mean time, rather than passing judgement on their eternal destiny hastily, we must help them to realise God's grace that is available and encourage them to respond to Calvary's invitation.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 73.

⁶⁷Flemming, "Foundations," p. 53.

PAUL'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE HUMAN CONDITION IN ROMANS 1:18-32 & 5:12-21

WON KEUN OH

I. Introduction

Dialogue with Paul on the subject of the sinfulness of humanity seems neither new nor interesting to Christians today. Over the centuries since Paul, many scholars have spent their time trying to understand what Paul tells us about human sin and its origin in view of Adam's fall. Different opinions have been raised on the basis of grammatical and theological analyses in one way or another, which provoke a tension between individual responsibility and inevitability concerning the sinfulness of humanity.

Yet, there seems to be no meta-narrative that claims to be THE answer. Every assertion has an adequate amount of reason to be rejected by others. Even a widely accepted view has to face serious criticism with enough reason. So there are numerous options, yet not THE answer. It seems almost unattainable to have a clear understanding of human sin in relation to its origin in Paul. Therefore, because of this ambiguity, should one give up discussing with Paul on the topic of human sinfulness? By no means! Rather, because of this openness, one might have more courage to approach Paul to explore what his understanding of human sin, especially in relation to its origin, is.

However, considering the previously discussed ambiguity on the subject of sin, one may ask a question of him/herself: Is Paul truly concerned about the sinfulness of humanity and its origin in consideration of Adam? Even if it is not certain at the moment whether Paul seriously takes into account the sinfulness of humanity and its origin with respect to Adam's fall, it is unequivocal that he expounds some aspects of the human condition in view of Adam's sin in Romans. To what extent does he tell us about the human condition? Provided that neither the sinfulness of humanity nor its origin is his primary concern, what would Paul's prime

interest be? Then, what is the place of his exposition of the human condition in view of Adam's sin in one's attempt to interpret Romans?

The aim of this paper is not to have THE answer to the questions raised. Rather, it aspires to broaden/sharpen one's insight by exploring some aspects, if not all, of Paul's understanding of the human condition in Romans, especially in 1:18-32 and 5:12-21, so that one may not go astray but keep in good touch with both Paul and the gospel he is not ashamed of.

II. The Jewish Understanding of the Human Condition

Exploring the Jewish understanding of the human condition may be a good place to start as one makes an effort to find Paul's understanding of it. How did other Jewish writers depict the human condition? Did they affect Paul's understanding of the human condition, or not? If one asserts Paul was, to some extent, interpreting and/or modifying them, in what sense can this assertion be acceptable? Or if the other denies any connection between Paul and other Jewish writers, in what sense can he or she make his or her argument conceivable?

Even if it is not the earliest example among Jewish literature,¹ Ps. 51:5 can be seen as one of the famous verses with which scholars have tried to explain human sinfulness and its origin in connection with Adam's fall. Whether or not King David wrote this Psalm is not the primary interest here. What is of importance in this paper is the psalmist's understanding of human sinfulness in verse 5.

What does the psalmist tell us about the human condition in this verse? Calvin is one of those who interpret this verse in such a way that supports the idea of hereditary sinfulness. Human beings have inherited the sinful nature from Adam, who is a legal representative of all mankind, because "we all forfeited along with him our original integrity."² Did the psalmist really have this in mind when he wrote, "Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me?"³ Rather, as many have come to agree, he seems to mean that he himself like others in general is "utterly

¹Of course, the early chapters in Genesis provide clues to one's understanding of the human condition.

²John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol. 2, tr. by J. Anderson (Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 1979), 291.

³All quotations are taken from the NRSV.

guilty from the beginning.”⁴ Barth is quite correct when he asserts that “the verse tells us that there is no time prior to man’s transgression: the life of man is transgression from the very first.”⁵ Because the world in which a man is born and grows up is full of sin, explains Weiser, “when the child learns to distinguish between good and evil he discovers already in himself a natural tendency of his will is at variance with the will of God.”⁶ Therefore, deducing the concept of hereditary sin which has come to man by seminal transmission from this verse seems inadequate. Even though it is certain that the psalmist tells us that human beings are sinful from the very beginning, it is quite ambiguous that he elucidates any notion of the origin of human sinfulness or any idea of genetic transmission of sin.

The more explicit contemplations on the human condition in relation to the first man, Adam, can be found in “Early Judaism.”⁷ Especially, 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch make it clear how contemporary Jewish thinkers understood the human condition pertaining to Adam’s fall. Is it not interesting to explore these ideas, before moving toward Paul? It is important to understand the current intellectual setting in which Paul was sharpening his own ideas rather than to ignore it.

Apparently, the teaching of 4 Ezra on the topic of the present human condition in view of Adam is pessimistic. Ezra believes that all turn away from God inevitably on account, to some extent, of the sin of Adam (7:118), in whose heart “a grain of evil seed (*yetzer*)” was sown (4:30). In his groaning, “O Adam, what have you done? For though it was you who sinned, the fall was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants” (7:118),⁸ Ezra seems to endorse the view that human beings are incapable of choosing good but only evil in consequence of Adam’s sin.

⁴M. E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, WBC (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990), 19; W. Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub., 1984), 99; Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. IV-1: *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, tr. By G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956), 500.

⁵Barth, *Dogmatics*, 500.

⁶A. Weiser, *The Psalms* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 406; C. C. Broyles, *Psalms*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub., 1999), 228.

⁷This term belongs to J. R. Levison, *Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism: From Sirach to 2 Baruch*, JSPSS 1 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988).

⁸All the verses of both 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch are taken from *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1: *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, ed. By J. H. Charlesworth (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 1983).

