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Goals of the *Africanus Journal*

The *Africanus Journal* is an award-winning interdisciplinary biblical, theological, and practical journal of the Campus for Urban Ministerial Education (CUME). Its goals are to promote:

- a. the mission and work of the members and mentors of the Africanus Guild Ph.D. Research Program of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Boston;
- b. the principles of the Africanus Guild (evangelical orthodox Christian men and women who are multicultural, multiracial, urban-oriented, studying a Bible without error in a cooperative way);
- c. Christian scholarship that reflects an evangelical perspective, as an affiliate of GCTS-Boston. This is an interdisciplinary journal that publishes high quality articles in areas such as biblical studies, theology, church history, religious research, case studies, and studies related to practical issues in urban ministry. Special issues are organized according to themes or topics that take seriously the contextual nature of ministry situated in the cultural, political, social, economic, and spiritual realities in the urban context.

Scholarly papers may be submitted normally by those who have or are in (or are reviewed by a professor in) a Th.M., M.Min., Ed.D., Th.D., S.T.D., Ph.D., or equivalent degree program.

Two issues normally are published per year.

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Life of Julius Africanus

Julius Africanus was probably born in Jerusalem, many scholars think around A.D. 200. Africanus was considered by the ancients as a man of consummate learning and sharpest judgment (*Ante-Nicene Fathers* 6:128). He was a pupil of Heracles, distinguished for philosophy and other Greek learning, in Alexandria, Egypt around A.D. 231–233. In A.D. 220/226, he performed some duty in behalf of Nicopolis (formerly Emmaus) in Palestine. Later he likely became bishop of Emmaus (Eusebius, *History*, VI.xxxi.2). Origen calls him “a beloved brother in God the Father, through Jesus Christ, His holy Child” (*Letter from Origen to Africanus* 1). Fellow historian Eusebius distinguishes him as “no ordinary historian” (*History*, I. vi.2). Eusebius describes the five books of *Chronologies* as a “monument of labor and accuracy” and cites extensively from his harmony of the evangelists’ genealogies (*History*, VI. xxxi. 1–3). Africanus was a careful historian who sought to defend the truth of the Bible. He is an ancient example of meticulous, detailed scholarship which is historical, biblical, truthful, and devout.

Even though Eusebius describes Africanus as the author of the *Kestoi*, Jerome makes no mention of this (*ANF* 6:124). The author of *Kestoi* is surnamed Sextus, probably a Libyan philosopher who arranged a library in the Pantheon at Rome for the Emperor. The *Kestoi* was probably written toward the end of the 200s. It was not written by a Christian since it contains magical incantations (*Oxyrhynchus Papyri* III.412).

The Greek text of Africanus’ writings may be found in Martinus Josephus Routh, *Reliquiae sacrae* II (New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1974 [1846]), 225–309, and Martin Wallraff, Umberto Roberto, Karl Pinggéra, eds., William Adler, trans., *Julius Africanus Chronographiae: The Extant Fragments, Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller* 15 (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007).

The extant writings of Julius Africanus may be found in vol. 1, no 1, April 2009 edition of the *Africanus Journal*.

Other Front Matter

Editorial Team for the issue: Cassidy Jay Gossage, Ruth Martin, J. Saemi Kim, Seong Park, Nicole Rim, John Runyon, Aída Besançon Spencer, William David Spencer

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Summary of Content:

Several articles on theological, biblical, and philosophical topics on the nature of God and art, worship, and moral choices. The book reviews discuss theology, applied theology and non-violence, Christian leadership, the fall, life cycles, and dangerous ecclesial movements.

THE AFRICANUS GUILD



L to R: Quonekuia Day, Mark Chuanhang Shan, Jennifer Creamer

“If not for the Africanus Guild, I would not even think of getting a Ph.D. and would not have had the chance to teach my own course at Gordon-Conwell, and be trained to be a Bible teacher, and for this I am most grateful.” –Benjamin Fung

Benjamin Fung’s Ph.D. was received from North-West University in South Africa 2017
Quonekuia Day and Mark Shan are Ph.D. candidates with London School of Theology.
Jennifer Creamer received her Ph.D. from North-West University in 2016.

