

# *The Mediator*



*A Journal of Holiness Theology for Asia-Pacific Contexts*

**ASIA-PACIFIC NAZARENE  
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

*Bridging Cultures for Christ  
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## Preface

It is easy to over-simplify Wesleyan theology into a caricature of itself, often in the form of the tired Wesleyan-Calvinist debate wherein the Wesleyan perspective is placed over against the Calvinist view as “you can lose your salvation” versus “once-saved-always-saved.” While this concern has roots in the respective theologies, Wesleyan theology, for its part, is much more robust—and edifying—than this kind of over-wrought trope.

Not least among the more robust aspects of Wesleyan theology is its theological method, the way that the theologian goes about her work.<sup>1</sup> At the core of the Wesleyan theological method is the so-called Wesleyan Quadrilateral, a hermeneutic that recognizes Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience as essential sources for doing theology.

The present *Mediator* issue is an exercise in Wesleyan theology. We begin with a study of pneumatology from a Wesleyan perspective, with special emphasis on implications for the Church (Davis). This is followed by four articles that explore experiential aspects of theology as demonstrated by Wesleyan-Holiness women (Pring) and as recommended for work with children (Lotha and Olumbe) and adults (Ning Ngaih Lian).

Rounding out this issue, once again, we feature the abstracts from the theses and dissertations of the current graduates from APNTS’s various degree programs.

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<sup>1</sup> The careful reader may note that all the articles in the present issue happen to be authored by women. It is for that reason that I use the feminine pronoun here. Of course, not all Wesleyan theologians are women.

## **The Spirit in the Church**

Rebecca Davis, M.Div.

The marks of the church, as set forth in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, are that she is “one holy catholic and apostolic church.” The Creed is the church’s confession about the Triune God, that doctrine being the central, crucial question for the church to answer at the councils of Nicaea and Constantinople. Thus, the creed can be divided into three sections, each addressing the church’s belief in and understanding of the workings of one member of the Trinity. The statement of belief in the church is in the third section, falling under the domain of the Holy Spirit. Along with confessing that the Holy Spirit is, indeed, an equal member of the Godhead by naming him “Lord” and “giver of life... who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,” we confess that we believe in the church, which exists because of the life-giving Spirit. Leroy T. Howe says, “The Church is the Spirit’s creation, and the Spirit intrudes into the world for the sake of creating that land of community of which the Church is both sign and promise.”<sup>1</sup> Jürgen Moltmann agrees with this assessment when he says, “The statements about the church... belong to the article about faith in the Holy Spirit, and are only justified and comprehensible in the framework of the creative workings of the Spirit.”<sup>2</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright adds, “The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed places the Church under the divine sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, now, and always, and unto ages of ages.”<sup>3</sup>

If, then, the church is created and operates under the divine sovereignty of God the Holy Spirit, what does that look like? How is the Spirit involved in making the church who she is? According to Moltmann, our confession

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<sup>1</sup> Leroy T. Howe, “Holy Spirit and Holy Church,” *Saint Luke’s Journal of Theology* 22, no. 1 (1978): 43.

<sup>2</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 337–38.

<sup>3</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, “The Holy Spirit,” in *Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine* 1997, 441.

in the Creed “is acknowledgment of the uniting, sanctifying, comprehensive and commissioning lordship of Christ.”<sup>4</sup> This paper will examine the Spirit’s role in these four marks of the lordship of Christ over the church, according to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed: (1) unity, (2) holiness, (3) catholicity, and (4) apostolicity.

### Unity

Unity in the church is a difficult thing to achieve. Often, it is even difficult to describe. What is meant by “one” church? How can the many expressions of the church today be one?

To begin, we must be aware that unity is not the same as uniformity. Moltmann says, “The unity of the congregation is a unity in freedom. It must not be confused with unanimity, let alone uniformity in perception, feeling or morals.... Because it is Christ who gathers it and the Spirit of the new creation who gives it life, nothing that serves the kingdom of God and the freedom of [the person] must be suppressed in it. It is a unity in diversity and freedom.”<sup>5</sup> If the Holy Spirit is the giver of life, he is creative. In giving life to the church, it is logical that the resulting community would be as creative as the individual believers who constitute it. There is no need to insist on uniformity in order to be united. Ephesians 4:4 and 7 says, “There is one body and one Spirit.... But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it” (NIV). All the “oneness” language in this passage is immediately followed by a statement telling us that each of those who make up the “one” is different. It follows that “one church” does not mean there should only be one expression of what “church” means, or even that every Christian must comply with a single comprehensive set of beliefs. Our core beliefs, as set forth in the Creed, are integral to our identity as the church, but there are many differences of understanding that need not destroy our unity.

The Triune God is a God of unity. We often use the word “communion” to express the idea of connection, or oneness among more than one, including when we speak of the Trinity. Silouanos Fotineas says, “It is from the

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<sup>4</sup> Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 338.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 343.



third person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit, that the event of communion is realised. In the Holy Trinity, it is the Holy Spirit which connects the Father and Son as well as the human person with divine life.”<sup>6</sup> This idea of unity is accomplished through the work of the Holy Spirit, who connects the church with himself, the individual members with each other, and all with God the Father and God the Son.

At the very beginning of the church in the book of Acts, we can see the work of the Spirit creating unity where no unity was humanly possible. The story of Pentecost and the resulting church is an amazing example of unity in spite of diversity. Another story describing how the Spirit produced unity in the early church occurs in Acts 8. This passage tells the story about Philip the evangelist preaching in Samaria. A central point of the story is that the new believers were baptized but did not receive the Holy Spirit immediately. Alexandre Vieira gives us a possible explanation for this situation. First, Vieira recounts the history of enmity between the Jews and Samaritans. He then says it is significant that verse one tells us that everyone except the apostles were dispersed because of persecution in Jerusalem, letting us know the apostles were not in Samaria with Philip. When the apostles heard about what had happened in Samaria, they sent Peter and John. Vieira posits that the reason the Samaritans did not receive the Holy Spirit concurrently with their baptism was for the purpose of uniting the Jews and Samaritans in the new church. He says,

God wanted to show the Jerusalem church that He was behind the Samaritans’ acceptance of the faith, and therefore the church had no choice but to welcome them as well.... In fact, centuries of enmity could only be undone by the hand of God Himself. If the Holy Spirit had “ordinarily” come as expected, together with the baptism of the Samaritans, the ancient rupture between the two peoples would not have been dealt with.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Silouanos Fotineas, “Saint Basil of Caesarea: The Κοινωνία of the Church and Κοινωνία in the Holy Spirit,” *Phronema* 32, no. 2 (2017): 91.

<sup>7</sup> Alexandre Vieira, “Holy Spirit, Church, and the Outsiders: A Brief Study of the Relation between Baptism and Holy Spirit in Acts 8:14-17,” *Missio apostolica* 22, no. 1 (2014): 115.

The unity of the church involves acceptance of those whom God accepts. When Jesus told his disciples they would be his witnesses in Samaria, he was preparing them to accept the people they hated. Vieira believes Peter and John needed to be first-hand witnesses of the Holy Spirit filling the Samaritans to accomplish unity between the two groups.

The unity that we confess our belief in as the “one church” is not something we can conjure up ourselves. The working of the Holy Spirit produced unity between the Jewish and Samaritan believers. The unity described in Acts 2 was also achieved through the Holy Spirit. Brent A. Strawn says, “In Acts 2, the unity that is present is not a unity that is achieved. It is a unity that is given. It is not only desired by God, but it is provided by the Spirit. The kind of unity that God wills is granted by God.”<sup>8</sup> George Eldon Ladd talks about *koinonia*, another expression of unity, in the same way. “This is something more than human fellowship or the pleasure people of like mind find in each other's presence. It is more than a fellowship in a common religion. It is an eschatological creation of the Holy Spirit. Probably II Corinthians 13:14 should be rendered ‘the fellowship created by the Holy Spirit.’”<sup>9</sup>

Even considering Biblical admonitions to believers to act in ways that promote unity (e.g., Eph 4:3, Rom 12:18, Phil 4:2), these choices are not merely an act of the human will but are a result of submission to the Spirit’s leading. The Spirit empowers believers to be an expression of the unity of the Trinity. Human beings may attempt to replicate this type of unity, but it is an unreachable goal without the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus, in his prayer for future believers, as reported in John 17, prays “that all of them may be one.” The very fact that he prayed to the Father for this to happen implies that the future believers would not be able to achieve oneness on their own but would need help. Further, Jesus says, “I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity” (John

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<sup>8</sup> Brent A. Strawn, “Unity, Diversity, and the Holy Spirit,” *Journal for Preachers* 40, no. 4 (2017): 13.

<sup>9</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 543.

17:22-23a NIV). Although Jesus does not specifically name the Holy Spirit in this prayer for unity, reading back into this prayer, we can see how the Spirit promotes unity in the church as a reflection of the unity between himself, the Father, and the Son.

In what may seem to be a divided Christendom, Ron L. Staples assures us that “the Church remains one. The communion of saints is not something that can be built by ecclesiastical structures.”<sup>10</sup> Our creed says we *believe* in one church, not that we *make* it one. Our faith rests not in ourselves or our own ability to achieve unity, but in the work of the Holy Spirit, who makes us one in Christ.

### Holiness

Holiness, like unity, is only achievable through the power of the Holy Spirit. In the same way that we believe in one church, we *believe* that the church is holy; we don’t *make* it holy. The holiness of the church is not a result of our personal, individual holiness—the church as the Body of Christ is holy because Christ, the Head, is holy. Holiness in the Body is affected by the power of the Holy Spirit. As Wainwright says, “The divine agent of holiness in the Christian and in the Church is precisely the Holy Spirit.”<sup>11</sup> Our positional holiness as the Body of Christ does not mean that everyone who is a part of that Body has achieved perfection. Wainwright also says, “The sanctification or divinization of the believer and the Church is to be conceived as a dynamic process in which the absurdity of sin is being overcome, and a salutary eschatological transformation is taking place. Saints are being made.”<sup>12</sup> We are in a place of “already and not yet” in regard to personal holiness. Yet, we believe in the holiness of the church. As noted above, we acknowledge in the Creed the “sanctifying... lordship of Christ.”<sup>13</sup>

As Wesleyan believers, we emphasize perfect love as the highest aim of holiness. Howe speaks to this idea when he says, “The power which [Jesus]

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<sup>10</sup> Rob L. Staples, *Outward Sign and Inward Grace: The Place of Sacraments in Wesleyan Spirituality* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1991), 157.

<sup>11</sup> Wainwright, “The Holy Spirit,” 448.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 338.

bequeathed his followers included the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, to be sure, but what those followers may be most remembered for in all generations to come will be their capacities for patience and longsuffering, for associating with the unacceptable, even unto disgrace and martyrdom.”<sup>14</sup> The church’s concern for the other is the true holiness given by the Holy Spirit. Howe goes on to say, “Its holiness emerges as it builds up the community of believers into a redemptively open community, within which, traditionally expressed, the fallen condition of human beings may realize that perfection which God has intended from the beginning.”<sup>15</sup>

The holy church is not just a conglomeration of individuals who are growing in holiness. Edmund P. Clowney says, “Growth in true holiness is always growth together; it takes place through the nurture, the work and worship of the church.”<sup>16</sup> Ephesians 2:21–22 says, “In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit” (NIV). The church is only a holy temple together. One stone in the building may be holy, but it is not, on its own, a holy temple. God’s church is “being built together.” Although we may each experience the presence of God dwelling in us individually, we are only his church corporately. The Holy Spirit takes all the individual stones and builds them into a unified structure in which God dwells.

Holiness can also be thought of as transformation, or being made new. Moltmann says,

According to the prophetic promise, *holiness* is part of the inmost nature of the coming divine glory that is going to fill the earth. “The Holy One of Israel” will redeem his people. When the church is called “holy” in the New Testament, this means that it has become the new creation in Christ and therefore partakes of the holiness of the new creation, which the holy God brings about

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<sup>14</sup> Howe, “Holy Spirit and Holy Church,” 46.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>16</sup> Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church*. *Contours of Christian Theology*. (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1995), 89.

through his Spirit.<sup>17</sup>

The church is the present-day embodiment of Christ, who is holy. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the church is holy. Our individual lives are a part of that, but we cannot enhance or reduce the holiness of the church; it belongs to Christ, who is holy.

### Catholicity

Howe says that what makes a holy people a catholic people is “An all-encompassing responsibility accepted by the people of God for service in the world, which knows no qualification and no condition.”<sup>18</sup> The mark of catholicity is the pervasive presence of the church throughout the world. Howe goes on to say that, in the language of the Second Vatican Council, the catholic church is “a pilgrim people, about God’s mission in the world.”<sup>19</sup>

Veli-Matti Karkkainen’s view of the catholicity of the church involves the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. He says,

Not only is the local church a church by virtue of the celebration of the Eucharist, it is also a catholic church insofar as it involves the coming together of the whole church at a specific place. If the whole Christ is present at the Eucharist—and according to Zizioulas he is—then it becomes understandable that catholicity of the church is guaranteed by Christ’s presence. This is also the key to the relationship between the local and universal church.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, to be a *catholic* church, the church must have a worldwide presence, and each part, or local expression, of this catholic church must include the presence of Christ, who is the head of the body. As Karkkainen points out, the real presence of Christ can be experienced in the Eucharist. However, that is not the only way in which Christ is present. Jesus himself is recorded as saying that he would be present wherever his people are gathered in his name (Matthew 18:20). It may be a point of contention whether

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<sup>17</sup> Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 339.

<sup>18</sup> Howe, “Holy Spirit and Holy Church,” 52.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002), 101.

Christ's presence in the church requires the Eucharist. The question could be asked: is Christ truly present in every believer? If the answer is yes, then is the physical presence of the Eucharist necessary, or is the spiritual presence of Christ embodied in his followers sufficient? In either case, to apprehend the presence of Christ requires an awareness of a spiritual reality. This spiritual reality is communicated to believers by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Can those without spiritual understanding see Christ in the Eucharist or feel his presence when believers gather? A catholic church, understood in this sense, is not possible without the Holy Spirit.

There is yet more involved in the catholicity of the church. Believers are connected by the commonality of the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. The Spirit-produced connection between all believers under the headship of Christ results in a catholic church. For Ladd, the catholic church "cuts across our normal human sociological structures. Race does not matter; social status does not matter; by Spirit baptism all kinds of people are equally members of the body of Christ because we have all experienced the eschatological outpouring of the Spirit."<sup>21</sup> Again, it is the Holy Spirit in us who connects the individual believer to the local church and the local church to the universal church. Millions of people all over the world connected only by a shared religious belief is tenuous at best. But we believe in the Holy Spirit, the giver and sustainer of life, who is the connection between us all.

Wainwright highlights the qualitative aspect of the word "catholic" in contrast to the quantitative connotation of using the word "universal." He says, "The deepest meaning of catholicity, its inner heart, is the fullness, *πλήρωμα*, of God's saving act as it is achieved in Church and world."<sup>22</sup> The catholicity of the church is not determined by the mere fact that the church is geographically universal, but that God saves the world through the church. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the church is the light of the world. This understanding of catholicity expands the idea of the church's identity from "We are Christ's worldwide church" to "We are Christ's church for the world." Our mission becomes part of our identity.

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<sup>21</sup> Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 543.

<sup>22</sup> Wainwright, "The Holy Spirit," 448.