Yet, Ezra never gives up confidence in human free will and individual responsibility. As Levison points out, “Ezra is filled with ambivalence, combining uncomfortably freedom and determinism.”⁹ Nevertheless, by juxtaposing two contradictory ideas of hereditary sinfulness and individual responsibility in 7:116-31, “Ezra’s complaint as a whole affirms individual responsibility.”¹⁰

The concept of individual responsibility becomes much clearer when it comes to 2 Baruch in which Adam is “the paradigm of free choice and responsibility” (54:15c-16) rather than the cause of cosmic sinfulness, in comparison with 4 Ezra.¹¹ “Adam is, therefore, not the cause, except only for himself, but each of us has become our own Adam” (54:19). Thus, by all accounts, it is sure that both 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch definitely affirm individual responsibility, even though 4 Ezra draws more attention to the concept of hereditary sinfulness than 2 Baruch.¹²

How do the thoughts of these apocalyptic authors help our understanding of the human condition in Paul? Wright avers that Paul modified “the Jewish ideas of the eschatological humanity” in the light of the gospel.¹³ Davies also asserts, “Paul was interpreting current Rabbinic thought,”¹⁴ and adds, “the assertion both of inevitability and responsibility is an accentuation of the Rabbinic doctrine of sin.”¹⁵ In this view, it seems good to make

⁹Levison, *Portraits*, 124.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 122; Levison explains this by adding, “In the end individual responsibility wins out, not necessarily because it is more correct theologically, but because it alone offers hope,” 124; Even though Davies’ interpretation differs from that of Levison when it comes to the issue of its relation to Paul, he seems to agree with Levison, at least, on this point, by mentioning, “That Adam’s sin involved all his posterity . . . is sound Rabbinical doctrine; but the Rabbis were always anxious to safeguard human freedom, and so could not regard the relation between Adam’s sin and the sinfulness of mankind as directly causal”(33).

¹¹*Ibid.*, 143.

¹²*Ibid.*, 121-158; W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (London: SPCK, 1955), 32.

¹³N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in the Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 35.

¹⁴Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 32.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 35.

use of the current Jewish thought as the background to establish the Pauline theology.¹⁶

However, Levison seems to have much difficulty with this point of view.¹⁷ For him, Paul is no more and no less than Paul, whose interpretation of Adam is as unique as those of others. In his book, Levison spends not a few pages to prove “the inadequacy of studies of Adam as a background for Pauline theology.”¹⁸ For example,¹⁹ regarding Davies’ *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, he calls our attention to the limitation of Davies’ study, by critiquing as follows:

The study is limited to texts which are relevant for interpreting Paul, and exegesis of them is limited to determining how they illuminate Paul’s theology. Therefore, while Davies succeeds in placing pivotal aspects of Paul’s thought in the context of Early Judaism, he does not provide a complete analysis of the portraits of Adam which existed in Early Judaism.²⁰

Then, what is the place of the current Jewish thought in the studies of Paul, especially in the area of the human condition? On the one hand, one might undeniably agree with Levison’s argument that every interpretation of Adam in Early Judaism was as distinctive as Paul’s that the immediate manipulation of them to support Pauline theology is neither adequate nor appropriate. Nevertheless, on the other hand, one could not but find the seeming parallels between Paul and others in their understanding of human sinfulness in its relation to Adam. To be fair, it must be wise to keep both in mind, as one begins a dialogue with Paul at this juncture.

¹⁶J. McCant also makes use of the Rabbinic writings to support the individual responsibility of sin and death in “The Wesleyan Interpretation of Romans 5-8,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 16 (Spring 1981): 70.

¹⁷Emphasizing that the “portraits of Adam in Early Judaism are characterized more by diversity than by unity” (159), Levison concludes that Paul is one of the many other unique writers of Early Judaism who were interpreting Adam (161).

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 14-23.

¹⁹For Levison, not only Davies but also Barrett and Dunn and Wright alike made the same mistake in their interpreting Adam in Early Judaism as the background for Pauline theology. He stresses that “the other early Jewish texts should not be grouped together as a background to Paul” (161).

²⁰Levison, *Portraits*, 14.

III. Understanding of the Human Condition in Romans 1:18-32 & 5:12-21

Now, we have come to Paul to find out how he understands the human condition in Romans. What a fascinating task it is to sit at the table with Paul and have some time to discuss the issue on the human condition that he raised in his epistle to the Romans! Of course, not a few scholars have already made questions and answers in their previous dialogues with Paul on this topic. Yet, there must be still more to be dealt with in one's attempt to find the true meaning of this issue in Paul. Thus, let us get closer to Paul circumspectly, yet keeping the previous findings by others in mind as well.

In 1:18-32, Paul's perception of the human condition might be packed into two words, "ungodliness" and "wickedness,"²¹ against which the impartial judgment of God is being revealed (v.18).²² Despite the fact that human beings are to live in good, even perfect, harmony "with the Creator and within the created order," the wholeness of human existence has turned away from this "appropriate and natural relationship."²³ Thus, for Paul, the present human sinfulness, as a whole, is "a consequence of distorted relationships."²⁴

Once this primeval relationship was broken off, then, everything went wrong. In spite of their having enough ability to know God, human beings gave up honoring him as God and darkened their senseless minds (v.21). Thus, "God gave them up to a debased mind and to things that should not

²¹K. E. Brower considers 'ungodliness' as 'wrong relationship with the Creator', and 'wickedness' as 'wrong relationship within the created order', in "The Human Condition in Romans," unpublished booklet in the library. NTC, 2000, 5.

²²After introducing the universality of the gospel (1:16-17), Paul "begins a section which leads to the conclusion that 'all, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin' (3:9)," therefore, under 'the wrath of God'" (1:18), Brower, 'Human Condition,' 5.

²³Ibid., 6.

²⁴Brower's understanding of the human condition in terms of its 'relation' to the Creator seems to agree with that of Ziesler. Ziesler also points out that every aspect of human sinfulness is "the outcome of the fundamental abnormality, the confusing of Creator with creation." J. Ziesler, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (London: SCM, 1989), 79.

be done" (v.28).²⁵ Then, "every kind of wickedness" became inevitable in human existence.²⁶

On what basis is Paul developing the present understanding of the human condition as expounded in 1:18-32? Many scholars agree concerning this issue. It is not unambiguous that Paul is "describing man's sin in relation to its true biblical setting—the Genesis narrative of the creation and the fall," even though it is not made explicit until chapter 5.²⁷ Regarding the ideas in chapter 1, there is an attempt to find a connection between Paul and other Jewish writers, on the one hand,²⁸ whilst suspicion arises against it, on the other.²⁹ Again, it would be wise to keep both in mind as one goes further on to the next step.

Coupled with 1:18-32, 5:12-21 has held the attention of scores of scholars over the centuries, on the subject of human sinfulness. In fact, it has been an excellent source for debating this whole subject. Especially, scholars have put an extraordinary effort in to discern Paul's original intention of writing ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον in verse 12. All the suggested

²⁵Ziesler comments on this, "it is not just morality that becomes corrupt, but reason itself" (*Romans*, 79).

²⁶Cf. "every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually" (Gen.6:5).