The Africanus Guild is a support program set up to assist selective, underrepresented constituencies to pursue research Ph.D.s from North-West University and London School of Theology. The Guild is especially oriented to the multicultural, multiracial urban scene. Accepted students are mentored by a Gordon-Conwell faculty member. Candidates may complete the Th.M. at the Boston campus and then apply to the Guild.

Does Jesus Communicate as an Artist?¹

WILLIAM DAVID SPENCER

Did you ever notice that Jesus came at questions at an angle? Even point-blank ones he would often parry with a story or an epigram or an analogy. This is why Christians today are still echoing the disciples' question: "Why do you speak in parables?"² To understand why Jesus used artistic means to convey truth is to glimpse something about the mission and nature of the Christ.

JESUS IS CREATOR AND ARTIST

John tells us clearly in his gospel that the Person of the Godhead who incarnated as Jesus Christ worked with the Father and Holy Spirit to create the whole world, literally "all things through him came, and without him came not one thing" (John 1:3). That Jesus created the world is not up to question. Everyone calling herself or himself Christian agrees – or ought to agree – with that statement. But, since the word "art" is drawn from the word "artifice," meaning a copy or representation of something that exists, we might conclude that, at the beginning, as a co-equal, co-eternal Person of the triune Godhead, the One who took on humanity to become "Jesus" (savior) "Christ" (anointed one) was hardly an "artist" copying what exists. Instead, the entire Godhead was involved in the initial crafting of the universe. God created what now exists and, according to John 1:3, the One who would incarnate in earth's creation to provide the means for humans to be recreated in a spiritual second birth was particularly active in the first birthing of our world. "Art" would only be able to follow that primal crafting of worlds – since it is reshaping matter, or, "imitate, represent, portray" (*mimeomai*)³ already existing matter.

Therefore, asking if Jesus were both Creator *and* an artist at the creation might be irrelevant when we are talking about God, since there was nothing *artificial*, no artifice at all about the original creation. Clearly, at the beginning, the One who would be born into our world as Jesus Christ was hardly an artist. This full Person of the Trinity was the Originator of the material that is shaped into art: the Master Crafter.

But, now, when we come to the next phase of the divine drama, his part in the Godhead's search and rescue operation, rescuing humanity from its great tragic plight – its fall – we come up with a different answer entirely for Jesus Christ, as a human among humans. The Originator has now taken on human flesh and has entered our world as one of us: a human (Rom. 1:2-3, 8:3; Heb. 2:14-18). Jesus Christ has become part of God's own creation; God-Among-Us has taken on human flesh, human gender, human limitations.

God's great cosmic opponent, Satan, the evil one, certainly realizes this, so it tempts Jesus to change the rules: to turn bread into stone at its command (see Matt. 4:3). But Jesus does not succumb to that temptation. If he is going to be truly human, he will not manipulate what he has created for his own benefit.

Of course, Jesus Christ demonstrates the power to change substances to benefit other humans and to teach a lesson about his mission on earth. Packing these demonstrations with significance, revealing who he actually is. So, for example, he turns water into wine to help out a harried host who has prematurely run out at a wedding feast, but his action is more than just making up for the fact that the wine gave out after Jesus's mob arrived at the scene. His act was providing a symbol of the blood he will pour out and the communion meal he will institute to commemorate that great

1 This article is an adapted excerpt from *Three in One: Analogies for the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2022), ch. 3.

2 In this section, I culled these passages from the gospel parallels in Robert L. Thomas and Stanley N. Gundry's, *Harmony of the Gospels* (Chicago: Moody, 1978), or its revision, as noted.

3 Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), 1134. (LSJ)

cosmic act of redemption (see John 2:1-11).