### Apostolicity

There is a difference between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox understanding of apostolicity, and the Protestant understanding. The Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches think of apostolicity as the authority conferred on the episcopacy by virtue of the laying on of hands in the ordination of bishops in a direct line back to the original twelve apostles. The problem Protestants see with this view is that it does not guarantee the transfer of truly apostolic teaching. As Clowney says,

The longer the succession list of bishops, the more tenuous the claim to untainted apostolic tradition.... Apostleship in the sense of the original and fundamental ministry of the first witnesses and messengers died out with the death of the last apostle.<sup>23</sup>

The Protestant church, then, believes that apostolicity depends on the faithful transmission of the original apostles' teaching. According to Thomas C. Oden,

The church is apostolic insofar as it retains, guards, and faithfully transmits its apostolic mission. Those sent by the Son are the apostolate. As Christ was sent by the Father, the apostles were sent, empowered by the Spirit, and the continuing apostolate is still being sent.<sup>24</sup>

He goes so far as to say,

It is primarily the whole church, and not merely discrete individuals, that succeeds the apostles and embodies apostolicity. It is the whole church catholic and not merely a fragment of it that is the temple of the Spirit, built on the foundation of the apostles (Eph. 2:20).<sup>25</sup>

Regardless of the divide over how apostolic truth is transmitted, the concern for the authenticity of the apostles' teaching has always been uppermost. Howe says,

When many diverse communities became involved in the mission,

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<sup>23</sup> Clowney, *The Church*, 77.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas C. Oden, *Life in the Spirit*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., v. 3 of *Systematic Theology / Thomas C. Oden* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 349.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 355.

it became essential for the churches to find ways of maintaining the integrity of the inclusive missioning fellowship throughout the Empire; hence, the criterion of apostolicity reminded the pilgrim people that their mission, expressed in diverse ways, nevertheless had to be the mission of Jesus Christ the Lord, and of none other than he.<sup>26</sup>

But how can the integrity of the apostolic mission be maintained through so many years? As with the other marks of the church, this, too, is the domain of the Holy Spirit. Oden says,

The basic affirmation of the apostolicity of the church does not specifically require or supply a particular theory of how that apostolicity is transmitted intergenerationally. Regardless of how the succession is viewed, whether symbolic or actual, the line of succession between the apostles and present apostolic witness is conceived as a continuous line of testimony sustained by the Spirit.<sup>27</sup>

And again, “Accurate recollection of apostolic testimony was understood to be undergirded and ensured by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>28</sup>

This idea is, of course, supported in Scripture. John 16:13 states clearly that the Holy Spirit “will guide you into all the truth.” In this passage, Jesus calls him the “Spirit of truth.” If the Holy Spirit were not present in the church, apostolicity would not be possible. How could we be sure the traditions handed down over two millennia were correct? We could not unless we believe in the Holy Spirit, who empowers the church and guides her into all truth.

Why do we believe in the apostolic church? We believe because we have faith in the sustaining power of the Holy Spirit. Clowney says,

The church is not the source of the divine revelation given through the apostles (Gal 1:6–9). Rather, New Testament revelation is part of Christ’s work through his Spirit; it is the apostolic foundation on which Christ builds his church.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Howe, “Holy Spirit and Holy Church,” 53.

<sup>27</sup> Oden, *Life in the Spirit*, 354.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 352.

<sup>29</sup> Clowney, *The Church*, 75.



The apostolicity of the church is not only guaranteed by the Spirit, truth was revealed by the Spirit in the first place. The revelation that resulted in the existence of Christ's church that continues until today is the work of the Holy Spirit, who is our sustainer, teacher, and guide.

### Conclusion

The one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church is nothing less than the working of the Holy Spirit in the world. John H. Wright says it well when he says,

All that belongs to the visibility of the Church has only one purpose: to manifest, sustain, strengthen, and intensify the inner life communicated to us by the Holy Spirit, in virtue of which we are a community of faith, a community of worship, and a community of love.<sup>30</sup>

The church without the Spirit could not possibly be conceived of as unified. The church without the Spirit has no possibility of being and becoming holy. The church without the Spirit has no presence in or witness to the world. And the church without the Spirit would not be able to maintain the mission given to her by Christ himself two millennia ago. We believe in the church because we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life.

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<sup>30</sup> John H. Wright, "The Church: Community of the Holy Spirit," *Theological Studies* 48, no. 1 (1987): 40.

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**Amidst the *Gemeinschaft*-ing and *Gesellschaft*-ing:  
The Atomization of Societies and the Communal Bonds  
Built by the Wesleyan-Holiness Women**

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I. A Development Trade-off: From *Gemeinschaft* To *Gesellschaft*

Humanity has never experienced development as rapidly as in the past hundred years—industrialization, modernization, and globalization transformed not only people’s way of life but also people’s worldview. Science and technology made the world seem smaller, as though it could be held in one’s hand, and solutions seem conveniently available at the end of one’s fingertips. Nevertheless, this is only one side of the development narrative. Development comes at a cost, and at times it comes with high stakes. Scholars then and now articulate that trade-offs inevitably occur as the economic and political systems of society transform.

One of the most notable theories of transformation in society is how it moves from being *Gemeinschaft* (pre-modern community) to *Gesellschaft* (market society). While *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* have been used by other German-language philosophers, it was Ferdinand Tönnies (1855–1936) who introduced these words as dichotomous analytical categories (Bond 2011, 1189; Waters 2016, 1; Tönnies 1957, 37–102). Tönnies understood that development is social evolution, a process wherein the *Gemeinschaft* community that used to be built upon personal relationships, loyalty, and shared values transforms into a *Gesellschaft* society that is characterized by impersonal relationships, fixed-term contracts, and individual advantages (Tönnies 1957; Waters 2016, 1–2). On the one hand, Tönnies thought of the *Gemeinschaft* bonds as emerging from what he called the “natural will”—solidarity is naturally established among those who have the same ethnicity or religious persuasions or social location. On the other hand, he thought of the *Gesellschaft* bonds as emerging from “rational

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will”—attachments are rationally constructed depending on one’s approximation of a relationship’s value (Tönnies 1957). Typically, *Gesellschaft* bonds are gauged through monetary measures (Bond 2011, 1187–1188). Tönnies thought of *Gesellschaft* as the more progressive society since it represents the advantages of modernity and it annuls the inefficiencies that come with the sentimental biases evident in *Gemeinschaft* (Tönnies 1957; Cahnmann 1995; Bond 2011, 1197–1199).

Another scholar who used the *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* as analytical categories is his fellow German thinker, Max Weber (1864–1920). Following Tönnies, Weber placed *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* at the heart of his sociology (Weber 1968, 4–41; Radkau 2009, 413–415). Nonetheless, Weber slightly differed from Tönnies. While Weber affirmed the economic and political advancement of the latter, he did not essentially see it as superior over the former. Weber supposed that the price *Gemeinschaft* pays to transform to *Gesellschaft* is the community’s very heart and soul (Weber 1968; Waters 2016, 3). For Weber, modernity transforms people from being a community of warm affection to a society of cold, calculated rationalism (Weber 1968). Relationships and people are objectified in *Gesellschaft*, and the overarching paradigm that governs transactions in a consumeristic society is, “What is in it for me?” Furthermore, if Tönnies perceived this societal transformation as a necessary, inescapable, and unidirectional historical transition, Weber did not. Specifically, he did not see *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* as mutually exclusive from each other, but rather, he thought of the two as an ongoing, interactive tension that will never be quite resolved (Weber 1968). Weber expanded Tönnies’s idea by introducing the gerunds *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung*, which crudely translate to *Gemeinschaft*-ing and *Gesellschaft*-ing. The fluidity in Weber’s idea of *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* can be likened to when one attempts to mix water and oil—resisting each other albeit coexisting (Cahnmann 1995, 109–110; Waters 2016, 4).

Despite the differences in Tönnies’s and Weber’s understanding and use of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, both agree that development atomizes society. It is apparent that as the socio-economic and political landscape changes, relationships break down, and the focus turns to individual interests. *Gesellschaft* includes the atomization of relationships even among the

most intimate social units such as close-knit neighborhoods and families (Tönnies 1957). For instance, the *Gemeinschaft* community of the feudalism era was overcome by the *Gesellschaft* society of the industrialization age. Traditional family ties and loyalty that used to be upheld as the utmost values in *Gemeinschaft* were supplanted by rationalistic and mechanistic value assessment in *Gesellschaft*. *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* reveal that development is two-faced indeed—the good side wherein it helps, and the other side wherein it hurts.

## II. A Wesleyan Trajectory for Transformational Development

The truth that development hurts because it atomizes relationships now poses a considerable challenge to the evangelical paradigm of development. The Christian philosophy of development, otherwise known as Transformational Development, understands the inevitability of modernization. In this age of rapid progress, this approach upholds that meeting the spiritual needs of people must also include meeting their physical needs (Myers 2011, 7). Moreover, Transformational Development advocates for the marginalized to have the freedom to access the economic and political advances that come with modernization. Concepts of modernization theorists such as Loomis, Rostow, and Newbiggin largely informed Transformational Development in its inception (Balaam and Dillman 2011; Myers 2011, 28–29; Offutt 2012, 38).

While Transformational Development is largely associated with efforts to improve the material aspect of people's lives, its hallmark remains its emphasis on relationships. Poverty is understood to be caused by humanity's fractured relationship with God, with one another, and with the rest of creation (Jayakumar 2011; Myers 2011, 65). The absence of peace in relationships is perceived as equivalent to abject poverty. Hence, Transformational Development views the healing of these relationships as the corrective intervention to undo poverty (Myers 2011, 17). Moreover, the end goal of Transformational Development is cosmological *shalom* wherein all people stand to have a wholly restored relationship with God, with one another, and with all of creation.

Transformational Development is evidently faced with a theoretical dilemma as it attempts to make two polarities meet. On the one end is its

emphasis on relationships—the signet of this development paradigm. On the other end is its affirmation of modernization—the process that breaks down relationships. Also adding to the burden of this conflict is the reality that Transformational Development cannot evade the *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* premise for two important reasons: (1) most academicians like Durkheim, Jameson, Tönnies, Veblen, and Weber support it and (2) this is a premise phenomenologically reinforced by history itself (Dingley 2008, Tönnies 1957; Weber 1968).

With this theoretical dilemma, Transformational Development could perhaps prime a discussion for resolution by looking at Weber’s concept of *Vergemeinschaftung und Vergesellschaftung*. Weber’s fluid concept, unlike Tönnies’ absolute distinction, conveys the possibility that a community can be *Gemeinschaft*-ing while *Gesellschaft*-ing at the same time. This means that *Gemeinschaft* bonds can exist amidst *Gesellschaft* contracts—just as a film production team in a broadcast network can turn into a small family, or a department in a corporation can become a group of friends, or a small company of dressmakers can become a sisterhood. In other words, Weber’s concept opens a possible space where a community can strive for development without losing its communal bonds or letting its relationships corrode.

It is also precisely in this tension-filled gap between *Gemeinschaft*-ing and *Gesellschaft*-ing that Transformational Development can begin to explore a new trajectory forward, one where a community minimizes the risk of relationship breakdown as it simultaneously pursues progress. More specifically, this trajectory can be informed by voices from the Holiness heritage. Offutt noted that it is mostly those from the Reformed tradition who have been steering Transformational Development discussions (Offutt 2011, 45). Tim Tennent, the president of Asbury Theological Seminary, conjectures that Christianity could now be on the verge of a “Wesleyan moment” (Offutt 2011, 45). In line with this, one cannot help but think of engaging the challenges that come in the wake of development, such as broken relational ties in a dialogue informed by the distinctly Wesleyan doctrine of social holiness.

The words, “No holiness but social holiness,” are more than just a doctrinal axiom or a dogmatic syntax to those who belong to the Wesleyan

tradition. While salvation is understood to be a posture of the heart that results in personal piety, the people of the Wesleyan heritage also emphasize that salvation has a social dimension which should result in social justice, and eventually, *shalom* (Velasco-Sosa 2015, 350; Lebeso 2015, 353; Manswell 2015, 357). Wesley and his group were unlike most Christians of their days—they dedicated more time in discharging their social duties than in spiritual introspection and musing of rapture (Rattenburg 1928, 234). They concretely demonstrated holiness in the seemingly mundane horizons of everyday life—they worked to clothe the naked, to feed the hungry, and to set the oppressed free. To the early Methodists, holiness is a social phenomenon—it “happens” when God’s people huddle and the presence of the divine manifests within the daily social realities and constraints of human existence (Lodahl 2013, 46–47).

It is not difficult to envisage how social holiness could engage communities experiencing the encumbrances of societal atomization in the tension-filled process of *Vergemeinschaftung und Vergesellschaftung*. In other words, if the corrosion of communal bonds is one of the persistent developmental challenges, social holiness could possibly mitigate this negative effect of development. This is not to claim that social holiness is the panacea that will end the problem once and for all—just as Weber posited, the conflicts brought by *Gemeinschaft-ing* and *Gesellschaft-ing* will never be fully resolved. Even more, social holiness is a doctrine that is still being reconstructed to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century context. Scholars like Assmann, Rieger, and Crawford agree that social holiness today needs to confront the postmodern structures of capitalism, exclusion, and oppression (Assmann 1988, 26–37; Rieger 2001, 10–11; Crawford 2014, 144).

To put this plainly, the task that needs to be started is to identify concepts in the Wesleyan doctrine of social holiness that can help communities keep relationships intact while they inevitably go through the changes demanded by progress. The discussion that follows will bring to the table voices that need to be heard today. The following is a survey of ways in which women of the Wesleyan tradition lived out social holiness and how their efforts helped forge relationships.

### III. Communal Bonds Built by Wesleyan-Holiness Women

Wesley and the early Methodists did not primarily think of informing developmental conversation when they served the people, more so the women who worked in the Foundry. Their concentration was on feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and giving shelter to the homeless. Nonetheless, even without the intent to participate in such discussions, the Wesleyan ethos of social holiness seemed to flow seamlessly, naturally, and inescapably into a Christian paradigm of development. Howard Snyder, one of today's foremost Wesleyan thinkers, identified distinct Wesleyan themes (Snyder 2011, 18). Three of these themes embody social holiness and engage the theoretical conflict of Transformational Development at hand: (1) love for the poor, (2) a renewed missional church, and (3) salvation as the restoration of God's image (Snyder 2011, 19–27; Offutt 45–46). This part of the paper explores the ways in which women of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition wove these three themes into their ministry to developing societies.

#### **Love for the Poor**

Wesley and the Methodists were considered a radical group in the 18<sup>th</sup> century because of their *caritas* in action and priority towards the poor. The Foundry, a building in Moorfields that Wesley bought as a meeting place for the Methodists, doubled as a shelter for the vagrants of London. The city at that period was at the dawn of the British industrial revolution. The women and men of Wesley's group provided the basic needs of the widows and poor children and afforded funds for those unemployed who wanted to begin small enterprises (Southey 1847, 390).

Evangelism and ministry to the people of the lower echelon of society are inseparable for the Methodists. In his sermon, "The General Spread of the Gospel," Wesley commented, "'They shall know me,' said the Lord, not from the greatest to the least but 'from the least to the greatest.'" He continued, "In this order the saving knowledge of God ever did and ever will proceed." Furthermore, Wesley commented that "the greatest miracle of all" is a church that reaches out and associates with the poor—people will not be able to do such ministry unless empowered by the Spirit and captivated by the character of Christ (Wesley 1958, 227; Snyder 2011, 22). Loving the poor is an expression of a life that is only possible if one has truly been



sanctified by the Spirit of God.

In this respect, Catherine Booth can be considered as a woman whose life embodied the sanctification of the Holy Spirit. Together with her husband, William, Catherine worked and served the poorest of the poor in then developing England from the 1860s until 1890, which was the year of her death (Leclerc 2010, 111; Green 2015, 32). Catherine and William not only served the economically disenfranchised in the community but also took under their wings the rejects of the society—the prostitutes, alcoholics, and gamblers—and led them to a life of repentance (Leclerc 2010, 110). They began to serve people living in extreme poverty in a work named the Christian Mission (Green 2015, 21). The Christian Mission, later called the Salvation Army, aimed to expand evangelism efforts from merely sharing the faith to meeting the physical and social needs of the poor. Hence the three S's of the organization were framed: soap, soul, and salvation.

Catherine, dubbed the Mother of the Salvation Army, lived out social holiness in a day and age where London was transitioning from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*. The population exploded, people were flocking to the large cities for industrial work, and both the government and the church were unable to cope with the flood of chaos caused by industrialization (Green 2015, 20). London became an industrial jungle where only the fittest could survive. The Salvation Army, under the leadership of the Booths, stepped in and did the vital work of caring for those who were weak in the society; they created a unified community in a segmented society—a band of brothers and sisters who shared the common goal of evangelism and social welfare. The legacy of Catherine, along with her husband William, lives on today in over 120 countries where the Salvation Army continues to bring the gospel and humanitarian aid.

### **Renewed Missional Church**

Wesley desired to see the Church of England vivified through missions. He perceived Methodism as an instrument to transform Christians' apathy to empathy (Snyder 2011, 29). Wesley envisioned in Sermon 74 a transforming church that builds up one another, encourages one another, and equips one another despite differences. Furthermore, the church must also call others to return to Christ and live a life filled with the power of the Spirit.

The church that lives out social holiness actively transforms society, not only through its pious worship but even more through its pious commitment to embody mercy and justice (Lee 2015, 343).