²⁷M. D. Hooker, *From Adam to Christ: Essays on Paul* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990), 76; S. E. Porter agrees with this when he states, "At points the language in 1:18ff and 3:23 may be similar to Genesis 1-3, but Paul does not present any explicit theory until 5:12ff." in "The Pauline Concept of Original Sin, in the Light of Rabbinic Background," *Tyndale Bulletin* 41 (May 1990): 19; R. N. Longenecker also agrees with Hooker, by mentioning, "though the analysis of humanity's condition is set out differently in 1:18-32 and 5:12-21, most interpreters have been content to read 1:18-32 as 'the obviously deliberate echo of the Adam narratives'." in "The Focus of Romans: The Central Role of 5:1-8:39 in the Arrangement of the Letter," in *Romans and the People of God*, ed. by S. K. Soderlund and N. T. Wright (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 65.

²⁸Longenecker tries this by suggesting its similarity to Wisd., "Focus of Romans," 51.

²⁹Admitting that the similarities exist between Rom.1 and Wisd.12, Hooker points out, "the differences are no less important than the similarities." And adds, "Rom.1 is concerned with a knowledge which was given to men but which they have suppressed," in contrast to *Wisd.12* which "speaks of a knowledge of God to which men should have attained through nature but have not" (76).

answers³⁰ are possibly located somewhere in-between the two extremes, “exclusively individual responsibility” and “exclusively fatal inevitability,” pertaining to human existence under the dominion of sin and death. By all accounts, scholars have tried to put their own words into Paul’s mouth. Nevertheless, all the results seem neither satisfactory nor confident to one another. One’s confidence becomes another’s doubt, and *vice versa*.

If neither the actual sinning of each individual nor the direct causal influence of Adam’s depravity will agree with the teaching of this passage, what is, then, the present reality of sin in view of ἐφ’ ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον? Is there any clue to solve this problem? If so, what can this be? A plausible option³¹ has been made by use of a word of French origin, “solidarity,”³² among scholarship.³³ “The only solution is that there must be some kind

³⁰Grammatical and theological interpretations that have been formulated against ἐφ’ ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον in v.12 are as follows: “in death all sinned” by Patriarch Photius; “in Adam all sinned” by Augustine (cf. “in quo” in the Vulgate); “because of Adam all sinned” by John Damascene; “because all sinned in their own persons independently of Adam, though after his example” by Pelagius; “because all sinned in their participation in Adam’s transgression” by the realists (Modification of Augustine’s view); “because all sinned in their own persons but as a result of the corrupt nature inherited from Adam” by Cyril of Alexandria & Cranfield; “because all sinned because they were constituted sinners as a result of Adam’s transgression: when Adam sinned, he sinned as the legal representative of his race, who are also counted guilty of his first sin” by the Calvinistic federalists. For the details, refer to C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, vol.1 ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 275-79, and Porter, “Pauline Conception,” 25.

³¹On the other hand, there are attempts to clarify the duality of voluntary and involuntary sides in Paul’s idea of human sinfulness in relation to the nature of sin itself: C. K. Barrett claims that since sin is rather a “living and personal agency” than a “thing” it propagates itself after having “a means of entry into the race.” *From First Adam to Last: A Study in Pauline Theology* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1962), 20; J. A. Ziesler also agrees with this. *Pauline Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983), 72.

³²Lit. means “being perfectly united.” *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary: Complete Text Reproduced Micrographically* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971).

³³L. Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 230; J. Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 186; Brower, “Human Condition,” 8; C. H. Dodd seems to agree with this, although he is a little vague in his view when he refers it to “a sort of mystical unity.” *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1944), 79.

of solidarity existing between ‘the one’ and ‘the all,’” Murray claims.³⁴ Thus, the wholeness of human existence under the dominion of sin and death has its origin in the “solidarity” of humanity with Adam. So, does all now become clear? It seems not enough at the moment, because of the inevitable limitation of the word itself.³⁵

At this juncture, it would be perhaps worthwhile to just acknowledge the existing “ambivalence between destiny and individual guilt”³⁶ in verse 12 rather than to try to clarify never-to-be-solved questions for debate’s sake. Porter recognizes this, saying “there is a recognizable tension here in Paul between destiny and individual action, but at this point Paul is not more specific.”³⁷ In agony, one may ask the same question as in 4 Ezra: “O Adam, what have you done?” However, as we have recognized, Paul’s account of human sin and death in relation to Adam seems uncertain at this point when he says: *καὶ οὕτως εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὁ θάνατος διήλθεν, ἐφ’ ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον*.³⁸ Why is it so confusing that one can fail to extract Paul’s understanding of the human condition as he intended from this passage?

To be certain, it is ours and not Paul’s understanding that is unclear. There must be a certain problem on our side. What is it? The answer is obvious: It may not be a proper attitude to remain faithful to a few words without getting involved with the whole conversation in one’s dialogue with Paul. The issue of the necessity and benefit of having a broader context on the subject of biblical studies arises here again.³⁹ To have a clearer understanding of Paul’s intention in placing this passage in the midst of his

³⁴Murray, *Romans*, 186.

³⁵Even though adopting the notion of “communal solidarity” seems to be the most plausible solution here because it fits both “in Adam” and “in Christ,” the word might be misused by some to disregard individual responsibility.

³⁶E. Kasemann, *Commentary on Romans* (London: SCM, 1980), 148.

³⁷At least Porter is aware of the tension at this point, even though he seems to be more comfortable with, what he calls, the federalist view (“Pauline Concept,” 25-29).

³⁸J. C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 215.

³⁹G. D. Fee and D. Stuart state that “words only have meaning in sentences, and for the most part biblical sentences only have meaning in relation to preceding and succeeding sentences.” *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Corp., 1982), 24.

argument, one should seek advice from Paul of Romans, at least of 5:12-21 together with 1:18-32 as a whole, not only of this phrase, ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον. As one notices, verse 12 is not a finished sentence in view of its grammatical incompleteness.⁴⁰ It requires more illumination. Thus, any conclusion made out of only this phrase seems invalid.⁴¹

Then in the light of what has been found so far, one may carefully conclude that as far as to the wholeness of human existence, it has been under the power of sin and death in its solidarity in Adam.⁴² At this point, it is worth noting Hooker's comment on the relationship between Adam's depravity and human sinfulness:

It is not necessary to discuss here exactly how Paul conceived of the relationship between Adam's fall and the sin of mankind in general; it is clear from Rom.5:12-21 that he did regard them as related, that he believed that sin had entered the world through Adam, and that every manifestation of sin is thus in some sense ultimately connected with the initial sin of Adam.⁴³

VI. Conclusion

“Solution Defined” rather than “Condition Undefined”?