The same kind of action/reflection component can be seen when Jesus uses his power to feed the throngs who have sacrificed their opportunity to secure nourishment in order to listen to his message [see Mark 6:32-44 and 8:1-9]. The astonishing luncheon that he hosts demonstrates that people can rely on him to provide if they will risk sacrificing their comfort to follow him, just as it harkens back to God's provision of manna (God's "bread") in the wilderness for an entire nation that is stepping out on faith (Exod. 16).

At the same time, however, he will not make his ministry into a charade, where he keeps a celestial helicopter ticket in the back of his robe, so as to say, so he can take off if this mission gets too tough. Jesus has jettisoned that celestial equivalent along with all his other divine powers, hence his answer to the evil one's second temptation. He will not compromise his mission by calling in angels to cushion his landing. If he leaps from the highest point of the temple, he will die as surely as did his half-brother James many years later, when James is thrown from the temple's heights.⁴

All the divine perks he had before, when he retained his powers as God, he had placed into his heavenly Father's hands as he emptied himself and, thus, entered our world empty-handed as all of us do (Phil. 2:5-8). The Father supplies power as Jesus needs it during his mission, so he can heal and raise the dead and even walk on water to overtake his sailing disciples, in order to underscore his message to them, but, as far as a quick fix to alleviate the vicissitudes of his own life on earth, or to kowtow to the challenges of the evil one, he's not asking and the Father's not supplying. Jesus is basically working with the same limitations the rest of us experience when it comes to his own wellbeing. He is just as tired from the long days of ministry, just as sore from the miles on the road, just as weary and sleep-deprived from the endless demands of those who want help, and, ultimately, just as pain-riddled from the onslaught of death. Jesus lived by the same rules we do – his life was not a play, simulating human experience; it was real. He lived the full experience himself.

Therefore, in his pre-incarnational state, Jesus Christ may have created us all and, therefore, he may hold a prior claim on us, but, when he arrives as recognizably human, he gets just as rebuffed as we often do when attempting to communicate God's truth to a competitive, self-promoting world (John 1:11). If he is going to make an impact explaining the healing signs of his mission, he is going to have to do it by developing skills to get his points across to a crowd as fickle and attention-span challenged as are our throngs today: For him, too, the response was the equivalent of "Okay, you healed the blind man – cool! – you got anything more up your sleeve, or is that it for now? If that's it, well, Herod's got a new aqueduct we all wanna check out. See ya, Pal!"

So, our initial question is posed again: despite being the original Creator, does Jesus, once incarnated, now work as an artist, using the material of the world he created, but this time to *recreate* or *sub-create* a means to reach people with his message?

To answer this, we need to agree on what we mean by "Art," since this word can be defined in many different ways, depending on one's perspective and the context of the discussion. In *God through the Looking Glass*, our book on the arts, we define art as "a type of communication through something arranged or created to represent what the artist perceives in the subjunctive (what could, would, or might happen) to be life or truth and that someone presents as art because of its perceived form and beauty."⁵ Herein, you notice, are the qualities of being arranged, representing, and communicating. For this discussion, I am condensing these elements into a definition of art as *craft that speaks beyond itself*. Was Jesus a maker of craft that speaks beyond itself? Or, another way to put it is: was the Master Crafter, when God-Among-Us, also a sub-crafter, an artist?

Bringing this question to the four gospels, we discover that it answers easily: art presages, sur-

4 Eusebius, *Church History*, 2.23.

5 William David Spencer and Aida Besançon, eds., *God through the Looking Glass: Glimpses from the Arts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 17.

rounds, and even flows from Jesus's nature, as we see it herald Jesus's entry into our world, convey his message to our world, demonstrate his message before our world.