Amanda Berry Smith was one of the first African-American women to become an evangelist, missionary, and social reformer from the Wesleyan-Holiness movement (Leclerc 2010, 120). Despite being born a slave, she was able to gain respect from both the black church and white church because of her spiritual fervor and works to eliminate prejudice. She also became the first black woman international evangelist when she preached throughout the United Kingdom in the year 1878. The following year, Amanda began her missionary work in India, and two years later, she moved to Africa. She worked for the education of children and the improvement of the status of women for eight years in Liberia and Sierra Leone (Alexander 2009, 9). Upon Amanda's return to the United States until her death, she served poor children through her orphanage in Harvey, Illinois (Leclerc 2010, 121). Amanda worked in societies that were not only segmented by development but also by racial and gender biases. She proved that even from her disadvantaged point, she could work for the inclusion of those who are also in the margins. Through her life's work, Amanda created a familial bond among the people she worked with, a bond that makes them a family that transcends skin colors and socio-economic backgrounds.

### **Salvation as Restoration of God's Image**

Wesley's understanding of soteriology stands out because of its two "not only, but also" aspects: (1) salvation is not only for the propitiation of sin but also for the restoration of the image of God and (2) salvation is not only personal but also communal. Justification is not the end-all and be-all of salvation in Wesley's theology. In Sermon 85, Wesley explained that at the very heart of salvation is sanctification—the restoration of the image of God in humanity through transformation into the likeness of Christ. In other words, salvation is a being inducted into a new way of living; it is a being in a loving relationship with the triune God, with other human beings, and with all creation. Hence, growing in Christ pertains not merely to individual Christlikeness but also to the thriving of a community's life into the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:12–16). Wesley called this "social Christianity" or "social

holiness,” a community sanctified by loving God and loving one another.

The life of Emma Whittemore is one that best displays salvation as restoration of God’s image. Emma and her family lived opulently in 19<sup>th</sup>-century New York, a time when the city was beginning to be a vital place of economic and political development in America (Whittemore 1931, 41). Intoxicated by their wealth and social status, Emma and her husband lived desensitized to the abject poverty on the other side of the metropolis. This was until Emma and her husband listened to a sermon by Jerry McAuley, an ex-convict who ministered in Water Street, a place in Manhattan that gained notoriety for its several rum shops and brothels. In such a place, Emma and her husband were confronted by what she would later refer to as their “useless lives,” and they were deeply convicted of their arrogance and neglect of the things of God (Whittemore 1931, 41–48). The Whittemores knelt alongside the alcoholics and the prostitutes, and at the altar, both were filled by the love of God and love for neighbor.

Emma would later work among prostitutes, providing them shelters and training for alternative sources of income like gardening, dressmaking, and poultry-raising to pull the women out of the sex trade (Stanley 2002, 3). In 1890, she opened the first Door of Hope as a rescue center for prostitutes. Ninety-seven Doors of Hope were operating by the time of her death, and later 250 more were opened to rescue thousands of fallen women (Stanley 2002, 4). Emma and the women who worked alongside her were bearing the image of Christ and through the Doors of Hope were imprinting Christ’s image to women who used to be defined by guilt and shame. The love of God manifested in them not only through personal piety but also through social holiness. Amidst the negative effect of *Gesellschaft-ing* in New York that threatened to abandon these women as victims on the margins, a *Gemeinschaft* of sisters emerged—one marked by the restorative power of the love of God and love for one’s neighbor.

#### IV. Courage to Engage the Current Context

Humanity cannot escape development and its consequences that change social structures. Modernization affects not only the economic and political landscape of a society but also people’s communal bonds. Women of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition like Catherine Booth, Amanda Berry Smith,

and Emma Whittemore, along with the thousands who were unnamed in the chronicles, proved that *Gemeinschafts* could exist among *Gesellschafts*. They have shown that the power of social holiness can unite communities via mutual care and self-giving. These 19<sup>th</sup>-century women continue to give courage to Christians still grappling with the *Gemeinschaft*-ing and *Gesellschaft*-ing of their 21<sup>st</sup>-century context—the courage to replicate their ministry to the casualties of developmental trade-offs and courage to imagine how the Wesleyan doctrine of social holiness can make new directions for a more holistic understanding of Transformational Development.

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**Children’s Spirituality: Biblical Foundations, the  
Importance of Laying a Solid Spiritual Foundation  
and the Nurturing Role of the Family and the Faith Community**

Wobeni Lotha, Th.M.

*“I believed that to be a Christian meant to God to Church, pray, read your Bible and be good. My picture about God was that God was a dictator, I was hopeless, felt worthless and lead a meaningful life,” said She as she recollected about her childhood (Rhakho 2017, 103).*

As I came across these lines, I could not help but be intrigued by the fact that spirituality is not only about the external religious practices that can be taught to children even though they grow up in a home, in a Christian home. Spirituality, as we see it today, is a term that has several connotations and can convey different meanings according to the different contexts.

Scottie May, a pioneer for children’s spirituality in Christian perspective and Associate Professor of Christian Formation and Ministry at Wheaton College, states that the term spirituality is “misused in a contemporary society” and expresses the difficulty to lay out a simple definition of spirituality (May 2006, 48). True to May’s statement, spirituality today is understood in many terms. It can also be defined in a solely secular way. It could be an expression or a lifestyle or, obviously, arising from religious allegiance. The influx of the usage of the term spirituality has made it difficult to create an autonomous, universal, or “a concrete functional perspective,” says Holly Catterton Allen, Associate Professor of Christian Ministries whose area of scholarly interest is in children’s spirituality (Allen 2008, 6). At this point, we see there are diverging thoughts that can be explored, but this paper will focus on one perspective, children’s spirituality from the Christian perspective.

Rebecca Nye, a renowned scholar in children’s spirituality who did extensive qualitative research on children’s spirituality in her dissertation, *Psychological Perspectives on Children’s Spirituality*, describes the spirituality of the child “as an unusual level of consciousness or perceptiveness relative to other passages of that child and this was often in the context of

how the child related to things, especially people, including themselves and God” (Nye 1998, 237). In her findings, “Relational consciousness appeared as a common underlying thread in much of the data” (Nye 1998, 244). She further elaborated the concept of relational consciousness as (1) child-God consciousness, where the child was able to imagine and experience the relationship to God, (2) child-people consciousness, the relationship of the child with the others, (3) child-“world” consciousness, the responses of the child around the beauty and sensation in nature, and (4) child-self consciousness, the context of the child’s relationship with their own identity and their own mental life (Nye 1998, 249–250).

Another important scholar on children’s spirituality within a Christian context is Catherine Stonehouse. In her book, *Joining Children on the Spirituality Journey: Nurturing a Life of Faith* (1998), Stonehouse also elaborates about children’s openness to God, the ability to think about God, and the ability to comprehend the reality of transcendence.

Children’s spirituality in Christian perspective is also defined in the form of experiencing and knowing God (Anthony 2006, 33); encountering God through a sense of awe and wonder and a process of reflection (May 2006, 46); knowing Jesus and growing in that relationship (Carlson and Crupper 2006, 104); or an innate or inborn part of the humanness of each child at the time of their birth (Copsey 2005, 24–26). At this point, giving a single definition to children’s spirituality from a Christian perspective may not do justice to all the opinions of the scholars stated above. The vastness of understanding also reminds me of what Brendan Hyde says in his book, *Children and Spirituality: Searching for Meaning and Connectedness* (2008): spirituality is a “contested concept” (1) which “belongs to every person’s being” (29), and no individual is created in the same way. As Hyde stated, spirituality “may not be able to be succinctly defined” (23), pointing to the idea that comprehension about spirituality would definitely have variants.

I would agree with Hyde’s concept about the inability to give a precise definition of spirituality experienced differently as all individuals are created differently. Some experience spirituality in relationships; others in knowing or encountering. But one thing is sure: “Trying to develop an understanding of spirituality without including God in the equation is futile” (Anthony 2006, 10). Children’s spirituality in the Christian perspective is not only about



the knowledge that the child possesses about God but also includes a personal encounter and moments of wonder that will connect the life of the child with God.

### Biblical Foundations for Children's Spirituality

The Bible clearly states, "So Jesus grew both in height and in wisdom, and he was loved by God and by all who knew Him" (Luke 2:52 NLT). Biblical holistic child development that is anchored in God's Word sees every component of growth as equally important, including spiritual development. These experiences influences, shaped, and contributed to Jesus' teaching and preaching ministry as an adult (Lee 2018). Spiritual encounters among children in the Bible are also evident. Young Samuel grew up in the presence of the Lord (1 Sam 2:21); David acknowledged God from birth and declared that he trusted God even as an infant (Ps 22:9); the prophet Jeremiah realized that he was appointed by God prior to his birth (Jer 1:4). John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit while still in his mother's womb (Luke 1:15) and leaped when Mary, who was pregnant with Jesus, greeted Elizabeth, John's mother (Luke 1:41). The Apostle Paul was set apart from birth and called by God's grace (Gal 1:15).

The Bible's distinct records of children's spiritual encounters clearly show that "the human capacity to be in a relationship with God is not solely limited to adults (Graves 2006, 165). Children experiencing God is not superficial; rather, Scripture sets the standard for what the child should be experiencing (Carlson and Crupper 2006, 106). Children, too, are spiritual beings (Csinos and Beckwith 2013, 57) who are created in the image of God. Spirituality is a part of our human nature because we are all created by God in His image (May 2006, 49).

### Significance of Children's Spirituality

According to Kathryn Copsey, when God said, "Now we will make humans, and they will be like us" (Gen 1:26 CEV), he laid the foundation for all people as spiritual beings because he was not referring only to a physical resemblance in terms of flesh and blood. It follows that God has made us spiritual beings like himself (Copsey 2005, 24). Copsey, in this aspect, also states that spirituality in children is within the child from the moment of

conception (2005, 24). Trisha Graves, the children's pastor at Carmel Presbyterian Church, acknowledges that children are extremely open to the spiritual dimension in their lives (Graves 2006, 188). She also further states that children are capable of transforming spiritually because the Holy Spirit is alive and living in them if they are followers of Christ (Graves 2006, 193). June Lee states, "God instilled in children a spiritual potential and inner capacity for faith to experience a relationship with Him" (Lee 2018). Machteld Reynaert considers the child as a full human being and an active maker of spiritual meaning wherein each child has the capacity to search for meaning in their lives (Reynaert 2014, 179).

Although Copey, Graves, Lee, and Reynaert agree on the same view of the potentiality of all children to experience God, Graves uses the word "If." By using this word, Graves implies that, although all children have spiritual potentiality, yet this potentiality can be awakened only if they are followers of Christ. I agree with Grave's statement when she uses the word "transformed." Following Christ is not only knowing about him but is all about being transformed like him. Graves also implies that if children follow Christ, they will be transformed. But such transformation calls for laying a very solid spiritual foundation.

#### Importance of Laying a Solid Spiritual Foundation for Children's Spirituality

At a children's spirituality conference I attended in Nashville, Tennessee, Dr. June Lee, a scholar from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Texas, talked about issues that we have today (2018). She stated, "There is a lack of knowledge about faith traditions, inability to relate to faith traditions, illiterate about the Bible, inarticulate about faith and belief in God and understanding of salvation. And so, many young people are leaving the church as they grow up and [are] adrift without a Biblical faith in the strong culture stream of the world" (2018). Lee here is speaking from a Western American perspective, but this is a global issue; it is the issue of this generation. Youngsters are leaving the church because they have found some other interesting things rather than the church.

Similarly, in an article published in *The Tennessean* on June 30, 2018,

Dr. Clay Stauffer, Senior Minister at Woodmont Christian Church Nashville and a fourth-generation minister, talks about young believers leaving the church and states, “Young believers are looking for a faith that is authentic, life-changing, and relevant to their lives” (2018).

From the views of both Lee and Stauffer, we see that the issues are not about non-believers or those who do not know about Christ. These are people who once knew the church or who God is but did not sustain it. Who is to be blamed for all these causes: the parents, the guardians, the church, the pastors? But the point here is this not a blaming game; it is about what can be done so that the young children today would be a generation tomorrow that will still hold on to faith. And this is the reason why, talking from the current human situation perspective, laying a spiritual foundation is a pressing need. Moreover, the Bible also clearly defines the need for a spiritual foundation.

According to Lee (2018), the Bible compares believers' lives to constructing a building: “For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building” (1 Cor 3:9 NIV). The Bible also talks about the difference between laying a strong foundation and a weak foundation (Matt 7:24–27, Luke 6:47–49). Even when it comes to the spirituality of children, strong foundations in the Word of God are necessary for sustenance in faith. Sustaining of faith also requires nurturing with utmost care because “nurturing of the child's spirituality creates an environment allowing [the child] to experience what it means to be a child of God, even when [the child] cannot find words to tell a parent or a caregiver how important this is” (Logan and Miller 2017, 41). In order to nurture the spirituality of the child, intentional creation of the environment is important, whether it is in the home or in the faith community.

### Role of the Family in Nurturing the Solid Spiritual Foundation for Children's Spirituality

Family plays a very important role when it comes to nurturing a solid spiritual foundation because the people in the family are the first people from whom the children will learn. It is also particularly important to note that, since “childhood is a particularly important time for the spiritual formation of the children, often setting the basic trajectory of their lives” (Knight 2014,

94), the child needs guidance, support, care, nurture, and love from the family. Building a strong foundation is not the end of the story; it is also important to nurture that foundation. When we talk about family, we cannot help but agree on the importance of the role of parents in this journey.

In the Old Testament, children are considered a reward, a heritage from the Lord (Ps 127:3), and a sign of fruitfulness (Prov 17:6). According to Graves, “Because of these value that God has placed on Children, He clearly desires that they be raised with full knowledge of Him (2006, 167). This also affirms that parents, or guardians for those who do not grow in families with their parents present, have immense responsibility towards not only laying a strong spiritual foundation but also nurturing it.

Graves argues from a Biblical perspective (Deut 1:31; 6:4-9; 11:18-21; 21:18-19; Ps 78:5-8) that parents should provide the primary nurturing and spiritual training of the children (2006, 169). Parents are the first teachers that children meet, and it remains crucial for them to teach them at a young age. As mentioned earlier, all children have a spiritual potentiality in them, which is innate to them since conception. Accordingly, it is necessary to start the spiritual training of children when they are young and inexperienced (Graves 2006, 168). Being able to start teaching at a young age remains crucial, as it sets the foundation of the child. Children begin burrowing ideas from their environment to make sense of their world at a very young age (Yust 2004, 26), calling for parents and or guardians to create an environment that aids the nurturing of the young mind. The adult also needs to tell children religious narratives so that children are “hearing the story of God’s love as it has been told throughout the ages” (Yust 2004, 49). Another crucial reason for nurturing the faith of children at a young age is because, as Nye states, “Research has found that childhood often provides the most crucial impressions of all, the ones that could shape (or distort) all the experiences of the later life (2009, 11).

### The Parents or Guardians as Role Models

Parents or guardians need to be faith role models in the family. Karen Marie Yust states, “The encounter with the spiritual world becomes superficial if there are no genuine models of adult faithfulness to observe and emulate” (2004, 39). If spiritual practices are more said than done then, there lies a

possible danger of becoming a cliché. In *Real Kids, Real Faith*, Yust argued that most children construct some kind of God concept from their parents and other significant adults before entering the pre-school years (2004, 12). Thus, it is essential for the parents to set an environment where children can have the right start to developing spirituality.

### Creating Space in the Home for Spiritual Experiences

To understand God's ways, children need to see the commandments lived out (May et al. 2005, 33). Children will not reflect on the spiritual significance of their experiences or ideas unless the adults in their lives provide the spiritual categories and concepts of the family's faith tradition for use in structuring their understanding (Yust 2004, 123). Children need intentionally to be given a space to question and to be encouraged to share their spiritual experiences. Parents are to introduce their children to the appropriate behavior and traditions of the church. Yust states, "Parents are the principal guides in children's spiritual formation" (2004, 164), just as they are for children's physical or mental well-being. Adults, most specifically parents, are responsible for being directive in shaping the spiritual lives of the children they influence (Carlson and Crupper 2006, 112). The role of parents in nurturing the foundation of the spiritual life of the children is easier said than done. Since we are all human beings, there is a tendency to make mistakes—sometimes even being the wrong model. But "parents need not be perfect in order to support the children in their spiritual formation; they simply need to be on the journey with them, learning and growing together" (May et al. 2005). Nevertheless, a journey with children is not the sole responsibility of the parents. It also involves the faith community to come alongside.