As discussed, it is recommended that 5:12-21 together with 1:18-32 need to be considered as a whole in one's attempt to know Paul's understanding of the human condition. However, in spite of the careful scrutiny of these two passages, one will still come to realize that there is no clear conception of the so-called doctrine of sin except for the fact that there is “a certain, yet not clearly defined, relation” between Adam's sin and the sinfulness of humanity. This uncertainty is natural, because Paul himself is not more specific at this point. Ellis states a quite crucial point here:

⁴⁰Murray points out that it has a protasis but not apodosis (*Romans*, 180).

⁴¹F.F. Bruce, *Romans*, TNTC (Leicester: IVP, 1985), 123.

⁴²One should keep “both-and” idea in mind: both voluntary and involuntary sides of human sinfulness.

⁴³Hooker, *From Adam*, 79; Davies agrees with this point. *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 31.

“Although the passage is celebrated as having enunciated the principle of original sin, this was not Paul’s primary purpose at all.”⁴⁴

If it is not so, what is Paul’s primary concern in these passages? And what is the place of his exposition of the human condition in his whole argument in Romans? Even though everything seems vague thus far, it becomes utterly clear at this point that Paul’s primary concern, as introduced (1:16-17) and developed throughout the first four chapters, is the universal effect of the grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ, the last Adam, and not that of sin of the first Adam and humanity.⁴⁵ It is the restoration in solidarity of humanity in Christ, not the condemnation in solidarity of the same in Adam, that is in every respect in Paul’s mind.⁴⁶ It is the origin of the new life in Christ, not the origin of sin and death in Adam, that is paramount.⁴⁷ With this intent, Paul “sets the scene for the exposition of his gospel by emphasizing the universal need for such a message if there is to be any hope for mankind,” Bruce affirms.⁴⁸

For Paul, no matter how universal the effect of Adam’s sin was and no matter how desperate the sinfulness of humanity was, the superabundance of the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, who has put “right what was wrong in Adam,” abounds all the more (5:20).⁴⁹ Even though Paul juxtaposes the “grace in Christ” and the “sin in Adam,” they are not compared as exact equivalents. “The act of grace does not balance the act of sin; it overbalances it.”⁵⁰

⁴⁴E. E. Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1957), 58.

⁴⁵E. P. Sanders says, “for Paul, the conviction of a universal solution preceded the conviction of a universal plight.” *Paul and Palestine Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM, 1977), 474.

⁴⁶Actually, redemption and restoration of the fallen humanity is not only Paul’s primary concern but more also God’s, as seen in the Genesis narratives. G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), li-lii; See also his “Original Sin in Genesis 1-11,” *Churchman* 104 (1990): 326; V. P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 1982), 51.

⁴⁷McCant, “Wesleyan Interpretation,” 70.

⁴⁸F. F. Bruce, *Paul: The Apostle of the Free Spirit* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1977), 327.

⁴⁹Brower, “Human Condition,” 8.

⁵⁰Barrett, *Romans*, 113.

What then are we to say? Should we continue debating what Paul neither clearly defines nor primarily intends for debate's sake? By no means! If the solution offered in Christ is Paul's primary concern, so may it be ours. Only in the light of the gospel, can one unmistakably understand Paul. And that is the only way for one not to go astray but to stay in the best relationship with both Paul and the gospel of Jesus Christ that he is not ashamed of. Eventually, Paul concludes, "just as sin exercised dominion in death, so grace might also exercise dominion through justification leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (5:21).

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A BRIGHT FUTURE

Proverbs 24:13,14

Hitoshi (Paul) Fukue

Once a little boy by the name of Jody wrote a letter to his teacher at school. The letter read like this:

Dear Teacher,

Today mommy cried. Mommy asked me, “Jody, do you really know why you are going to school?” I said, “I don’t know why.” She said it is because we are going to be building me a future. I said, “What is a future? What’s one look like?” Mommy said, “I don’t know, Jody. No one can really see all your future. Just you. Don’t worry because you’ll see. You’ll see.” That’s when she cried and said, “Oh, Jody, I love you so.” Mommy says, “Everyone needs to work really hard for us kids to make our futures the nicest ones the world can offer.” Teacher, can we start today to build me a future? Can you try especially hard to make it a nice pretty one just for Mommy and for me? I love you teacher.

Love,

Jody

This little boy does not quite understand what future is. Those of us who are adults think we know what future means, but we find it difficult to explain what it is. But I think everyone desires a good future for one’s family and for one’s friends and for oneself.

The scriptural text given to us today is Proverbs chapter 24, verses 13 and 14. This text teaches us where is the key to unlock a good future for each one of us. Let us read it again, “Eat honey, my child, for it is good; honey from the comb is sweet to your taste. Know also that wisdom is sweet to your soul; if you find it, there is a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.” The proverb says, “Eat honey, for it is good.”

Honey is an amazing food. I once heard that a jar of honey was found in an ancient pyramid of Egypt. And in spite of the fact that the honey was thousands of years old it tasted just like our honey today. We can understand people cherished honey from ancient days. In First Samuel Chapter 14, we find a story of Jonathan, the son of the first king of Israel, Saul, eating honey in a wood during a war between Israelites and Philistines. The Scripture says, "When Jonathan ate honey from a honeycomb, his eyes brightened." Honey is indeed an amazing food, it is good for our body and it certainly is sweet to our taste. And the Proverbs likens wisdom to honey. "Know also that wisdom is sweet to your soul; if you find it, there is a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off."

Just as honey is good and sweet to your body and it brightens your eyes, so is wisdom to your soul and it gives a bright future for you. This is the Word of the Lord and the promise of God. What an amazing promise this is! The key to unlock a good future for each one of us lies in finding the wisdom.

We are living in an age when it is very difficult to find hope for our future. We are living in a fast changing, fragile world where nothing is predictable. People find it difficult to dream a dream for their futures. There seem to be too many obstacles and troubles and conflicts to find a hope for the future. But the unchanging message of the Bible is, "There is hope for your future, and your hope will not be cut off."

We human beings can not live without hope. We must have hope in order to live. Though the world around us may be hopeless and dark and desperate, we must always keep hope for our future. However difficult your life may be now, you need to cling to a hope for the future.