Jesus Is Artfully Introduced

Prehistoric glimpses in John 1 and Colossians 1, in conjunction with John 8, etc., help us glimpse a fuller understanding of Jesus's identity. John 1:3 tells us that Jesus is the Master Crafter. Verse 10 of John 1 adds: "the world was made through him." Verse 4 tells us humanity itself is a creation, whom Jesus himself animated. Colossians 1:16 corroborates: "All things through him and in him were created."⁶

Since all the Godhead's productive creative activity was done through Jesus, appropriately, his advent was greeted creatively. His mother, who was obviously a poet, responded to the news that she had been elected to bear him with a burst of poetry, or an actual song, which today we know as "The Magnificat" (Luke 1:46-55), a piece that has inspired composers down through the ages to create musical settings for it. His earthly relative Zechariah, when his tongue is loosed, also bursts forth in poetic song, when Jesus's herald, John the Baptist, is born (Luke 1:67-79).

John the Baptist himself will soon be proclaiming and fulfilling Isaiah 40:3-5's poetic prophecy:

A voice shouting in the wilderness:

"Prepare the way of the Lord,

Make straight his paths.

Every ravine will be filled up,

And every mountain and hill will be leveled;

And the crooked will be straightened,

And the rough [or uneven] into smooth roads;

And all flesh will see the salvation of God" (Luke 3: 4-6; see also Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:2- 3).

When John the Baptist introduces Jesus, he turns to rich metaphors drawn from Old Testament sacrificial imagery to depict the uniqueness of Jesus's coming: "Behold, the Lamb of God, the one removing the sin of the world!" (John 1:29, 36). John also describes Jesus as "the bridegroom" and himself as a friend of the wedding party (John 3:29). Jesus will use this same imagery, explaining the contrast between John's fasting disciples and his feasting ones (Matt. 9:14-15; Mark 2:18-20; Luke 5:33-35; cf. 12:35-38). Eventually, Jesus will return the tribute, responding to John the Baptist's death by comparing him to "a lamp" that illuminated those around him (John 5:35). Jesus, himself, the Apostle John tells us, is the Giver of Light, who bestows the light of life on every human coming into the world (John 1:4, 9). John the Baptist, of course was not *that* light, John the Apostle hastens to add (1:8), but a witness to that light, perhaps, as a searchlight may be contrasted with the sun. Both of them give light. The searchlight can pinpoint and highlight a particular target, as John did singling out candidates for repentance. But the sun illuminates everything with life and health and plenty of vitamin D. When, like John the Baptist, we reflect Jesus, our testimony can speak into someone's life, "Let there be light!" even if ours is only 100 watts.

John's preaching certainly shimmers with luminescent, poignant, searing, definitive imagery. He censures his opponents with a metaphor: "You offspring of snakes!" (Matt. 3:7; Luke 3:7), effective in silencing them and illustrating his opinion of them to the watching crowds. We wonder at his choice of words. Was that selection really intended to win over his critics with sarcasm? Maybe not. John's mission was announcing the coming of Jesus, who, John proclaims, will baptize with "fire" (Matt. 3:11). In that sense, John was already striking a match to symbolize the conflagration

⁶ All translations unless otherwise indicated, are by the author, literally rendered, to manifest clearly figurative language in the original Greek.

to come with the One whose heavenly Parent cuts off those who will not receive Jesus, just as a gardener prunes off dead branches and heaves them into the fire (John 15:1-6). “Therefore, produce the holy fruit of repentance,” John the Baptizer warns, “but now the axe is at the root of the trees” (Matt. 3:8-10, Luke 3:9) and the “winnowing shovel is in his hand” (Matt. 3:12, Luke 3:17). And, after that thorough bit of landscaping, God can raise substitute children out of the very stones to replace those branches God destroys (Matt. 3:9, Luke 3:8).

John’s graphic depictions of Jesus and the eloquent setting of his preparatory words are actually most appropriate, since even the moment of Jesus’ advent was graced with melodic beauty, as none less than the angels of heaven chant when they proclaim Christ’s birth (Luke 2:13-14).