### Role of the Faith Community in Nurturing a Solid Spiritual Foundation

Religious communities share with parents the responsibility to help children receive the faith story through godly human actions (Yust 2004, 39). The process of spiritual nurture of children can be exhausting if undertaken by a single parent or one set of parents. We need a community of faithful people to study, work, pray, and worship alongside our children and us so

that we do not need to shoulder the responsibility in isolation from the resources others can provide (Yust 2004, 164). Yust writes about the impact and importance of the community in the spiritual lives of children. She says,

Parents are the principal guides in children's spiritual formation, yet children need a religious community within which to experience God as something other than their own friend and or possession. They need the benefit of others' discoveries about divine love and others' testimonies to the challenges of faithful living. They need to rub up against different ideas about God and experience the affirmation of shared understanding. They need opportunities to be shaped by communal rituals and practices that extend beyond the narrow confines of their immediate family so that they realize their kinship with other spiritual people. They need to realize that their religious language belongs to many others and that they can speak this language outside the home as well as within it. (2004, 164)

Children have the ability to reflect on, wonder about, wrestle with, and question deep issues related to life; they just need to be given an opportunity to do so within a godly community with the proper support, structure, freedom, and listening ears of adults (Newton 2014, 229). The faith community needs to be a safe place where children are allowed to practice what is being learned at home. Adults in the faith community need to understand that they are seen by children, which also calls for careful examination of thoughts and actions because children are watching. The commitment of the faith community must be to improve the lives of the children in their neighborhood, whether those children are members of their congregation or not (Yust 2004, 169).

### Welcoming Children, the Role of the Church.

The church plays a significant role in introducing children to Jesus and then helping them grow and become more like him (Graves 2006, 174). After the home, the church is the primary—or in some cases, the only—place where children learn about God and the only community they come across. Again, for some children, the church is the only place they learn to nurture their faith.

The Old Testament states that Scripture calls for children's presence and involvement during worship. During the renewal of the covenant, Moses specifically addresses the children (Deut 29:11), while Joshua read all the words of the law as Moses had commanded to the assembly of Israel, including children (Josh 8:35). In the New Testament, the children were also present when it was time to bid farewell to Paul (Acts 21:5) as he continued on his missionary journey. When Paul's letter arrived and was read in early house churches, specific instructions to children were also included (Eph 6:1). When the disciples stopped the children from coming to Jesus, he commanded his disciples to let them come to him. Jesus not only told the children to come to him but also took the children in his arms, placed his hands upon them, and blessed them (Mark 10:16). These instances highlight the cruciality for children to be invited into the faith community where God's presence is real, where children can experience that presence and the love of God through God's people (May et al. 2005, 71). The church must be a place where children feel that they are a part, not just because their parents are a part of it. Welcoming children could be in the literal sense of using words and expressions to welcome them when they are seen in the church.

Ways of welcoming children to the church include involving the children in the worshipping community through the incorporation of children's experiences in the sermon, corporate prayers, and responsive readings, through the inclusion of a reference to children's lives, and through the utilization of hymns and songs that will attend to the multiple comprehension levels represented by an intergenerational congregation (Yust 2004, 168). By welcoming children to the church, we cannot expect them to behave like little adults. When we involve children, it is important to see that, from maintaining an appropriate pace during the activities in the service to the use of language, there needs to be careful consideration. For example, long sermons may make children restless, or gender insensitive words might create confusion for children.

By entering God's story together, experiencing God, sharing our discoveries, and honestly processing our questions, a deep sense of community is built (May et al. 2005, 136). Citing Ivy Beckwith, Holly Catterton Allen, and Christine Ross Lawton observe,

Children need frequent, regular, ongoing opportunities to interact with people of faith ‘who struggle, who trust God, who make mistakes and are forgiven, who work for mercy and justice, who model kingdom values.’ Beckwith says children will remember the stories and the lives of people they have known in their faith communities more than Bible facts they may have learned. (2012, 53)

The vicarious experiences of faith could strengthen and guide the children as they continue to journey in faith.

Personal, meaningful relationships are crucial for nurture in a faith community (May et al. 2005, 144). The character, integrity, and spiritual vitality of the faith community will affect children profoundly (May et al. 2005, 132). When the children worship together with their parents, their experiences provide intentional opportunities for the whole family of God to worship together (May et al. 2005, 240). As children engage in tasks and activities with people who are older than them, their learning is enhanced, and their formation is spurred forward (Allen and Ross 2012, 144). When the church experience includes children, it shows that the adults and children are all together in the journey of faith. Children learn to be comfortable with adults in the church, they are assured of adults valuing them, they find their place in the faith community, they learn to explore faith, and most of all, they see the church as a family of God learning to help, share, grow, and learn from one another despite the differences in generations.

In conclusion, children’s spirituality is not just a concept that is created. It has deep roots in the Bible. Spirituality is innate and inborn in every child, but it needs to be awakened in order to be truly transformed. Spirituality in children needs to take a deep root, a solid foundation rather than just being a creamy layer. This solid foundation has to be nurtured. In this nurturing process, the role of the family and the faith community remains essential.

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**“Let the Little Children Come to Me”  
Examining the Place of Children from a Theological, Historical, and  
Developmental Perspective: Implications for Missions with Children**

Roseline Olumbe, Ph.D.

The significance of Jesus’ message to the disciples who were hindering children from coming to Him cannot be taken lightly. In his words, Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these” (Luke 18:16b NIV). The invitation of children to come to Jesus has implications for ministry among children in different contexts. It is notable that in Jesus’s welcome for children, he was clear on two things. First, children should be allowed to come to him, and secondly, no one should hinder children’s access to Him. This implies that parents and other caregivers have a mandate to bring children to Jesus without any roadblocks. Therefore, it is important to discuss why children should gain access to Jesus and the implications of this command. To this end, this paper discusses the importance of theological reflection on children, taking into consideration Biblical, developmental, historical, and sociological perspectives about children. Finally, the paper will outline the implications of these perspectives for ministry among children in the home, church, and specialized ministries.

**Biblical Perspectives about Children**

The Bible covers different themes concerning children, and these perspectives are critical in aiding one’s understanding of the place of children in God’s eyes. Marian Carter notes, “The picture of children in the Hebrew scriptures is multifaceted. There is no systematic thinking, yet there are a number of references to children: to the emotions of joy at their birth or sadness at infertility; to weaning, nurturing, socialization, and educating; to the care of the fatherless; to children as innocent and as sinful” (2007, 76–77). These views, though centered in the Old Testament, have an implication to the way Christians should and must view children. Some of the themes evidenced in the Bible concerning children are discussed in this section.

### **Children as God's Gift and Blessings**

In Ps 127:3, the Bible records that “Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a reward from him” (NLT). In Gen 17:6, 28:3, 49:25, and Ps 128:3–4, the Bible alludes to the fact that children are a blessing from the Lord. Not only are children viewed as gifts, but Prov 17:6 also reveals that “grandchildren are the crowning glory of the aged” (NLT). Therefore, referring to grandchildren as a crowning glory, they are also seen as a blessing. Douglas McConnell notes that children are given to us by God as gifts to welcome and nurture (2007, 5). As precious gifts are given to human beings, children must be nurtured and provided with a safe and enabling environment where they will thrive and grow.

### **Children Created in the Image of God**

Children, just like adults, are created in the image of God. This view is worth appreciating and embracing since it has implications for the way human beings value and handle children. Genesis 1:26–27 says,

Then God said, “Let us make people in our image, to be like ourselves. They will be masters over all life—the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the livestock, wild animals, and small animals.” So God created people in his own image; God patterned them after himself; male and female he created them. (NLT)

Creation in the image of God denotes value and dignity to the creature. Children (male and female), made in the image of God, are born with inherent dignity and value. Inarguably, dignity is not credited to children by human beings; it is innately credited to them by God. Truly, as McConnell says, “God creates every unique person as a child with dignity” (2007, 5). Since they are made in God’s image, they are endowed with dignity and value that comes from God alone (Brewster 2011,19).

According to Jennifer Orona, children are created in the image of God and bestowed with intrinsic value in and of themselves (2007, 102). Brewster expounded on this idea and stated that “all children regardless of tribe, language, nationality, age, gender, ability, behavior, caste or any other human characteristic” have God-given dignity (2011, 19–20). For this reason, “Every child born of human parents carries the image of God, independent of any decision of the will or privilege of birth” (McConnell 2007, 5). Born

and made in the image of God, children are spiritual and have the natural desire to connect with God. Catherine Stonehouse points out that “many children sense God’s presence, love Jesus and are captured by Bible stories” (1998, 22). It is, therefore, important to help children connect with God and enhance their spiritual development. Spirituality is fundamental to children, and they need exposure to spiritual matters. Rebecca Nye argues that spirituality is essential for children in three ways: (1) essential to their faith, (2) essential to childhood and not an optional extra of adulthood or something opted into by minority, and (3) essential to being whole at any stage in life (2009,18–9).

The value of children is not only reflected in the book of Genesis. In Ps 139:13–16, the Psalmist echoes,

You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knitted me together in my mother’s womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—and how well I know it. You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed. (NLT)

This Psalm reveals that human value and dignity do not emanate from what children or adults do, where they come from or how they look. However, every person—and in this sense, every child—is fearfully and wonderfully made from conception. This intrinsic value of children should be respected by adults. As a result, no child should be wounded, hurt, oppressed, or denied their rights (Jeyaraj 2009, 5).

### **Children as the Hope of Salvation**

Children represent the hope of salvation, as noted by Jesudason B. Jeyaraj, who points out that the Savior of the world was the incarnated baby (2009, 12). God did not choose to redeem the world through an adult; however, he chose to be born a child so as to live among human beings and bring salvation to the world. The fulfillment of the prophecy by Isaiah regarding the birth of a child by the virgin was evidenced in Matt 1:23. The birth of Emmanuel, God with us, was the peak of incarnation as God himself chose to live among people. He demonstrated the value of children by coming

into the world as a baby. According to Jeyaraj,

The presence of the incarnated child in the midst of people gave them the hope of salvation. Jesus also proclaimed himself as the Messiah in various ways in the later period of his life, namely, through his teachings (Luke 4:16–21), dialogue with people (John 1:35–42; 4:16–26), and actions of healing the sick, feeding the hungry, delivering the people from evil spirit and reconciling communities (John 4). (2009, 12–3)

According to McConnell, “children are a promise of hope for every generation” and “although in Christ alone is our hope for Salvation (1 Pet 1:19–21), there is also a deep sense of hope and fulfillment that is born in each new generation” (2007, 5). This signifies that a ray of hope is always presented in every generation that arises. Each generation has a responsibility to fulfill while on earth.

### **Children as Agents and Participants in God’s Mission**

The Bible has several examples of children who were called and used by God to achieve his purposes on earth. The children mentioned in the Bible include Miriam, Samuel, David, a slave girl, Jeremiah, and Jesus. These children made a contribution to the Kingdom of God. First, at a very tender age, Miriam watched over Moses to see what would happen to him and offered solutions to the princess who came to rescue baby Moses (Ex 2:4–10). Secondly, the prophet Samuel was called by God when he was young and was given a tough message to deliver to Eli, and he accomplished this task (1 Sam 3:1–21). Thirdly, as a young boy, David killed the giant Goliath and brought an end to the Philistine oppression of the Israelites, as recorded in 1 Sam 17.

Fourthly, the slave girl in Naaman’s house became part of the solution to Naaman’s illness by directing him to the prophet Elisha in Samaria (2 Kgs 5). Naaman was healed completely from leprosy that was a danger to his life. Fifthly, the prophet Jeremiah expressed his incapacity to prophesy by saying he was young and not able to speak (Jer 1:6). However, in spite of his fears, God used Jeremiah to give the message of doom to the people of Judah, and he faithfully fulfilled his prophetic mandate. Finally, it is evident in the Bible that Jesus did not come to the world as an adult but as an

infant. At the age of 12 years, Jesus argued with the religious leaders and demonstrated wisdom and intelligence (Luke 2). He brought transformation and salvation to the world as a young person.

### Developmental Perspectives about Children

The development of children is an important aspect in guiding one's theological reflection on children. Different theorists have come up with stages within which children manifest specific characteristics in their growth process. In understanding child development, some of the theorists conceptualize development as a continuous process, while others describe development as a discontinuous process (Copsey 2003, 5). In the former, the argument is that development occurs gradually over a long period of time, while in the latter, children are believed to develop ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving that are qualitatively different as children grow older.

It is believed that changes within each stage affect the way children understand the world and what is expected of them. According to Duncum, these changes are psychobiological processes of maturation that mark the transition from childhood to adulthood. He also notes that since children are moving towards adulthood, childhood should be viewed as fundamentally different from adulthood (Duncum 2002, 100). The physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual development of children will thus be explored.

### **Physical Development**

Physical development entails changes in the body, including growth patterns and changes in weight, height, health, and safety. This domain includes the child's ability to see, hear, speak, read, and write (Karia et al. 2016, 11). Physical changes in a child are very critical and many times are outward manifestations, hence observable. A child's physical development begins from conception but is heightened in the early years and later during adolescence, when growth spurts take place. According to Kathryn Copsey, most of a baby's characteristics are fixed from the time of conception. These fixed characteristics include gender, eye color, and hair color. Nevertheless, she claims that some characteristics, like height and weight, are influenced by diet and physical environment (Copsey 2003, 5).

## **Social Development**

Socially, the child forms relationships from very early years without a language. This domain focuses on the development of relationships and attachments (Karia et al. 2016, 18). The environment within which a child grows and develops affects how a child forms his or her attachments and also abilities to negotiate challenges encountered. Research indicates that the most important thing to the child at the very early stage of development is to have one or two consistent caregivers with whom she can build bonds of security and trust. Additionally, it is important that the “primary caregiver must be available and responsive to the child and provide a secure and consistent environment” (Copsey 2003, 5).

The early years of a child are important, and Carter exposes that during this stage, the child invites adults to participate in non-verbal communication (2007, 39). The child tends to explore his or her world through toys and learns how to socialize with people around him or her. Nonetheless, it is noted that “if social signals for help and attention are ignored, a child will become frustrated and detached, and relate poorly to people” (Carter 2007, 39). The preschool years provide the child with opportunities to make relationships with the outside world. Members within the church nursery or daycare center become new friends in the child’s relationships. The child tends to imitate what the others are doing in order to be accepted and fit in the group. Notable is the fact that young children socialize for only part of the day since they need personal space to feel nurtured and loved (Carter 2007, 39).

Children’s social development depends on their receiving unconditional love for healthy personal growth. Adults in the child’s life make an impact on the appropriate development of the child. As the child begins to trust the teacher more and question the authority of parents, the child starts to realize that adults are fallible and needs an assurance that there is someone or something greater (Carter 2007, 40). Children should be given opportunities to make decisions, be helped to be obedient to parents, and be shaped into socially acceptable human beings. The middle years and adolescent stage characterize children focusing on peer relationships as opposed to family members. The development of identity and self-image is critical at this stage as a child receives acceptance or rejection from others.



### **Emotional Development**

Emotionally, a child's feelings of identity grow as the child seeks to fit into society. Alice Karia, Beatrice Kathungu, Carolyne Chakua, N. Grace Maina, Hannah W. Maingi, and M. Teresia Matheka claim that a child's emotional wellness is largely dependent on a healthy caregiver-child relationship and a healthy relationship between child and peers (Karia et al. 2016, 15). These interactions are very important in enhancing the child's wellness. Conversely, if these needs are not well addressed, it leads to childhood psychological disorders, which include "fear, anxiety, inability to socialize with others, resentment, aggression, nervousness, worry, and feelings of rejection" (Karia et al., 2016, 15).

Children's emotional reactions are linked to their cognitive abilities. Older children have the capacity to make the distinction between what emotion they display in response to what other people say and what they are actually feeling (Copsey 2003, 8). Children observe and imitate adult behavior and emotional response to issues. Play is critical in helping children rehearse their own behavior and reaction to issues. Carter opines, "In play, children rehearse the future and reflect on the past, organize their own learning and problem-solving, come to explore and control their bodies (coordination, motor skills, balance, spatial awareness) and emotions (exploration and control), and develop social skills (co-operating with others)" (Carter 2007, 42).

### **Cognitive Development**

Cognitive development has to do with the child's ability to reason, remember and learn. According to Laura Taylor, "Cognitive development refers to the way in which our thinking changes with age" (Taylor 2004, 4). These changes are affected by an individual's biological conditions and the environment within which the individual lives. While developing, children acquire skills that enable them to think, learn, read, remember, pay attention, and solve problems. The child's ability to navigate all these changes and process any information is affected by the ability according to his/her age. Jean Piaget (as cited in Carter 2007, 46) believed that cognitive development is a continuous process of assimilation and accommodation. The balance between accommodation and assimilation helps the child to organize past

experiences into concepts. This is an active process that made Piaget perceive children as active learners (Carter 2007, 46; Copsey 2003, 6).