Victor Frankl, a Jewish psychiatrist, wrote a book based on his experiences in the concentration camp under the Nazi regime during World War II. He observed his fellow Jews and vividly saw that those people who lost hope for their future locked in the concentration camp sooner or later breathed their last, but those who kept hope and somehow clung to hope continued to live unless they were killed. From his observation of this extraordinary experience, he seems to be saying how vitally important for anyone under any circumstances to have a hope for one's future in order to continue to live a meaningful life.

Then where and how can we find a future hope? The Bible says, it lies in your finding "wisdom" and in the Book of Proverbs, the primary message is "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." It says, wisdom begins from "fearing the Lord." Of course this "fear" does not mean "being afraid or scare of," but rather it means "trusting the Lord," "clinging to the faithfulness of the Lord," and "believing the steadfast love

of the Lord,” as found in many verses of the Proverbs. If you grasp this amazing love of God, you begin to find wisdom, and that wisdom unlocks the door of your future hope. Trusting in the Lord in every way all the time rather than leaning on what we think we know is the key to unlock the door to our future hope. The love of God is expressed vividly in that blessed verse in Jeremiah chapter 29, verse 11: “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’”

One Sunday morning a middle-aged man came to church where we were pastoring in Tokyo. He worshiped with us for the first time in his life. He seemed very gentle and kind. He continued to come to church since then. After several months passed, one Sunday evening after the service, some of us got together. He was among us and he seemed to feel accepted by us, though he was very quiet and gentle and had not opened his heart to us. As we were casually talking and sipping tea together, he began to talk with frequent pauses. He said, “I am a sick person. I have been suffering depression and neurosis since my college age. And two years ago I had an operation on thyroid gland cancer and am taking medication still now. I am afraid it might relapse. My sister committed suicide seven years ago. I am interested in Christianity, but I can not find faith.”

After hearing this, we all began to pray for him earnestly. Oh, what a heavy burden he is carrying for his life. Our brothers and sisters in church began to remember him in their private prayers and it became our real concern that he find the Lord and a future hope to live. But before I tell you what happened to him when the whole church began to pray for him earnestly, let me share with you a story I heard last week at a Regional Education Conference held in Bangkok. A Korean professor from Korean Nazarene University brought a morning devotion and he told a true story which happened during the Korean War in 1950's. When the war broke out, people began to flee to seek refuge. Among them was a young girl who was pregnant, near her time of childbirth. There was no one to help her, and there was no house, no bed, no pillow for her to rest her body. She had to flee but could not run because of her pregnant child. It was a very cold windy day in December. She could not find any heat, blanket or food. After seeking a place of refuge in vain, she went beneath a bridge on the cold dirt, and she gave birth to a child. There was no one to help her delivery. And it was a bitter cold night, the night of December 24th to be exact. The young mother took off all her clothes to bundle up her baby and tried to protect the little life. The next morning, one American missionary couple was delivering food and clothes to those people in need, they found the baby bundled in the mother's clothes and the young mother already lying dead virtually naked in the icy cold weather. The missionary

couple discovered that the baby still breathed, rushed to their home to keep the baby warm and safe. They also buried the young girl reverently with due ceremony. They adopted the baby and raised him as their child. As the child grew older, the missionary couple told him about his real mother. When the boy was eleven years old, after hearing about how he was born, the boy asked the parents to take him to his mother's grave. When the boy came to his mother's grave, he took off his coat and clothed the gravestone with his coat. And the boy said to his real mother, "I will live and protect you. And I will be a good person."

When I heard this story, I couldn't help but think that the young mother's love reveals the love of God in Christ for the whole world. Just like what this young girl did to save her child, Jesus Christ suffered humiliation, pain, agony, and gave up His life on that cross to save you and me. Christ died for my sins, for me, even me. In order to give us eternal life, He loved me and gave Himself up on that cross and died for you and me. This is how we know God's love: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. "We love Him, because He first loved us." The love of God is ultimately revealed in Christ Jesus at the cross. And when we grasp how much God loves us, we begin to live, we begin to love, and begin to serve. And most of all we begin to find a future hope. We begin to hear God say to you in your heart, "There is hope for your future." You hear it directly from God, "There is hope for your future." Things around you may all point toward hopelessness, but you hear that still small voice saying, "There is hope for your future." When you are connected tightly with the love of God revealed through Christ, you hear it every time you feel depressed.

Let me return to the story of the gentleman who came to our church seeking after God. I was saying that the whole church was praying for him earnestly that he might come to know the love of God. Several weeks passed after he first shared his burdens. He sought after God earnestly. Then one Sunday evening after the evening service, during fellowship time, he said quietly that he wanted to be baptized. I asked him, "Do you mean you now believe in Jesus Christ?" He said, "Yes." When the people heard his soft but determined answer, "Yes," they began to shed tears. And we prayed, thanking God that he believed in Jesus Christ. He said, "I thought I had to carry the burden of my sins by my own strength. But I learned and understood that Jesus Christ died for my sins and gave me forgiveness. My heart is liberated for the first time in my life. I now know that the life I now live, I live not by my own strength but by the love and grace of Christ who loved me and died for me." From that time on, he began to see a

future hope and he began to smile. We saw his life transformed by God. His burdens of life were there with him, but he carried them with Christ who strengthens him.

If we find wisdom, if we grasp the truth of how much God loves us, if we trust Him and cling to Him rather than cling to what we think we know, then we find that there is a future hope for our lives and that hope will not be cut off.

Let us pray: Dear Lord, thank you for your amazing love. Your unchanging eternal love gives us life, love, and a future hope. Our hope rests on nothing but your atoning love and sanctifying grace. May we grow in the knowledge of your love and grace, and may your love fill us until we cannot help but will to live and love and hope. This we pray in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

MINISTRY TO THE POOR

Jerry D. Porter

- I. God's special interest in the poor
 - A. Proverbs 19:17: helping the poor is like lending to God
 - B. Psalms 41:1: the Lord rescues those who help the poor
 - C. Psalms 9:17-18; the needy will not be forgotten for ever
 - D. Psalms 34:6; the Lord hears my cry for help
 - E. Exodus 3:7-10; Jehovah calls the slave nation "My people"
- II. The prophet's speak on behalf of the poor
 - A. Isaiah 10:1-2; God's judgment will fall on those who abuse the poor
 - B. Amos 8:4-7; God will not forget the wicked who rob the poor and trample the needy
 - C. Ezekiel 22:24-31: the Holy City filled with greed and exploitation was destroyed
- III. God's people serve and defend the poor
 - A. Psalms 82:3-4; rescue the poor and the helpless
 - B. Proverbs 28:27; give to the poor and lack nothing
 - C. Matthew 5:42; give to those who ask and don't turn away
 - D. James 1:27; our Lord's brother taught that pure religion is to care for the widows and orphans
- IV. Jesus identified with and ministered to the poor
 - A. Luke 2:10-12; born so poor they found him in a cattle feeder
 - B. Luke 4:18-19; the gospel is preached to the poor

The outline of a sermon preached at the Asia-Pacific Region Theological Education Conference, Bangkok, Thailand, January 12, 2003.

- C. Luke 7:20-23; message for John the Baptist that Jesus was preaching to the poor
 - D. Luke 18:22-30; rich young ruler rejected the Kingdom and Jesus taught that it was very difficult for the rich to embrace the Kingdom; like pushing a camel through the “eye of the needle gate”
 - E. Luke 19:8-10; Zaccheus’ encounter with Jesus transformed him into a person who was generous with the poor
- V. The New Testament church was poor
- A. Acts 4:13; they were unlearned simple men who had been with Jesus
 - B. I Corinthians 1:26-29; Paul reminded the Corinthian believers that none of them were highly educated, wealthy, powerful, nor influential before they came to the Kingdom
 - C. James 2:1-9; poor must not be treated as inferior; what church programs exclude the poor in favor of the rich? We must always hold each other accountable challenging church systems that prefer the wealthy and powerful.
- VI. The Church of the Nazarene’s calling to minister to the poor
- A. The Wesley brothers, though highly educated and valuing a well-educated clergy, themselves focused their ministry efforts on the uneducated and the poor. The Wesleys took the Gospel outside the walls of the established, wealthy and highly-educated Anglican churches to England’s streets amongst the coal miners and beggars.
 - B. The first Church of the Nazarene in Los Angeles, California focused on reaching and serving the poor. Dr. Bresee emphasized that the poor could sit on the front row in contrast to the mainline churches where “pew rental fees” were used to generate revenue, allowing the poor to sit in the back on the “free pews.” This “Glory Barn” filled with working class poor was such an emotional “show” that it was sometimes included in the L.A. tourist guide as an amusement to see!
 - C. Redemption and lift elevated the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th generation Nazarenes. Our emphasis on higher education has only accelerated this normal process. We “clean up our act,” obtain more education, better jobs, and become more responsible. We urge our children to rise even higher than us economically, educationally,

and socially. This leaves a great vacuum among the poor. We are no longer near them nor desiring to reach them. We are enamored with converts who are highly educated, wealthy, and influential.

- D. To counteract this predictable change of focus and mission we must urge every church to plant daughter churches and ministries among the poor. Rediscovering compassionate ministry to the poor in every community for every cultural group will allow the Church of the Nazarene to reach all of society rather than a narrow particular socioeconomic level. We actually do not minister *to* the poor; we literally *give them the church* for of such is the Kingdom!
- E. The Colombia Nazarene strategy was to first reach the upper class in order to reach the whole nation. The Dominican Republic strategy was to first reach the poor. Eventually the Colombian Nazarene leaders changed their focus and the church has exploded with growth. The upper class will be best evangelized by 2nd and 3rd generation believers who have themselves become upper class highly educated persons. Our missional priority must be the poor.
- F. In this process no ministerial student can be left behind! The educational institutions cannot simply serve the wealthy justifying this strategy due to pragmatic realities. To be a Kingdom of God institution our schools must find ways of delivering quality theological education to EVERY ministerial candidate. The university system by definition tends to be elitist due to accrediting entrance and graduation requirements. Creative educational/training alternatives must be pursued in concert with the districts and local congregations to make ministerial preparation readily available to all.
- G. Psalms 37:25; is this a promise that guarantees God-followers will always have food or is this King David's testimony of not allowing his eyes to see the righteous forsaken nor their descendants begging for bread? May that also be our testimony.
- H. Educators must instill this concern for the poor in our students, pastors, and laity, not just in theory but in practice, by continually planting churches and training pastors amongst the socio-economic groups below us. In so doing, we will be reflecting God's concern for the poor.

NEWS BRIEFS

New APNTS President

In January 2003 the Board of Trustees elected Dr. Hitoshi (Paul) Fukue as the fourth president of Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary. He has already assumed leadership and will be officially inaugurated on April 4, 2003. He brings a wealth of training and experience to this position.

Dr. Fukue received his Doctor of Theology degree from Boston University School of Theology in 1993 with a concentration in Sociology of Religion and minor fields of Christian Ethics and New Testament. He also did some advanced studies at Harvard Divinity School and Sophia University Graduate School of Social Studies in Tokyo. In 1973 he was a *Cum Laude* graduate of Nazarene Theological Seminary with a Master of Divinity degree. He did undergraduate studies at Sophia University in English literature and comparative cultures and completed his undergraduate work in Religion at Northwest Nazarene University.

His multi-faceted experience will serve him well in his new role. He has been a pastor for more than twenty years and has served in other leadership roles in the church, both nationally and internationally. His teaching experience includes Lecturer at such places as Eastern Nazarene College, Boston University School of Education, Sophia University, Department of Comparative Culture, and Shikoku Christian University. In addition, he has served as adjunct professor at Japan Christian Junior College and at APNTS over the past ten years. In 1999-2000 he served as President of Japan Christian Junior College, and for the past two years he has been professor in residence at APNTS.

Dr. Fukue is a published writer, having authored many articles for the District Journals and Church School Publications in the Church of the Nazarene in Japan. In addition he translated several works including *Exploring Evangelism* by Mendel Taylor, and articles on society and Christianity. His writings have been published in academic journals in Japan, in the *Mediator*, and in the U.S. He presented a paper, "Beyond Christ and

Culture” at the Global Theological Conference at Guatemala City sponsored by the International Church of the Nazarene in 2002.

In coming to APNTS, Dr. Fukue has not come alone. His wife, Mitsuko, is currently teaching courses in Communication and English and is involved in many other committees and functions of the seminary. They have two grown children. APNTS is the recipient of the gracious hand of God in his provision of persons in the Fukues so particularly prepared and gifted for such a time as this.