Taylor believed that “cognitive development involves the constant reorganization of knowledge so that new incoming information is consistent with what the learner already knows. This has the knock-on effect of enabling the learner to develop new and more effective ways of dealing with and explaining the world” (Taylor 2004, 5). Children navigate this process of thinking and problem-solving in order to make meaning in life. Piaget proposed four stages of cognitive development: sensorimotor, pre-operational, concrete operational, and formal operations. In the first stage, the child makes meaning through senses, whereas the last stage involves more abstract thinking and very few adults attain this stage (Carter 2007, 49).

### **Spiritual Development**

Children are born with an innate connection to a spiritual being. They need the support of adults to nurture them towards a spiritual connection. Spirituality in the life of a child is very important and a springboard to a child’s building of faith. According to John H. Westerhoff, faith is not taught, but it is caught (Westerhoff 2000, 19). Therefore, children’s spiritual growth is predicated upon adults’ Christian lifestyle, which children need to catch. This does not mean that God is out of the picture. In every moment, adults play their role, but God works in the life of the child to bring salvation.

Westerhoff compared the development of faith to a tree trunk and proposed that faith develops like the rings of a tree. The rings of faith growth occur as a result of life experiences and of interacting with others and with God. Westerhoff proposed four stages of faith development: experienced faith, affiliative faith, searching faith, and owned faith. At the experiential level, the child gets to know about this faith through participating in many Christian rituals done in the home, church, or other places of worship. At the searching faith stage, children begin to question the faith they have believed all along. Nothing holds unless it is well answered and clarified. At the final stage, the child makes a commitment to own the faith, hence conversion (Westerhoff 2000).

In their project on children’s spirituality, David Hay and Rebecca Nye found out that children’s spiritual awareness is mostly artificially blocked

out by secularized society (as cited in Copsey 2003, 9). As a result, children's spirituality is damaged by "a squashing of the sense of awareness; the crushing of mystery; the rise of individualism and the breakdown of the family; a pushing out of the consciousness of the fundamental questions of meaning such as 'Who am I?'" (as cited in Copsey 2003, 9). Unfortunately for children, when the image of God is scratched, they inherit a negative image of God and self.

### Historical and Sociological Perspectives about Children

The history of the world has witnessed children being understood and treated differently. There are varied themes that emerge from these perspectives, and it is important to explore them in helping formulate a properly theological reflection on children. Philippe Aries pointed out that in the middle ages, children were mixed with adults once they were capable of doing without their mothers or nannies, basically about the age of seven (Aries 1965, 411). In this regard, children participated in all activities with adults, whether it was work or stories. The concept of childhood did not exist, and therefore there was no preferential treatment for children. Nonetheless, Aries revealed that,

This is not to suggest that children were neglected, forsaken, or despised. The idea of childhood is not to be confused with affection for children: it corresponds to an awareness of the particular nature of childhood, that particular nature which distinguishes the child from the adult, even the young adult. In medieval society, this awareness was lacking.... The infant who was too fragile as yet to take part in the life of adults simply "did not count." (Aries 1965, 128)

The sixteenth and eighteenth centuries witnessed changing views about children, from a stage of no childhood to a state where children were recognized in their own right and later regarded as vulnerable needing care and protection. Key themes within this period include children as weak, sinful, mini-adults, and innocent.

### **Children as Weak, Poor, and Needy**

Children have been viewed as weak, poor, needy, and subordinate members of the community (Moss and Petrie 2005, 55–6; Orona 2007, 101; Georgieva

2013, 3). It is true that physically children are weaker than adults, and in many ways, they are needy and seek help from adults. Many thinkers in history “have viewed children weaker than their adult counterparts, lesser beings in every way and lower in status than their more logical and experienced elders” (Orona 2007, 101). This paints a negative picture of the capacity of children and has led to maltreatment of children or lack of utilizing their full potential.

Some scriptural passages seem to point to the aspect of children being dependent and weak. As a result of their weakness, they need discipline and direction from adults. Reflecting on Prov 22:15, Prov 29:15, and Rom 3:23, Miriam J. Hall argues that these passages picture children as dependent, trusting, foolish, in need of firm discipline, and sometimes wayward. She further notes that like everyone else, children are sinners who, if left to their own devices, pursue a pathway of wrongdoing (1980, 23).

The perspective of children as weaker and with lesser capacity also appears in the writings of theologians such as Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas believed that children were “immature and simpleminded,” subordinate members of the community (Aquinas as cited in Orona 2007, 101–2). This led to children being seen as human becomings and not human beings (Orona 2007, 102). These views undermine the whole value and dignity of children. In the Jewish context, “children were to be subservient to parents, respectful and obedient” (Hall 1980, 23). Whereas respect and obedience from children are important, their being treated as subservient is negative and unbiblical. Duncum points out that though this was a historical perception of children, it is still practiced in modern society. He says that while childhood is cherished for its innocence, it often represents a lower, inferior state of being (Duncum 2002, 101).

The reformation period of the seventeenth century promoted the importance of the parental role in nurturing children and the value of education. Aries reveals that parents were taught that they were spiritual guardians and responsible before God for the souls and bodies of their children. Additionally, parents were helped to know that “a child was not ready for life, and that [a child] had to be subjected to special treatment, a sort of quarantine, before [a child] was allowed to join the adults” (Aries 1965, 412).

John Wesley is known for actively promoting the welfare of children

through the establishment of schools where children from both the lower and upper socioeconomic status could attend. He provided education for boys and girls, and he mixed children from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Wesley also established many institutions to take care of the sick and poor (Bunge 2001, 26). Paradoxically, though these schools were intended to improve the welfare of children, education was provided so as to push children towards adulthood. This is because children were viewed as lesser members of the community and had several deficiencies (Orona 2007, 102).

The preceding discussion reveals that some theologians had a negative view of children's capacity and their place in society. As a result, most of the programs that were implemented for children pushed them towards maturity, which would eventually provide them a status. Such views held about children demeaned them, and there is a possibility that children were subjected to pain, fear, and anxiety. In opposing this negative attitude towards children, Orona contends that although children need guidance and support from adults, this does not qualify them as less human or unable to contribute to the welfare of the community (Orona 2007, 102).

### **Children as Mini-Adults**

Before the sixteenth century, children “were simply considered smaller, less intelligent and weaker versions of adults” (Aries 1962, as cited in Hook and Duncan 2009, 564). Aries further notes,

Indeed it appears that size was the most salient difference in medieval depictions of adults and children, with the latter typically viewed, treated, and even dressed the same way as their adult counterparts. An examination of the 12th-century European art will reveal that children during that period were invariably portrayed as miniature, complete with adult-like facial features and postures. (Cited in Hook and Duncan 2009, 564)

Viewing children in this manner had implications for their lives. Such views allowed “children to relate freely with adults in work, play, and worship, but it also meant that children were required to take on adult responsibilities at a very early age” (Orona 2007, 102). Likewise, Mark Poster argued that children were not significantly different from adults since they worked for long hours and enjoyed many pleasures as adults (1988, cited in Hook

and Duncan 2009, 565). Consequently, children were frequently included in adult conversations, jokes, and entertainment. Noticeably, children did not enjoy childhood but assumed adult roles, which could hinder their normal growth and development.

### **Children as Sinners**

Based on some Biblical passages, it is believed that every human being is born a sinner (Ps 51:5), and all human beings inherit sin from Adam (Rom 5:12–20). As a result, from very tender ages, children are seen as sinners demonstrating continuous willful disobedience (Carter 2007, 18–9). This theological view was strongly propagated by Augustine, who believed that children were “non-innocent” and therefore prone to eternal doom at whatever stage of life. As a way to respond to this problem, he advocated for infant baptism so as to cleanse children of their sin (Orona 2007, 103). Augustine further argued that “if children inherited sin, they needed to be kept safe ‘for their own good,’ taught or trained how to behave morally” (as cited in Carter 2007, 10). This perspective made people in Christian history handle children with strictness and firmness to turn their hearts from sin.

Carter documents that the Puritans compared children to “an unbroken horse [which] turns out to be stubborn” (Carter 2007, 20). Due to this attitude, parental authority was required to help children change. Furthermore, Carter says, “Children bore the marks of original sin, evident in pride, self-centeredness and above all willfulness. Parents were to suppress and control what was understood as natural depravity through weekly catechism, daily prayer and Scripture reading, warnings and, if necessary physical punishment” (Carter 2007, 20). The firmness in Christian teachings and Christian homes was to ensure that children were brought up morally right and their hearts attuned to the heart of God.

John Wesley also propagated strict punishment for children. He is believed to have held the view that children were fallen and in need of conversion. He, therefore, advised parents “to break the will of your child, to bring [your child’s] will into subjection to yours that it may be afterward subject to the will of God” (as cited in Carter 2007, 20). However, it is notable that although Wesley advocated for physical punishment, it was to be used as a last result after trying other options of discipline. Bunge notes

that though some theologians perceived children negatively as sinners, they did not recommend physical punishment since the Bible recommends love for neighbor. However, for others, the fact that children inherit sin goes hand in hand with the physical discipline of children (Bunge 2001, 13).

### **Children as Innocent**

Historically, children were believed to be innocent, that is, not corrupted by any sin or evil. According to Carter, “Innocence related to naivety, simplicity, vulnerability, and lack of adult knowledge of sexuality and suffering” (2007, 21). This perception of children as innocent became prevalent in the eighteenth century and thrived in the later years. According to Chris Jenks, “Children were regarded as possessing a unitary state. They were innocents. Any other conception, such as object of erotic desire, abused victim, or violent criminal, were seen as aberrations or deviations from the norm of innocence” (1996, as cited in Duncum 2002, 98). This period strongly contrasted earlier perceptions of children, where they were perceived as sinners and inherently evil.

The idea of childhood innocence was popularized by Jean Jacques Rousseau, who believed that children were innocent and that they had inner goodness that could only be tarnished by the evil in society (Carter 2007, 21). Rousseau stated that “Everything is good as it comes from the hands of the Creator; everything degenerates in the hands of [humans]” (Rousseau 1964, 55). Childhood was perceived as a time of happy innocence and openness to learning (Jenks 1996, as cited in Duncum 2002, 99). With innate goodness, children were to be educated and socialized in the natural world. Children were to be allowed to be children before they could become adults; otherwise, the natural order would be perverted. Childhood was to be appreciated in itself and not as a developmental stage (Carter 2007, 22).

In Rousseau’s view, children were not to be introduced to education very early since this would corrupt their minds. Children were filled with inner morality and therefore needed to keep their souls as fallow as possible. Children would only do wrong things because they were taught by adults to do so. He, therefore, argued, “The child is only naughty because [the child] is weak; make [the child] strong and [the child] will be good; if we could do everything we should never do wrong” (Rousseau 2013, 39).

### Implications for Missions with Children

Perspectives held about children are broad-ranging, from Biblical to socio-logical contexts. These views have both negative and positive impacts on children. The example of Jesus's interaction with children should impact the way ministry is done among children. Whereas society has differing perspectives about children, Jesus had a high place for them. He was keen to meet children's needs. He interacted with them and also said special things about children (Hall 1980, 23). His ministry was not only limited to adults but extended to children. Notably, Jesus was willing to interrupt or stop his plans for the sake of children (Hall 1980, 23). Sanne states,

Jesus was very concerned about children's situation. He embraced them (Mark 9:36), blessed them, became indignant when his disciples rejected them and held them up as examples of faith (Mark 10:13–16). To welcome a child means to welcome Jesus and the Father (Mark 9:37). He strongly warned against causing children to sin (Matt 18:6) and to look down on them (Matt 18:10). (2007, 24)

Mission with children is important so as to enhance holistic restoration of children who are affected by the fall. According to J. Andrew Kirk, missions is "the purposes and activities of God in and for the whole universe" (as cited in Brewster 2011, 150). These purposes do not exclude anyone, and they are holistic. Brewster argues that God's purpose has been to redeem humankind and re-establish his kingdom on earth (2011, 150). Within God's purposes of redeeming mankind, his intention is to restore *all* people (children included) to what he created them to be and fulfill.

Missions to and with children is critical in the church due to the implications of the fall. The fall, as recorded in Gen 3, affected people in all dimensions: physically, socially, spiritually, intellectually, and emotionally. Thus, restoration must be on all these levels for one to enjoy the relationship with God. The church should not only focus on the spiritual wellbeing of children but on their holistic wellbeing. Brewster points out that "*whole* children have bodies, minds, and emotions; they exist in spheres such as family, school, work, society, and other structures" (2011, 150). Holistic growth and restoration can only take place in children if there is a ministry that focuses on the provision of needs in all the spheres of life. Children



should receive their basic needs such as food, shelter, health services, water, security, education, participation in a spiritual community, love, and warmth.

### **Ministry with Children at the Local Church**

The local church has a responsibility to nurture children towards holistic growth. Robert J. Keeley points out that children must be nurtured in their faith by the whole community of faith, not just their parents (2008, 21). The church community has a Biblical mandate to nurture children's faith and help them grow in the ways of the Lord. Teaching the Word of God to children and inviting them to a personal relationship with Jesus is the greatest requirement of the local church.

Nevertheless, the church must offer holistic ministry to children. In this sense, the church needs to be an authoritative community for children. According to the Commission for Children at Risk, an authoritative community is one that is a social institution that includes children and youth, treats children as ends in themselves, is warm and nurturing, has the core of its work performed largely by non-specialists, enables children to benefit from being around people in all stages of the life cycle by being multi-generational, has a long-term focus, reflects and transmits a shared understanding of what it means to be a good person, encourages spiritual and religious development, and is philosophically oriented to the equal dignity of all persons and the principle of love of neighbor (Commission for Children at Risk, as cited by Keeley 2008, 26).

Children in a local church should be offered love, care, and nurture. They should be allowed moments of meaningful participation. Westerhoff argues that children learn through experience and not necessarily through understanding Biblical concepts. They learn through imaging, hearing stories, and using their imagination to process the stories and their experiences (Westerhoff 2000, 61). Children must be supported to become responsible participants in the life of the church, or the church will fail to incarnate Christ and to truly see the Kingdom of God (May et al. 2005, 143). According to Larry Richards, the Old Testament context allowed children to "participate with adults in the worship, symbolism, and events that teach about God and faith relationship with Him" (1983, 25). Meaningful participation

for children will help them unleash their full potential and make a contribution to God's Kingdom.

Holistic ministry with children in the church context requires the establishment of child-friendly churches. The church should ensure that children feel safe, welcome, and fully protected. A child-friendly church is one that creates a world where a child can love and be loved and where programs, facilities, and staff are child-friendly (Brewster 2011, 121–134). Friendly facilities are characterized by having child-level seats and tables, ramps (especially where there is a multi-story building), and bright colors in the rooms. Programs such as Vacation Bible School (VBS) and camps have a greater potential of attracting and retaining children in the congregation. These programs should be effective in teaching children the foundations of the Christian faith and directing them toward growth and maturity in Jesus. The staff need to be screened and ratified as those who can work with children. A background check, references from those who have worked with such people, and recommendation letters are essential before hiring staff to work with children. Staff should have a heart and calling to work with children.

### **Ministry with Children in the Family**

The family is the basic societal unit, as evidenced in Gen 2:24; 5:21–6:4. A family that nurtures children is characterized by faithfulness, responsibility and obedience, and mutual submission. These are critical virtues within a family. When they are lacking, the family fails to meet its responsibility effectively. The effect of sin culminating in the breakdown of the family, characterized by separation, divorce, mobility, self-centeredness, consumerism, and materialism, has wounded and destabilized the child (“Children at Risk: Statement of an International Consultation at Oxford, January 1997,” 2). These circumstances challenge the lives of children and put them at risk. Despite these sin issues, God intends children to grow and thrive in families with loving parents who attend to their needs, give appropriate information at opportune times, and explain the wonders of God on a daily basis (Choun and Lawson 2002, 17).

Parents have a great responsibility toward children to guide them to walk

in godly ways. According to Bunge, parents are to provide for their children's basic needs; respect, enjoy, and be grateful to God for their children; nurture their children's faith; help them use their gifts to serve God and others; and finally listen to children and learn from them (Bunge 2007, 55–6). In doing this, parents provide their children with a safe haven and help them to unleash their potential as God desires. Families need to provide a place for ministry to children. This may include (1) studying the Bible together, (2) serving the church and community together, (3) caring for the environment, (4) identifying mentors for their children, (5) performing worship rituals together, (6) educating children, (7) fostering life-giving attitudes toward the body, sexuality, and marriage, and finally (8) taking up a Christ-centered approach to discipline, authority, and obedience (Bunge 2007, 59–62). Children should not be a liability but a blessing and source of joy (Ps 127:5) to the family.