Dedication of the Nielson Center for Education and Evangelism

The new CEE building will be dedicated at a special service following the inauguration of Dr. Hitoshi (Paul) Fukue as president of the seminary. Dr. John Nielson, the third president of the seminary, will be present for the dedication along with his wife, Janice. Later in the day, Dr. Jerry Lambert, Commissioner of Education for the Church of the Nazarene, will speak at the Graduation Banquet. Dr. Jerry Porter, General Superintendent for the Church of the Nazarene, will be the commencement speaker at the Eighteenth APNTS Graduation on Saturday, April 5.

Compassionate Ministry Conference Chiang-Mai, Thailand, November 3-9, 2002

The Global Nazarene Compassionate Ministry Conference coordinated by Asia-Pacific regional director of NCM, Larry Bollinger, was held in Chiang-Mai, Thailand during the semester break. Dr. Robert and JoAn Donahue along with APNTS students Paul Coy, Steve and Tamara Fairbnaks, and Jubilee Thanga were in attendance along with John Bose from Bangladesh and Tomo and Ceny Hirahara who are now working in Thailand. The almost 100 attendees came from such countries as the USA, Australia, Samoa, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, China, Russia, Nepal, Laos, Myanmar, and United Kingdom. Sessions were led by Dr. Robert Linthicum, who challenged those present to think some new thoughts not only about service and relief, but also about community development and people empowerment.

Faculty News

Rev Gilbert Montecastro, Th.D. Candidate, joined the faculty in November, 2002 as Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies. He and Merlita and their four children have joined our campus family. In addition to his teaching, he is also chapel coordinator.

Dr. Floyd Cunningham recently visited Melanesia Nazarene Bible College in Papua New Guinea, where he was the commencement speaker, and Nazarene Theological College in Brisbane, Australia. He also coordinated a regional education conference in Bangkok.

Dr. Robert and JoAn Donahue used the semester break for a variety of ministry opportunities. They remained in Thailand after the Global Nazarene Compassionate Ministry Conference in Chaing-Mai. Dr. Donahue taught “Foundations of Urban Evangelism” at Southeast Nazarene Bible College at the district center in Bangkok. Back in the Philippines, the Donahues attended the 50th anniversary celebration at LNBC where the week preceding the anniversary Dr. Donahue was the college’s Spiritual Renewal Week speaker. During the Christmas break the Donahues and student Paul Coy travelled to Macao where Paul had ministered previously. One purpose of the trip was to assess the potential for cross-cultural and supervised ministry sites.

The Donahue Covenant Group along with Pastor Elmer Perez distributed an APNTS Compassion gift for Christmas to a group of children who have been rescued off the streets in an area known as Solid Cement.

Professor Beverly Gruver has been reappointed interim Dean of Student. She returned to APNTS in January after completing her residency requirement towards her doctoral studies in education at the University of Kansas, and is also involved in planning for courses to help prepare teachers for English as a second language ministry.

Drs. Charles and Carolyn Siefert are back on campus this semester and will stay for modules in May. They conducted a special seminar in Wesleyan music at DeLaSalle University on February 19. Several faculty members accompanied them and met with members of the DeLaSalle University faculty.

Oh, Won Keun (Abraham Oh) is teaching two courses in Old Testament on the APNTS campus this semester. Abraham is a graduate of APNTS and is now studying toward a doctorate at Manchester University through Nazarene Theological College (Manchester).

Satish Mamonthe taught an intensive course in theology during January and part of February. He is an APNTS graduate from India who spent time ministering in Samoa, and is now a pastor in Australia. He recently received his Th.M degree.

The academic dean of Melanesia Nazarene Bible College in Papua New Guinea, Noki Pep, was on campus for about a month taking in a graduate course in theology and visiting with students and faculty.

2003 SUMMER SCHOOL SCHEDULE

FIRST MODULE, APRIL 7-16

LITERATURE DEVELOPMENT

Daniel Sangwichei, D.Miss.

Approaches literature development from biblical, historical, and contextual, cross-cultural perspectives. Proposes a “new” method of doing literature development for the Christian churches in today’s world. Draws upon some crucial contextual, cross-cultural principles so as to help the students form their own literature development criteria that best reflect and relate to the socio-cultural settings of the people among whom they minister. The class meets 8 a.m.-12 noon, and 2-5 p.m. Dr. Sangwichei is the Academic Dean of South East Asia Nazarene Bible College, Bangkok.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

Janice Nielson, M.Ed.

Equips students for instructing and nurturing children through their cognitive, emotional, physical and spiritual development within the various ministry opportunities of the church. Discusses the biblical, educational and developmental principles necessary for teaching and ministering to children. Exposes students to methods, materials and curricula appropriate to the needs, age and learning levels of children through age 12. Students will develop resources for children’s ministries. The class meets 8 a.m.-12 noon, and 2-5 p.m. Mrs. Nielson teaches at European Nazarene College.

SECOND MODULE, APRIL 21 – MAY 9

LIFE-SPAN DEVELOPMENT

Carolyn Seifert, D.Min.

Students will study life-span human growth through lectures and readings that focus on physical, intellectual, psychological, social and spiritual development. These concepts are applied to local church ministries,

including the selection of age-appropriate curricula and methods. The class meets 8:00 -12 noon. Dr. Seifert is an adjunct professor of APNTS.

HISTORY OF CHURCH MUSIC

Charles Seifert, Ed.D.

Surveys the development of music in the church and its implications for worship services. Beginning with music of Old Testament the survey will progress through the early twentieth century and conclude with an in-depth study of the development of music in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. The class meets 8 a.m.-12 noon. Dr. Seifert is an adjunct professor of APNTS.

COMMUNICATING BIBLICAL HOLINESS IN ASIA-PACIFIC CONTEXTS

Gilbert Montecastro, Th.D. cand.

Correlates the study of holiness passages in the Scripture with culture, religion and society in Asia. Included in the study are the possible approaches and paradigms necessary in the interaction. The class meets 8:00 a.m.-12 noon and 2-3:30 p.m. Rev. Montecastro is Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies, APNTS.

THIRD MODULE, MAY 12 – MAY 23

WRITING PRACTICUM

Beverly Gruver, M.Ed.

A “hands’on” course focusing on writing towards publication. Voice, audience, style, organization, and purpose will be emphasized. Students will work through the writing process from topic selection through drafting, revising, and editing towards publishable copy. The class meets 8:00 a.m.-12 noon and 2-3:30 p.m. Mrs. Gruver is Assistant Professor of English, APNTS.