### **Special Ministries with Children at Risk**

Children are at risk from various challenges. The breakdown in families, deaths, accidents, natural disasters, recruitment in the army, disabilities, wars, and more place children at risk. Children “suffer from hunger and homelessness, work in harmful conditions, high infant mortality, and deficient health care and limited opportunities for basic education.” (Swaroop 2009, 88). Such children need to receive care and nurture from adults and especially the church. Children at risk are deprived of the dignity that is due to them, and this kills their sense of worth and esteem. There is a need to provide these children with a safe environment and to protect them against abuse (May et al. 2005, 138). It is not enough to simply rescue those at risk; they must also be offered the fullness and wholeness of life in the Kingdom.

Ministry with children at risk demands that they be protected from all forms of abuse. Jeyaraj outlines the contexts within which children are to be protected: protection from slavery (Ex 21:7–11), physical injuries (Ex 21:20–21), rape (Ex 22:16; Deut 22:23), prostitution (Lev 19:29), divorce (Deut 22:13–19), sacrifice and sorcery (Lev 18:21), and discrimination (Gal 3: 26–29) (2009, 21–8). The Bible is clear about God's concern for children. Deuteronomy 10:18; 24:17 and Ps 68:5 present God as the defender of the fatherless and the widow, as loving the foreigner and giving them food and

clothing. Evidently, God not only provides for their physical needs (food and clothing), but he also provides for their emotional (love) needs. In Matt 18:6 and Mark 9:42, Jesus said it would be better for whoever causes the little ones to stumble for a large millstone to be hung around their neck and be thrown into the sea.

God's heart for children at risk implies that Christians should be at the forefront to protect and care for children. His compassion should move all believers to act on behalf of children at risk. There is sufficient justification for providing special preventive and protective guardianship of children at risk ("Children at Risk: Statement of an International Consultation at Oxford, January 1997," 5). The response to such children should be to provide them an environment for holistic growth. Those without food need food, those without love need love, those without shelter need shelter, and those without family need a family. Care and protection for children at risk affirm the fact that they are created in the image of God and possess intrinsic worth. This response is significant for it affirms Biblical teaching for providing compassion to those in need as shown in Matt 24:35–36, where Jesus declares, "For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me" (NIV).

### Conclusion

Children are a blessing from the Lord and bear God's image. They need to be received by adults and nurtured within caring and loving environments. On the one hand, children have been neglected, yet, on the other hand, they have been accepted and allowed to interact with adults. History reveals that children have been viewed as mini-adults, sinners, innocent, and weak. Modern society perceives children as commodities, consumers, and dependents requiring a lot of attention. The historical, sociological, and Biblical views of children must be held in tension. Yet overall, the Biblical perspective must supersede all. The care, nurture, and understanding of children must take into consideration their social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and spiritual developmental needs. With the proper information about children, all child caregivers must give children the right place, that is, created in God's image and

worthy of care and nurture. The church must have space for all children to grow and flourish for the glory of God. Indeed, all people must heed Jesus's call: "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them" (Matt 19:14).

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## **Transformational Teaching/Learning**

Ning Ngaih Lian, Th.M.

### I. Teaching and Learning Methods Used in Myanmar

For many decades, government schools and seminaries in Myanmar have practiced a teaching method called banking education. In the context of education in Myanmar, information generally transfers from professors to students. The knowledge of professors on the related subject is directly transmitted to the students, mostly via lectures. Therefore, professors cannot give more than the amount of knowledge they have to the students. The amount of knowledge the professors obtained can estimate the level of knowledge students can get from the professors. However, in most teaching contexts, the students get a lesser amount than what the professors intend to pass on to them. Therefore, this kind of banking education lessens the knowledge that is passed to the students as time goes by.

The second education system in Myanmar has been memorization. In most Western countries, teachers in government schools and seminaries focus more on rationalization or reason. In Myanmar, most of the subjects are taught, and students learn best by memorization. Therefore, the more the students can memorize, the better grade they get in school. From my elementary until college, memorization has been the best method that most of the students use for learning. Most subjects need memorization; after the exam, all the memorized material no longer needs to be reread or revised. Therefore, most of the learning just happens for the sake of passing the exam; after the exam is done, most memorized things slowly fade away.

The learning culture in Myanmar between teachers and students is mostly “hurt.” In education in the Western world, the teacher is typically viewed as the helper of the students in their learning. In Myanmar, the teacher-student relationship is very strict, and sometimes teachers use their power too much in class—especially in examinations—thereby leading to problems with students. There is no power-sharing in the class between teachers and students. Teachers are the most powerful persons in classes; based upon their mood and ideas, classes are conducted and controlled by

them. Most teachers in Myanmar see their role as someone who has the power and authority to rule over their students in terms of their knowledge.

Even in the context of churches, the schooling model is heavily practiced where church school teachers try their best to impart the education or knowledge that they have. Even church school teachers try to “school them in the faith.” Sadly, faith is not something that we can teach or force to be attained by our students or learners, which is just transmitting the information. Most of the education in both government and seminary contexts could not influence learners as long as they use the one-way method of teaching where information is carried as one-sided from professors to students.

## II. The Nature of Transformational Learning Theory and Critical Pedagogy

The word “change” or “transform” has become a popular term these days. Education plays a crucial role in uplifting the living standards of human beings and global leadership. The ultimate goal of education is liberation, which normally takes place by action and reflection by men and women upon their world in order to transform it (Freire 1970, 60). Similarly, the goal of adult education is to help learners develop the requisite learning processes to think and choose with more reliable insight to become more autonomous thinkers (Mezirow 2000, 348). Therefore, education in its nature has a tendency toward helping changes and intentions for the betterment of personal and societal development.

Patricia Cranton says that education could be the author of changes in our understanding, which help us change for the betterment of our world as a whole (1996, 160). Regarding transformation, it can take place when there is readiness for giving up and replacing our thinking and belief systems.

God is the one who always brings change into a human’s heart and life according to His sovereign plans and purposes. The Biblical account testifies that God is the God who brings change to many human beings and even to the whole of human history. For instance, the radical transformation which took place in the life of the prophet Elijah may be one of the most interesting stories in the Old Testament (1 Kgs 19:1–21).

Transformation occurs when a person encounters a perspective that is at odds with his or her current perspective (Kroth and Cranton 2014, 3). The prophet Elijah had faced an unusual moment in his life. He immediately faced life-threatening words from Jezebel after being used by God through the miracles of supernatural fire and rain from heaven in front of the prophets of Baal and King Ahab (1 Kgs 18:16–46). That odd perspective changed his heart into fear, and he had run into the desert and, at last, had prayed to God to end his life. Then Elijah received a chance to reexamine his beliefs, values, and assumptions while in the desert and at Horeb, the Mountain of God. The reexamination is seen in his conversation with God, back and forth, while answering the same question from God, “What are you doing here?” Finally, on the Mountain of God, Elijah experienced a perspective change that happened after receiving the mission of God, which was also at odds with his assumptions, perceptions, and beliefs. The small voice from God totally transformed his life and mission over the loud and threatening voice of Jezebel.

Radical transformation happened in the life of Elijah. He subsequently became the agent of God, who could carry on God’s mission by appointing kings and leaders for the Israelites, including his successor, Elisha. As Mezirow says, meaning making and perspective change result in changes to meaning schemes and meaning perspectives (2000, 3–31). His radical transformation literally benefitted Elijah and the history of Israel after he properly reflected upon it in his life and ministry.

Christian theology could be summed up in three important stages: salvation, sanctification, and glorification. Transformation is one of the most important steps in Christian life. It comes after justification, whereby we are declared by God as justified through the saving act of Christ on the cross. According to Romans 1:7, Christians are called not only to be saved but also to be saints, which is the heart and desire of God. Since the nature of God is holy, we, his children, are also called to be holy. The apostle Paul writes that you are washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of Our God (1 Cor 6:11).

Among different views on sanctification, Lutherans define it as the favor of God into which we are received at initial justification. They hesitate to speak of a “growth in grace” for fear of works-righteousness. For Wesleyans,

perfection is possible and required, which could come gradually or instantaneously. This perfection is, as the Bible promised, understood that the Christian life could be free from sin (Wesley 1950, 3). There are some Biblical references to perfection. God wants us to be perfect like him (Matt 5:48, 1 Cor 11:2, 1 Pet 1:16). John Wesley also says that “entire sanctification” means the perfect love of God and neighbor, for which Christians should be praying and striving their whole life as a gift (Wesley 1950, 3). As the famous inventor Thomas Edison once said, genius was one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration (Nichols 1962, 170); our Christian life also has the ideal of perfection and calls for the required effort to attain it while depending on the help of God (Smith 1963, 9). Like a coin with two faces, the process of transformation has divine help and human striving to attain perfection. Millard J. Erickson (2013, 912) also states that the Christian life is a process of challenge and satisfaction under the guidance and empowerment of the Holy Spirit, not from our own strength. It is very true that the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit is tangible to the one who seeks and longs for it in order to become more like Christ.

The nature of a transformed life is clearly displayed in the letters of the Apostle Paul. According to Rom 12:2, the constant inward transformation and yielding of our whole selves to God are required or expected from believers. Yielding should be not only for dedication but also for separation and being transformed by the renewing of our minds. The transformation, which we are expected to practice, is started by the work of Christ on the cross, which is an ongoing, lifelong process. It will only end when the believer is reunited with Christ in glory (Phil 1:6; 1 John 3:2), which means glorification (NIV Foundation Study Bible 2015, 1221). Sanctification is a progressive matter which aims to be like Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit, which involves both God and us. The main purpose is to be set apart for the use intended by our designer, God, for those who live according to His design and purpose (Mullen 1996, 708, 711–713). God works inside us to transform the sin that besets humanity with the offer of salvation that we teach. We are saved from sin and saved for His glory (Pazmiño 2001, 159–160). Transformation is the business of God, who requires our yielded heart to allow Him to make us like Christ.

Transformative teaching refers to transforming a problematic frame of

reference in order to make it more dependable in adult life by generating opinions and interpretations that are more justified. It is a way of problem-solving by defining a problem or by redefining or reframing the problem (Mezirow 2000, 20). This kind of transformative teaching aims to rearrange understanding based on the adult learner's own understanding by reexamining the context.

According to Cranton (2006, 36), transformative learning examines problematic frames of reference by making them more inclusive, discriminating, open, and reflective, which in turn enables emotional change. In that process, discourse plays a crucial role, and the learning that brings transformation is either provoked by a single event—a disorienting dilemma—or in a gradual manner. In order for transformative teaching to happen, it needs to be in unusual circumstances which motivate us to reorganize our ways of thought and behavior.

The father of transformative learning theory, Jack Mezirow, developed a theory of perspective transformation in ten steps, based on his wife's experience of going back to university as an adult learner (2000, 22). The steps are:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination of feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame
3. A critical assessment of assumption
4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective

Therefore, in general, transformation in learning could be defined as reflecting critically on our own experiences by talking with others to get the best judgment on our new worldview and walking in the new perspective

(Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner 2007, 137). It requires our own understanding of a specific subject while inquiring of the opinions of others in order to choose the best and most meaningful decision for our new world.

The practice of transformative education shows the same context as education, such as purpose, content, teacher, student, environment, and evaluation. More than that, transformational teaching has some other foci that need to be done properly. Practicing transformative education, according to Parker J. Palmer, is creating a space where a community of truth is practiced (2007, 92). Palmer helps us to understand the community of truth as an essential form of reality and the matrix of all beings (2007, 100). From that community itself, we can know what reality is by being in that community.

Moreover, the community of truth can be seen as having many communities, distant across space and always changing through time. At the center of it, there is a subject that is available for a relationship. The living subject serves as the connective core of all the relationships, which is circular, interactive, and dynamic (Palmer 2007, 104–106).

Regarding the nature and importance of the community of truth, Palmer states, “The firmest foundation of all our knowledge is the community of truth itself. This community can never offer us ultimate certainty—not because its process is flawed but because certainty is beyond the grasp of finite hearts and minds” (2007, 107). Secondly, in the practice of transformational teaching, creating a space where obedience to truth is practiced is necessary. Obedience to truth means listening with a discerning ear and responding faithfully to the personal implications of what one has heard (Palmer 1993, 89). Therefore, to teach is to create a space where obedience to truth is practiced for education which brings transformation (Palmer 2007, 105). In the practical context of transformative education, the community of truth is crucial as a part of learning, and the spirit of obedience is required for the truth to be applicable.

### III. The Approaches and Practices of a Spiritually Formative Curriculum for Students

In order for students to experience transformation, the following approaches and practices need to be considered and focused on.

## 1. The Teacher

### A. Character

Joseph Epstein says, “What all the great teachers appear to have in common is the love of their subject, an obvious satisfaction in arousing this love in their students, and an ability to convince them that what they are being taught is deadly serious” (1981, xii). With that, there are some personality traits that a teacher should possess. Required character traits include a love for the subject and a love for the student. These traits reflect in teaching the subject in order to let students know.

*a) Identity, integrity, and authenticity.* Good teaching is not just a technique but comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher (Palmer 2007, 10). Therefore, a good teacher can teach only when identity is clearly laid out. Palmer says that good teaching requires self-knowledge; it is a secret hidden in plain sight (Palmer 2007, 3). Good teachers understand their identity very well and help others find their own identity. According to Palmer, “The courage to teach is the courage to keep one’s heart open in those very moments when the heart is asked to hold more than it is able so that teacher and students and subject can be woven into the fabric of community that learning, and living, require” (2007, 11—12). There might be moments when teaching demands more than teachers expect. At that moment, teachers really need to invest in anything which is demanded. Real courage is needed as a teacher, which comes from understanding one’s identity and making a difference or impact on the students’ life and learning context.

Identity is a moving intersection of the inner and outer forces that make people who they are, converging in the complex mystery of being human. Integrity is becoming more real by acknowledging the whole of who we are. Identity and integrity include being truthful to our shadows and limits, our wounds and fears, as with our strengths and potentials (Palmer 2007, 13–14). Therefore, good teachers know who they are and are willing to reveal who they are.

Authenticity is a quality that everyone desires to see in other people’s lives. Especially for a teacher, one of the most important characteristics is authenticity. According to Cranton, the most commonly discussed facet of authenticity has to do with the relationship between teacher and student,

which includes helping a student learn, caring for students, engaging in dialogue, and being aware of the exercise of power (2006, 112). It is only through relationships with others that authenticity can be fostered. Being authentic in our relationship with students is central to being supportive. It does not mean that all teachers must have warm, deep, caring relationships with learners in order to be authentic or to be supportive. For some educators, a respectful distance is appropriate; for others, a collegial relationship works best; and for others still, a close relationship comes naturally (Cranton 2006, 162).

The quality of relationships depends on how well we know ourselves and how authentically we bring ourselves to the relationship. James Hollis proposes four principles of relationship: (1) what we do not know or want to accept about ourselves, we project onto others; (2) we project our wounds and longings onto others; (3) when the other person refuses responsibility for our wounds and longings, projection gives away to resentment and issues of power; and (4) the only way to heal a faltering relationship is to take personal responsibility for our own individuation (1998; Cranton 2006, 162). In a relationship, there are so many things to cope with, including our own struggles by ourselves to build a better relationship with others. Being authentic to ourselves and being authentic to students have many advantages in transformative learning.

Peter Jarvis also defines relationship as a kind of experimental and creative act whereby adult educators consciously have the goal of helping another person develop (1992, 113). According to Paulo Freire, the six attitudes for a meaningful and authentic dialogue are: (1) love for the world and human beings, (2) humility, (3) faith in people and their power to create and recreate, (4) trust, (5) hope that the dialogue will lead to meaning, and (6) critical thinking and the continuing transformation of reality (1970; Cranton 2006, 162–163).

*b) Humility.* The next character trait for teachers is humility, which anyone can talk easily about, but it is hard to live out. According to Palmer, humility is the virtue that allows us to pay attention to “the other”—be it student or subject—whose integrity and voice are so central to knowing and teaching in truth (1993, 108). As a teacher, there is always a tendency not to be humble, but transformative education requires humility. In the words



of Karl Deutsch, humility is “an attitude towards facts and messages outside oneself... openness to experience as well as to criticism... a sensitivity and responsiveness to the needs and desires of others” (1966, 230). Humility is one of the most important qualities of a teacher for transformative education.

## B. Methods

In transformative education, how teachers teach, or the method of teaching, plays an important role. This modern age has more than a thousand teaching methods. In order to be transformational, teaching methods need to be unique and flexible.

*a) Creating space.* One perspective on teaching seeks to create a space where students and teachers can enter into fearless communication with each other. In that communication, they allow their respective life experiences to be their primary and most valuable source of growth and maturation. This calls for a mutual trust in which those who teach and those who want to learn can become present to each other, not as opponents, but as those who share in the same struggles and search for the same truth (Nouwen 1966, 85–86). Transformative teaching, therefore, asks first of all for the creation of a space where students and teachers can grow together with mutual trust from their experiences in life.

*b) Openness, Boundaries, and Hospitality.* Palmer conveys the three major characteristics, or three essential dimensions, which a transformative teacher needs to apply in the teaching context, namely, openness, boundaries, and an air of hospitality (1993, 71). Openness does not refer primarily to space but focuses more on removing barriers that could block learning. Such barriers could come from us, in us, or around us so that the truth can find us. Therefore, our conscience and our classroom could be openly processed in the learning, without any barriers and disorders, if we can properly create a space for it.

The second important method to practice is setting boundaries. Since boundaries serve as the firmness of space, a learning space needs boundaries that will rightly guide the learning process and protect it from confusion and chaos. Therefore, a good and effective teaching method always needs profound and firm boundaries or limits (Palmer 1993, 72).

Third, hospitality receives people, each other, our struggles, and our newborn ideas with openness and care. The main concern and intention of hospitality are to prepare an avenue where a community of truth could be formed, and the pain of truth's transformation be borne. It is the strategy of God, which always gives a chance for us to experience truth through strangers (Palmer 1993, 74). These openness, boundaries, and hospitality are the crucial practices for the transformative learning environment.

*c) Making Space for Feelings.* Paying attention to feelings is also an important practice for a transformative teacher. According to Palmer, space for feelings is the place where a group's capacity for tough-mindedness can grow (1993, 87). Methods that make space for feelings are mostly focused on exposing our own ignorance, asking hard questions, challenging the validity of what others are saying, and receiving similar challenges—all in a spirit of growth rather than just attending to our familiar feelings. As a teacher, creating an emotionally honest learning space with some simple techniques, where no one needs to fear, would be a place where a community of truth properly flourishes.

### C. Expectations of the teacher

For teachers, there are some expectations in order to see transformation in the lives of students. Nouwen says, "The real host is the one who offers that space where we do not have to be afraid and where we can listen to our own inner voices and find our own personal way of being human. But to be such a host, we have to, first of all, be at home in our own house" (Nouwen 1966, 102). To become a good host, teachers should be able to stay and enjoy being at home, which means enjoying their own company.

Secondly, a good host needs to know the right time to let the guest go. Nouwen also conveys, "A good host is not only able to receive... guests with honor and offer them all the care they need but also to let them go when their time to leave has come" (1966, 84). There is a time when teachers let students go with the ability and knowledge attained through their learning process. Teachers need to be made ready for those moments of meeting and separation. It is important to create a free and fearless space where mental and emotional development can take place for the students. There are also some prior requirements for a teacher to understand the students.

a) *Individual experience of students.* Individual experience, the primary medium of transformative learning, consists of what each learner brings (prior experiences) and also what he or she experiences within the “classroom” itself. It “constitutes a starting point for discourse leading to a critical examination of normative assumptions underpinning the learner’s... value judgments or normative expectations” (Mezirow 2000, 32). Experience is also what educators stimulate and create through classroom activities. Learners and teachers reflect on the experience as they learn new ideas about themselves and their world (Mezirow and Taylor 2009, 5–6).

b) *Teachers as critical reflective learners.* The nature of transformative learning involves critical reflection and encourages teachers to undertake self-examination. Hence, they can revise their expectations of themselves, their learners, and the larger place of education in society when these expectations are exposed as invalid or distorted. Critical reflection helps educators articulate their assumptions and lets them understand why they do what they do. It allows them to change their practice if it has been based on invalid or constraining habits (Cranton 1996, 93). Reflection helps teachers to be more fit in the context of the student and the learning community.

Mezirow states that “by far the most significant learning experiences in adulthood involve critical reflection—reassessing the way we have posed problems and reassessing our own orientation to perceiving, knowing and believing, feeling, and acting” (1990, 13). Transformative learning can happen in both the lives of the students and teachers only as teachers reassess their own way of knowing things and dealing with problems. In the process of transformative learning, healthy relationships, trust, honesty, and friendship are needed for thoughtful and in-depth reflection, which leads to genuine critical reflection (Mezirow 2000, 308). In order for proper reflection to be done, a teacher needs to have very strong relational qualities for the best outcome.

c) *Educators are learners.* Self-directed learning could be one of the most important qualifications of adult educators. Educators have their own meaning perspectives, which could be underdeveloped, not thought through clearly, constrained by the experiences they have had, or distorted by misinformation. As a result, educators could have limited perspectives

on education. Therefore, adult educators need to keep on learning and develop by questioning their beliefs about and perspectives on their practices. According to Cranton, becoming a self-directed learner as an adult educator is itself a transformation of a perspective on education (1996, 116). As Mezirow states, “Adult development means the progressive realization of an adult’s capacity to fully and freely participate in rational dialogue, to achieve a broader, more discriminating, permeable and integrative understanding of his/her experience as a guide to action” (1994, 226). Reflecting properly on previous experiences in life as an adult educator is the essence of professional development for educators.

*d) Revealing and affirming.* There are two more approaches teachers should have for the student: revealing and affirming (Nouwen 1966, 87). Revealing means the responsibility of the teacher to reveal the things that the students possess in their lives to offer their fellow students and teachers as well. This strategy is quite radical for students since they have been seen and treated as the ones who need to receive. The teacher needs to figure out ways to let students share what they have in their lives (Nouwen 1966, 87).

According to Leighton Ford, “Affirmation means pointing out and being grateful for the strengths that we see in others and encouraging them to build on them. It involves nothing but paying attention, caring and expressing our core” (1991, 1). Therefore, affirming teachers always see and affirm the good they see in the lives of students. A good host is one who not only helps the guests see that they have hidden talents but also is able to help them develop and deepen these talents so that they can continue their way on their own with a renewed self-confidence (Nouwen 1966, 88).

There should always be a revealing and affirming atmosphere for the student in each context of learning. Both aspects show that students are not just poor, needy, ignorant beggars who come to the man or woman of knowledge, but that they are indeed like guests who honor the house with their visit and will not leave it without having made their own contribution (Nouwen 1966, 89).

## **2. The Student**

Approaches to learning

There are different approaches to learning for students. Among them, constructivism is a possible means for transformative learning to be involved. Constructive learning means that learners construct their own knowledge from their experiences. The cognitive process of meaning-making is emphasized as both an individual mental activity and a socially interactive interchange. Self-directed learning, situated cognition, transformational learning, reflective practice, and experiential learning are aspects of constructivism (Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner 2007, 297). Candy C. Phillip says, “The constructivist view of learning is particularly compatible with the notion of self-direction since it emphasized the combined characteristics of active inquiry, independence, and individuality in a learning task” (1991, 278). Therefore, students need to process their learning by self-direction in order for transformation to occur in the community. This change is mediated through personal reflection and dialogue with others. Experience also plays a crucial role in adult learning. Hence, life experiences are resources and also stimulation for adult learning, where constructivism starts when learners connect the learning with their experiences (Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner 2007, 293).

### **3. Role of the Holy Spirit**

The indwelling Spirit undergirds the ministry of teaching in the three phases of preparation, instruction, and evaluation (Pazmiño 1997, 217–222). In the life of Jesus Christ, we can see the involvement of the Holy Spirit in various ways from the very beginning of his life till his present ministry through the universal church. At the same time, the indwelling Spirit fosters the processes of learning so that the spirits of the students are transformed along with their minds, souls, hearts, and bodies (Pazmiño 2001, 87).

#### **A. In preparation**

Robert W. Pazmiño says that the preparation of a teacher’s spirit or soul is an essential element for teaching (2001, 205). Moreover, preparation—of the teacher’s heart, mind, and body—is required for transformative teaching. Also, the preparation phase and the Spirit’s influence cannot be limited to teachers. The lives of the students must be identified as a crucial dimension of the Spirit’s ministry if any learning is to happen. The Spirit’s work

is honored in the context and content of teaching (Pazmiño 2001, 105). Therefore, in the moment of preparation, teachers, students, and the Holy Spirit must take their place ahead of time.

A teacher's preparation phase under the Holy Spirit starts at birth and continues throughout his or her development. Then the transforming presence of the Holy Spirit bestows unique gifts, abilities, sensitivities, and skills upon the teacher. Moreover, the Spirit calls the teacher to be involved in a particular ministry and offers empowerment for the preparation for teaching (Pazmiño 2001, 105).

Prayer is essential in preparation as teachers request the Spirit's enlightenment and trust in what they sense to be necessary for the particular teaching session. Moreover, the Spirit assists teachers in assessing student readiness and in planning with prayer and reflection before the actual instruction (Pazmiño 2001, 106). D. Campbell Wyckoff points to the divine as complementing both the natural and human aspects (1955, 104). The Holy Spirit is the determinative environmental presence. The challenge for teachers is to create those conditions where the Spirit of God can work most fruitfully in the life of a person. The ministry of the Holy Spirit in helping teachers teach is crucial as they start to prepare for any teaching.

#### B. Actual experience of teaching and learning

The illumination of the Holy Spirit works in the human heart in a special way to help it understand or grasp the message of God. One of the most important aspects in the context of teaching is not to minimize the role of the Holy Spirit, a role that is the basic element for transformation. Though instruction is a risky venture, as Christian teachers, the more we rely on the presence of the Holy Spirit, the more we will be stable and effective in our teaching ministry with more creative ways (Pazmiño 2001, 107).

Second, the Holy Spirit can work from outside our planned curriculum if our discernment goes well with his agenda. Pazmiño states that the Spirit works in instruction through the questions, responses, and actions of participants (2001, 107). Sometimes, issues and problems which are not identified in the preparation could provide occasions to be open to the Spirit's leading. At the same time, those things can turn into distractions. Therefore, Pazmiño says,

Discernment is required. Part of the teaching task is to creatively weave together student responses with the immediate content with the wider context of teaching. Being aware of what students bring with them into the classroom setting can signal this. God's Spirit in us assures Christian teachers of hope and empowerment in their calling and provides perspective for meeting the daily challenges of teaching. (2001, 107)

So, we should make sure that the Holy Spirit is working through the context of the learning environment based on the things that have happened in the student's life.

Third, the Holy Spirit can use the life of the teacher as an agent of change for the students. Palmer also explores the dimension of teaching that "teachers proclaim who they are in the instructional act. Because of a relationship with the Holy Spirit, Christian teachers are able to proclaim that they are children of God with all of their weaknesses and strengths" (2007, 42). Teaching with authority and courage is a dimension of ministering to others with the hope that transformation can occur. God's Spirit in us assures Christian teachers of hope and empowerment in their calling and provides perspective for meeting the daily challenges of teaching (Pazmiño 2001, 108).

### C. Relationship formed

The work of the Holy Spirit in a believer's whole life on earth is relational and significant. The blessed Comforter given to the church at Pentecost undergirds the teaching ministry. The Spirit comes alongside teachers who teach to form a divine-human partnership fraught with wonder and dread. This is both a marvel and a mystery that sustains teachers in their diverse ministries (Pazmiño 2001, 100).

Peter Hodgson describes the teaching work of God's Spirit this way: God "teaches" through the "educing," or leading forth, of the human spirit into the widest range of its potentialities. Through the interaction of Spirit and spirit, the possible becomes actual, the ideal becomes real, truth becomes known, beauty takes shape, the good enters into practice. This is the work of God's Spirit. (1999, 6-7)

Hodgson's description affirms the essential teaching element that God in

us through the person and work of the Holy Spirit assures us of an empowered partnership for teaching. The strong relationship between the Holy Spirit and the spirit of the human teacher brings breakthrough and transformation.

Moreover, God works through us in the teaching ministries of the church that extend God's mission in the world (Pazmiño 2001, 132). James E. Loder captures the dynamic and logic of our relationship with the Holy Spirit by considering the Reformed understanding of the *Spiritus Creator* (1998, 17). This understanding embraces the transformational potential of the relationship between individuals and the Spirit. Loder notes, "Although distinctly different in origin, destiny, and magnitude, the human spirit and Divine Spirit are made for each other, according to a relationality ultimately designed to replicate the relationality of the divine and human in the person of Jesus Christ" (1998, 17). The Holy Spirit supervises the transformation processes of conversion, sanctification, edification, and mission. In addition to this general dimension, the Spirit confronts, corrects, directs, and resurrects when our teaching efforts fail to fulfill God's purposes and the promise of new life (Pazmiño 2001, 101).

Where the world of education is lessening its focus on global and community benefits over individual benefits and self-service, real transformation should be recovered and achieved in every context of education.

Transformative education has been a famous topic and subject area in the Biblical accounts both in the Old and New Testament. It is closely related to the nature of God, who called us to be like him and to live our Christian lives as his Son, our Savior, and our model. Moreover, some theorists have affirmed and put priority on education that is transformational and beneficial to society and even the whole world. In the practical ministry of teaching, transformation can happen by creating a space where the community of truth and a community of obedience are opened and welcomed to be practiced.

In practical teaching and learning for transformation, teachers play a very important role related to their character, teaching methods, and role in transformational teaching. Next, students are responsible for constructing their own learning. As guests and contributors, students are also responsible for contributing to what they already have in the learning context.



Finally, the role of the Holy Spirit is crucial to the whole process of teaching, even in the preparation and actual teaching, where the relationship is formed for the process of transformation in any stage and context. The Spirit also enables persons to live in accordance with the truths disclosed or discovered in instruction. The Holy Spirit is the agent working for long-term personal and social transformation among people in the world. Christian educators must, therefore, evaluate the workings of the Spirit in the areas of renewal and transformation.

#### IV. Spiritually Formative Practices,

##### Transformational Learning Practices and Discipleship

Spiritual formation practices are the crucial components in helping a Christian grow spiritually by using means and methods. Transformational learning theory, according to Mezirow, has three fundamental components: disorienting dilemma, critical reflection, and integration (2000, 3–31). Those who take these three steps of transformational learning theory into their lives, by doing critical reflection on their lives' disorienting incidents, can attain a perspective that is their own, and which in turn transforms them. Therefore, both spiritual formation practices and transformational learning practices help a believer experience a transformed life, which is the aim and purpose of Christian discipleship. Teaching and learning without any change or growth are just passing on information to the students. Real teaching and learning take place only as people really have time to reflect upon and get the meaning of what is taught and learned for themselves and to let transformation occur. This kind of learning is important in the process of discipleship. Both spiritual practices and transformation learning practices help a disciple to be able to become a true disciple of Christ. Therefore, both practices are similar in nature, and they still can contribute to discipleship, which is the ultimate purpose of being a follower of Jesus Christ. A transformed life, the ultimate destination of discipleship, can be achieved by spiritual formation and transformational learning practices.

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### 2019 APNTS Thesis and Dissertation Abstracts

**Fallaria, April Anne. “The Use of Mobile Apps by Selected Millennials of Victory Christian Fellowship Ortigas to Facilitate Religious Practices.”**

**M.A.C.C. thesis, Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary, 2019.**

This study seeks to answer the main question, how do millennial members of Victory Christian Fellowship Ortigas use religious mobile apps in facilitating religious practices? This study looks at the perceived knowledge and attitudes of these millennials toward the use of religious mobile apps, the factors they consider in choosing religious mobile apps, their expectations in using the apps, and the ways in which these religious mobile apps impact the spiritual lives of these respondents.

This study was guided by two theoretical frameworks, namely, the Uses and Gratifications Approach and the Religious Social Shaping of Technology. The Uses and Gratifications Approach was used to see how these millennials adopt the use of religious mobile apps in facilitating religious practices from the perspective of the users. In addition, the Religious Social Shaping of Technology was used to see how the core values and beliefs of Victory Christian Fellowship Ortigas, as a church, influence the way religious mobile apps are being adopted by these millennials.

The study is descriptive research that employs qualitative methods. The respondents engaged in a one-week recording of diary reports about their daily use of religious mobile apps. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with the respondents to help provide clarification about the diary reports and also to gain additional data that were needed but not covered in the diary reports. Then, document analysis was used to know the core values and beliefs of Victory Christian Fellowship Ortigas. The responses from the diary reports and interviews were analyzed in light of Victory’s core values to know how they were reflected in the way millennials adapted religious mobile apps in facilitating religious practices.