COMMUNICATING CHRIST IN MUSLIM CONTEXTS
Melvin Rigsby, Ph.D.

Principles and procedures of Muslim evangelism with emphasis on cross-cultural communication and contextualization of the gospel. The class meets 8:00 a.m.-12 noon and 2-3:30 p.m. Dr. Rigsby is Professor of Philosophy and Religion at Eastern New Mexico University.
Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological

Seminary, a graduate level institution of the Church of the Nazarene, exists to prepare men and women for excellence in the task of Christian ministries in Asia and the Pacific.

FOURTH MODULE

MAY 28 – JUNE 13

**SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY II
PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST**

Kim Kyung Soo, Ph.D.

Studies the historical development and contemporary diversity of understandings about the person of Christ and the nature and extent of his work. (Prerequisite: undergraduate Systematic Theology, Introduction to Theology, or permission.) The class meets 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Dr. Kim pastors in Akron, Ohio, USA.

JUNE 2 – JUNE 20

COMMUNICATING CHRIST IN FOLK RELIGIOUS CONTEXTS

Neville Bartle, D.Miss.

An in-depth study of the folk religions that are practiced in the Asia and Pacific regions of the world. The analysis of animistic religions will help the church to understand how it can best evangelize in areas where such is practiced. The class meets 8 a.m.-12 noon. Dr. Bartle is a missionary serving in Fiji.

JUNE 9 - 27

I. TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Daniel Behr, Ph.D.

Acquaints the student with the historical use of drama, including a survey of passion plays; and with the cultural roots of both rituals and drama. The course will apply the dynamics of the performance medium to contemporary church use. (Prerequisite: Introduction to Christian Communication, or permission). The class meets 8 a.m.-12 noon. Dr. Behr is Professor of Communication at Mount Vernon Nazarene University.

INFORMATION

1. **CREDIT** – Each subject carries three credits. All are graduate level. Students may take one course per module.
2. **FEES** – Registration & Library fee = P500 for the summer; Tuition = P1,320 (\$25) per course*
3. **LODGING AND FOOD** – A limited number of accommodations are available on campus. Dormitory rooms are P1,000 per month.* Cost for eating lunch and dinner in the dining hall totals P65/day.
4. **QUALIFICATIONS** – Graduate credit is offered to college graduates who apply to and are accepted as students of APNTS. In some cases, courses may be offered for undergraduate credit and for audit. All students must go through normal application procedures.
5. **REGISTRATION** – Interested persons should file their application forms and transcripts with the Registrar prior to the beginning of course work. Contact the office of the Registrar.

*Fifty percent discount is given to members of the Church of the Nazarene.

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ASIA-PACIFIC NAZARENE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**SUMMER CLASSES
2003**

“Bridging Cultures for Christ”

Schedule subject to change. For application information, please see page 113.

CALL FOR PAPERS

One of the purposes of *The Mediator* is to provide a forum for dialogue about theological issues related to ministry in Asian and Pacific contexts. In keeping with this purpose, the editorial committee of the journal is seeking quality papers on the following topics. Also welcome are reviews of publications, including books and music.

Leadership Development, Evangelism and Church Growth (Volume 5, Number 1 [October 2003])

We are looking for articles on issues faced by pastors at the local church. How can pastors more effectively lead, train, and inspire their congregations for effective ministry in their communities? The topics could be addressed from a number of directions including biblical, theological, sociological, historical, missiological, or psychological perspectives. Articles are due by August 2002.

In addition, articles on the following topics are always welcome:

- Various Approaches to Theological Education
- Contextualized Interpretations of Holiness or other Doctrines
- Christian Communication or Cross-cultural Communication
- Compassionate Ministry or Missions

Readers are also welcome to submit papers on topics not listed above.

Guidelines for Submission

Please submit all proposed articles to the editor in both paper and electronic forms. Articles formatted in most modern word processing programs are acceptable. The proposed article should be in standard international English. Citations should contain complete bibliographic information, or a bibliography should be provided at the end of the article. Footnotes are preferred over endnotes. Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, 6th edition, is the preferred standard. Papers may be of any length, although authors may be asked to condense longer papers. A list of non-standard abbreviations should be provided.

BRIDGING CULTURES FOR CHRIST

*For there is one God and one mediator between
God and humanity—
the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5).*

Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary is a graduate level school of the Church of the Nazarene. It is located on the outskirts of Manila, Republic of the Philippines.

This graduate school exists to prepare men and women for ministry in the Asia-Pacific region and throughout the world by developing personal and professional attitudes and skills so as to enable analytical reflection upon Christian faith and life, and competencies in the practice of ministry. Since its first graduating class in 1986, APNTS has trained men and women for a wide range of vocations.

Today, over 175 graduates serve as pastors, teachers, Bible college presidents, missionaries, and various other church and para-church workers.

APNTS seeks to live out the holistic approach to the Gospel—a distinctive Wesleyan contribution to Christianity.

Degrees and Programs:

APNTS offers a number of degrees and programs including:

- ✓ Master of Divinity (93 units) with possible concentrations in Biblical Studies, Religious Education, Missions, and Christian Communication..
- ✓ Master of Arts in Religious Education (48 units) with possible concentrations in Curriculum or Church Ministries.
- ✓ Master of Arts in Christian Communication (48 units) with emphasis in radio, video and print media.
- ✓ Master of Science in Theology (48 unites) with concentrations in Biblical Studies, Christian Faith and History, Christian Ministry, and Missions.

English is the language of instruction in the classrooms. Thus, students must pass the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the APNTS English Proficiency Exam to register. A score of 500 is required for the M.Div., and 550 for the M.A. and M.S.T. degrees.

Faculty

The well-qualified teaching staff upholds a high level of education. Adjunct and visiting professors from both within and outside the Asia-Pacific region help expand students' worldviews.

Accreditation

APNTS is accredited by the Philippines Association of Bible & Theological Schools (PABATS), Asia Theological Association (ATA), and the Association for Theological Education in Southeast Asia (ATESEA), and is recognized by the Philippines Commission for Higher Education (CHED).

For further information or for an application, please write to the address below and indicate

Program(s) of interest:

- Master of Divinity
- Master of Arts in Christian Communication
- Master of Arts in Religious Education
- Master of Science in Theology

Materials we can provide you:

- Student Catalogue
- Application Form
- Other (please specify)

Please send all correspondence to

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Taytay, 1920 Rizal
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Fax: (63-2) 658-4510

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