Based on the findings of this research, the respondents use five kinds of apps: sacred textual engagement, religious media outlet, religious wisdom and leaders, devotional worship, and religious games. Among these types, the most used apps are Sacred Textual Engagement apps. In relation

to this, the activity that they mostly do with religious mobile apps involves engagement with the Scriptures—Bible reading, devotions, and in-depth study. They also employ religious mobile apps for evangelism, discipleship, and equipping themselves for ministry. All these activities reflect the core values of Victory. The study participants indicated that religious mobile apps have helped them in these aspects of their spiritual lives.

However, the core value of connecting with others was not reflected as much as the others in the activities that the respondents engage in when using religious mobile apps. Non-religious mobile apps were what the respondents commonly use to connect and communicate with others. The respondents also identified the risks in using religious mobile apps, which are distractions, technical errors, decreased use of a physical Bible, and security concerns. Despite these risks, the respondents kept on using the religious mobile apps because these apps satisfied their needs and expectations.

Based on the millennials' use of religious mobile apps, it can be concluded that they have developed certain degrees of dependency on apps in facilitating religious practices. Though their uses actually reflect this dependency, the respondents still project that they are not actually dependent on apps by incorporating traditional forms of media into their activities. This reflects the conflict within these millennial Christians who are inclined toward the use of digital technology but would still want to preserve traditions.

After conducting this research, the researcher proposed that further studies of the following areas need to be considered: (a) a qualitative study of how other denominations use religious mobile apps in conducting religious practices; (b) a qualitative study of how other age groups use religious mobile apps in conducting religious practices; (c) a qualitative study of how non-religious mobile apps are used for conducting religious practices; (d) a study comparing the use of the hardcopy of the Bible and the use of Bible apps; (e) a study comparing the use of religious mobile apps by different generations; (f) a study comparing the degree of use of different mobile apps among Christians; (g) a qualitative study of how computer-mediated communication could lead to monasticism; and (h) development of survey questions and scales based on the findings of this research for qualitative study.

**Gondra, Cathy Lee F. “Perceived Impact of Confirmation Classes on Selected United Methodist Members in the Manila Episcopal Area.”**

**M.A.R.E thesis, Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary, 2019.**

This study examines the perceived impact of the confirmation classes on the selected United Methodist Church (UMC) members in the Manila Episcopal Area. The researcher studied how the confirmation classes affected the affective, behavioral, and cognitive experiences of the selected respondents.

The guide questions used in this study were based on the UMC vows, as well as the objectives of the confirmation classes cited in the *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*. The study was anchored in Robert R. Pazmiño’s framework, “Integration of Developmental Concepts with Biblical Anthropology.” This research particularly focused on one of the six elements in the framework, namely, “Learning.” Under the Learning element were the three learning domains, namely, affective, behavioral, and cognitive, which according to Krathwool, Bloom, and Masia, are expected to develop as a result of the instructional process.

The methodology used in the study is the multiple-case study approach. Semi-structured interviews facilitated data gathering. The six respondents were active members of the UMC and were currently between the ages of 23 and 40 years old. They were chosen using the purposive sampling method. Data were analyzed using a multiple-case comparison.

Based on the research findings, confirmation classes can provide opportunities for holistic growth among the participants if delivered in ways that cater to the needs of the students. The following are some of the conclusions this study yielded. In terms of the affective aspect, the confirmation classes the respondents had were too doctrinal and too academic, especially for 12-year-old learners. The respondents indicated that there were elements in confirmation like the culminating activity, the re-affirmation of faith, and the Love Feast that were memorable instances that helped them think about their commitment to Christ.

In terms of the behavioral aspect, confirmation lessons helped the respondents see the big picture of their commitment to God. The presence of other activities like summer camps, Christmas Institute, Bible studies, and other church activities helped them as they processed their faith. Finally, in

terms of the cognitive domain, confirmation led the learners to an understanding of their Christian faith through learning and reflecting the Four Pillars of Faith and their faith's relevance to their lives. Confirmation also allowed them to re-affirm their faith and prepared them to become professing members of the UMC.

The researcher proposes further studies in the following areas: (a) a survey on what activities in the youth camp can provide the most impact on the youth's learning experiences, especially if the confirmation could be conducted in a camp; (b) a qualitative study of the impact of confirmation vis-à-vis spiritual nurturing of the youth; (c) a qualitative and quantitative study about the Christian education programs that most help the youth in nurturing their Christian faith; (d) a project thesis creating an interactive curriculum on the lessons of confirmation; and (e) a case study of best practices on how to teach confirmation lessons to children 12 years old.

**Macabuhay, Rogelio Yalung. "Doctrinal Beliefs and Practices of Selected 15–18-Year-Old Youth in the Philippine Church of the Nazarene: Do They Understand, Believe, and Apply the Articles of Faith in Their Lives?" Ph.D. dissertation, Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary, 2019.**

This study has been conducted with selected youth in three districts of the Church of the Nazarene in the Philippines, identified as Districts A, B, and C. Six churches from each district were selected to participate in the study. The purpose of the study was to discover how well 15–18-year-old youth in selected Nazarene Churches from the three districts understand the Articles of Faith of the Church of the Nazarene, whether they believe them, and how those beliefs are manifested in their practices.

Data was gathered using a fifty-item questionnaire completed by the youth in the selected churches. The questionnaire provided biographical information on the respondents and measured the level of their agreement with the Articles of Faith.

Focus Group Discussions (FGD), one in each of the three districts, provided qualitative data. Each focus group had one youth from each of the six selected churches in that district. Three scenarios were employed to stimu-



late a structured conversation with the focus group participants. The scenarios were prepared using the Tagalog dialect, spoken by most of the participants. Video and audio recordings were made of the three focus group discussions and transcribed for analysis.

The findings show a range of abilities on the part of the 15–18-year-old youth to articulate what they know about the Articles of Faith of the Church of the Nazarene. A few struggled to give a response to the scenario questions, others shared an insight or two, while still others were able to more fully respond to the questions, giving an indication of their ability to appropriately bring together their grasp of insights from several Articles of Faith.

The quantitative data indicated that the three Articles with the lowest agreement scores were Article 13 (The Lord's Supper), with a score in the Disagree range, and Article 1 (The Trinity) and Article 3 (The Holy Spirit), each with a score in the No Opinion range. These findings suggest that the 15–18-year-old youth throughout the Church of the Nazarene in the Philippines could benefit from an examination of how the Articles of Religion are being presented to the youth in their local churches.

This study recommends that youth leaders and pastors from the Church of the Nazarene in the Philippines gather together to review the findings of this research and discuss the implications of the study for their ministries with youth in the Church of the Nazarene in the Philippines.

**Naomi Ni Em. "The Influence of the Family upon the Development of Children in St. John Baptist Church, Kalaymyo, Myanmar." M.A.RE. thesis, Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary, 2019.**

This case study explored the perceptions of the selected children in St. John Baptist Church, Kalaymyo, Myanmar, regarding the influence of their families upon their holistic development. Specific factors were investigated to explore the respondents' experiences and perceptions. The respondents were 10- to 12-years old from families who have been regular members of the St. John Baptist Church. They were chosen using the purposive sampling method. Three research methodologies were used to gather data, namely, semi-structured interviews, observation, and drawings of the children. These avenues provided information about the influence of the families upon the spiritual, intellectual, physical, and social development of the children.

Based on the findings of this research, the following conclusions were drawn. Spiritually, this study found that there is less intentionality on the part of the parents and siblings to conduct devotions, read Bible stories, and discuss spiritual matters in the context of the home. Intellectually, the family affected a very positive influence upon the selected children. In fact, in the study, this is the most positive area where the selected children indicated the family really helped them through supporting their educational needs. Physically, the study revealed that the height and weight of the selected children were not up to the standards set forth by the World Health Organization (WHO). Socially, the family has helped the children's development by fostering right relationships with others through their encouragement and guidance. The respondents have learned how to show respect toward the elderly, as well as how to help and love others in their school, church, and community.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are offered to the parent. First, for the spiritual needs of the children, the parents need to be aware that the home is a place of parental teaching and child learning. Second, for the intellectual needs of the children, the parents need to be commended on a job well done in the area of helping their children with their intellectual pursuits. Third, since the study revealed that the height and weight of the selected children in the study was not up to the standards set forth by World Health Organization (WHO), the family can help the children by providing meals, clothes, health care, enough sleep and regular exercise, and time to play with other children. Finally, for their social needs, the parents need to exercise equality in their treatment of each child, as the respondents indicated they felt there is favoritism in the family.

Finally, the following are recommendations for further study: (1) a qualitative study of the perceived influence of the church upon parenting in Myanmar; (2) a quantitative study of the differences of the self-perceptions of holistic development between boys and girls; and (3) a qualitative study of the impact of grandparents upon children's holistic development in Myanmar.

**Olumbe, Roseline Shimuli. "Effects of Children's Political Awareness, Affiliation, and Participation on Inter-Personal Relationships among 10-13-**

**Year-Olds in a Multi-Ethnic Kenya.” Ph.D. dissertation, Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary, 2019.**

Children learn about politics from their early years, forming affiliations to political parties. Kenyan politics have been known to divide people ethnically, leading to political tensions which have an effect on children. In 2013 and 2017, children were observed to closely follow political issues and hold strong views regarding political candidates. This study sought to investigate how children’s political awareness, affiliation, and participation affect their interpersonal relationships.

The study used Albert Bandura’s theory to explain how socialization impacts children’s learning, Henri Tajfel and John Turner’s theory of social identity to discuss interpersonal relationships, and Urie Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory to explain environmental influences on children’s political awareness, affiliation, and interpersonal relationships. The interplay among independent variables (children’s political awareness, political affiliation, and political participation) affect the dependent variable (children’s interpersonal relationships). This outcome was influenced by intervening variables: child’s age, gender, teachers, media, parents, religion, educational level, and tribe.

A mixed-methods design was adopted, and multi-stage sampling was used to select 363 children aged eight to thirteen years out of a population of 4,368. Data from children was collected using questionnaires uploaded onto Online Data Kit (ODK) and focus group discussions (FGDs), while key informant interviews (KII) were used to collect data from purposively selected teachers. SPSS version 24 and NVIVO 10 were used for data analysis.

Results revealed that children are aware of politics. They get political information from electronic and print media, parents, friends, teachers, and political rallies. Religious institutions were the least contributors to children’s political awareness. Most children had no party affiliation, but some had preferred political parties. A positive relationship was established between children’s political awareness and political affiliation. Findings also revealed that children participate in political activities; however, most do so at manipulation and decoration levels, which are non-participation. Chil-

dren's political affiliation had a direct effect on their interpersonal relationships as some expressed hostility, mistrust, and ethnocentrism towards friends. Finally, political outcomes in Kenya affect children in all development domains.

This study recommends that teachers, parents, government agencies, and religious institutions provide appropriate political information to children, model good citizenship, teach values that promote inclusive relationships and offer psychosocial support to children who are affected by political outcomes.

**Ramos-Pajaron, Evelyn. "A Mixed-Methods Filipino Parenting Education Project towards Evidence-Based Practice." Ph.D. dissertation, Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary, 2019.**

Parental beliefs and practices have an influence and deep impact on children's identity, development, and outcomes. In view of this, parent education programs have become significant endeavors in developed countries to intervene and support families, especially those at risk. These parenting programs have become evidence-based with repeated randomized controlled studies that show effectiveness. Parenting realities in the country and the absence of evidence-based parenting programs to date show the necessity and importance of a Filipino parenting education program that meets standards to show effectiveness.

This mixed-methods study employing randomized controlled trial (RCT) and quasi-experimental research (nonRCT) examined the effectiveness of a parenting curriculum named P4S (pronounced Pforce, *Pagsasanay sa Pagiging-magulang tungo sa Pinagpalang Pamilya*) in bringing about transformation in perspectives and practice of parents in two public schools in Quezon City, Philippines. The P4S curriculum was developed after a literature review of (a) research made from the year 2000 onwards on Filipino parenting studies to identify needs and issues; (b) Biblical and theological perspectives on these identified needs and issues; and (c) lessons learned from effective evidence-based parenting programs. Using the transformative learning framework, the research-based curriculum had a pilot study in two public schools. The RCT results of the experimental group ( $NE = 56$ , where only 38 attended P4S) indicated an improvement from pre- to post-

test in terms of parental consistency, coercive parenting, positive encouragement, parental teamwork, and religious well-being, but the change was not significant enough. There was only a significant improvement in terms of parental adjustment and family relationships. The nonRCT results ( $n = 52$ ), which included all program attenders, rejected the null hypothesis on all the variables except for RWB. When both RCT and nonRCT groups were combined ( $N = 108$ ), thereby increasing the samples of those who actually went through the parenting program, a significant effect was evident on the variables that were targeted. Increasing sample size showed evidence of significant effects on the variables being studied except for the RWB. One possible explanation for the RWB results could be the innate religiosity and spirituality of Filipinos. The questions regarding belief in God's love and care and relationship with God are accepted beliefs common among Filipinos, thereby registering high scores already even at pretest and not much change at posttest.

The qualitative data, where 82.1% of the program's attendance in the RCT classes ( $N = 32$ ) were included in the interviews and triangulated by the children's FGD ( $n = 26$ ), showed the effectiveness of the intervention. Parents shared the following changes: (1) talking calmly (90.6%) with their children; (2) refraining from spanking and saying curses (65.6%) and practicing self-control and patience (56.3%); (3) spending time to play (43.8%) and bond with their children (40.6%); (4) giving more praise (68.8%) and rewards (25%); and (5) indicating a deepening trust in God and specifically saying that Christ should be at the center of all they do (71.9%). As participants shared with their families the P4S lessons and applied them in their lives, more cooperation and partnership between spouses were taking place (65.6%). The family members felt happier (81.2%), were showing more affection to each other (71.3%), communicated more (53.12%), and felt closer as a family (43.8%). Key recommendations included: A follow-up study on changing the Religious Well-being (RWB) instrument to suit the specific changes P4S program is trying to address; a quasi-experimental study of the P4S program in a barangay composed of informal settlers to see if community transformation is possible; and a multiple case study of best practices in Biblical parenting among selected pastors' families.

**Woehrl, Kathrin S. “An Approach to Enhance the Creative Bible Lessons Curriculum (Hong Kong) with Multimedia.” M.A.RE. thesis, Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary, 2019.**

The intention of this production thesis was to enhance the Creative Bible Lessons (CBL) with multimedia. This curriculum is published in Hong Kong and provides weekly Sunday School lessons to teach children. The CBL curriculum provides detailed lesson outlines and printed visual aids. The product of this thesis was a set of 26 PowerPoint presentations to complement the lessons of one volume of the CBL curriculum. The material used was the original artwork owned by the publisher in Hong Kong. The different pictures and figures were prepared for digital use, arranged, and animated according to the narrations in the respective volume. The presentations are intended to be used either in addition to or instead of the printed visual aids. The 26 multimedia files were designed as prototypes for the publisher to prepare an avenue for further exploration into this field, as educational technology is an increasingly used tool in children’s spiritual formation.

The product was developed based on the literature review in the three areas of the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework by Punya Mishra and Matthew J. Koehler. To validate the product, a test group of twenty churches in the Philippines was provided with hard copies of the CBL curriculum and asked to implement the lessons. For a period of six months, the churches received the developed multimedia on a weekly basis. The researcher used observations, interviews, and questionnaires to collect feedback concerning the implementation of the curriculum and the thesis product over a period of three months. Based on the findings, the product was evaluated and amended according to the Eternal, Synergistic Design Model by Caroline Crawford. It is recommended that the publisher initiate further research to explore the effectiveness of multimedia for the spiritual formation of children.

## Call for Papers

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

## Guidelines for Submission

1. Please submit all proposed articles to the editor (dland@apnts.edu.ph) in electronic form (Microsoft Word is preferable). Please put “Mediator Submission” in the subject line.
2. Articles must be written in standard international English.
3. Authors must provide complete bibliographical information either in citations or in a bibliography at the end. Citation style may be either parenthetical or footnote style, but must be consistent within each article. If used, format as footnotes rather than endnotes. Use shortened form for subsequent citations rather than *Ibid*.
4. Articles must conform to the latest edition of Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*.
5. Papers may be of any length, although authors may be asked to condense longer papers.
6. A list of non-standard abbreviations should be provided.





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Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary, a graduate school in the Wesleyan tradition, prepares men and women for Christ-like leadership and excellence in ministries.

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

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# *The Mediator*

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## **Contact**

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