Jesus Continues His Ascent on the Wings of Art

From the moment Jesus begins his public ministry, he fulfills the promises of the Old Testament poetry that prophesies his mission. Robert Thomas and Stanley Gundry point out how many scriptural prophetic composites are fulfilled in each of Jesus’s symbolic utterances or actions, for example, his teaching on the end times in Matthew 24:29 and Mark 13:24-25: “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky [or heaven].” They cite references Isaiah 13:10; 34:4.⁷ The pageantry of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matt. 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-44; John 12:12-19) fulfills such prophetic verses as Isaiah 62:11, Zechariah 9:9, and Psalm 118:26-27.⁸ Even on the way to his death, the suffering savior Jesus is quoting Hosea 10:8’s use of personification: “Say to the mountains, ‘Fall upon us!’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us!’” (Luke 23:30). Jesus is conscious of the role he will contribute to the great passion play of redemption. But, his employment of the arts is not simply limited to this role of a lifetime.

His affinity for things artistic runs through all Jesus’s interactions. When reproofing his contemporaries’ lack of godly cooperation with John the Baptist or with himself, Jesus depicts them as children, complaining to would-be playmates: “We played the flute to you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not lament” (Matt. 11:16-17; Luke 7: 31-32). He and John are like musicians, a heavenly band playing to an unappreciative audience. “Tough crowd” about sums it up.

The famous account in John 7:53-8:11, which first appears in the Greek and Latin fifth century codex Bezae (a manuscript of the Bible that gathered up early traditions),⁹ tells how Jesus may

7 Robert L. Thomas and Stanley N. Gundry, *The NIV Harmony of the Gospels: with Explanations and Essays* (New York, HarperCollins, 1988), 190-91. Also see Ezek. 32:7; Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15, where the imagery more presages Jesus bringing the sword rather than peace (Matt. 10:34). Interesting to note is that Thomas and Gundry’s *A Harmony of the Gospels* first appeared from Chicago’s Moody Press in 1978, using the New American Standard. A decade later when it was republished by HarperCollins, it had switched to the New International Version, 199, and, with a decade of success, more certitude, substituting “The” for “A” in the title.

8 Thomas and Gundry, *NIV Harmony*, 1988, 169-72.

9 Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 71. The beloved story of Jesus’s mercy to the woman caught in adultery is not found in any papyri or earliest authoritative codices or early translation of the New Testament. Nevertheless, an account of a woman dragged before Jesus was already extant in the second century. Papias (c. 60-130) mentions this account concerned “a woman falsely accused before the Lord of many sins.” It was included in the apocryphal Gospel of the Hebrews, which many believe was an Ebionite document (Montague Rhodes James, trans., *The Apocryphal New Testament: Being the Apocryphal Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypses* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1924], 2, 4, 8-10). Papias, along with Polycarp, is said to have been a disciple of John, but Papias does not in the fragments we have of his writings attribute the account he mentions to John (Eusebius, *Church History* 3.39). Whether it is a variation of the same account as the woman caught in adultery is unclear. What is clear is that the majority of textual scholars do not think it belongs in John’s Gospel. It is not canonical. Bruce M. Metzger concludes the account is a “piece of oral tradition which circulated in certain parts of the Western church” (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2d ed. [Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2002], 187-89). At the same time, A. T. Robertson believes, “It is probably a true story for it is like Jesus, but it does not belong to John’s Gospel” (*Word Pictures in the New Testament: Vol. 5, The Fourth Gospel, The Epistle to the Hebrews* [Nashville: Broadman, 1932], 135-36). Leon Morris notes, “If we cannot feel that this is part of John’s Gospel we can feel that the story is true to the character of Jesus. Throughout the history of the church it has been held that, whoever wrote it, this little story is authentic. It rings true” (*The Gospel According to John* [Grand Rapids:

have even turned to pictorial art when rescuing a woman in jeopardy. Dragged before Jesus on her way to execution, the woman trembles, as her abusive accusers accost Jesus, attempting to use her to trap him as a scofflaw, should he choose to intervene and take her part. Jesus, however, appears calm, even unperturbed, choosing instead to give a type of mimed performance rather than answer in verbal argument. The report tells us he stooped down to the ground while listening to the charges being brought against this woman caught in adultery. In classical Greek, the noun related to *katagraphō*, the verb employed to describe what Jesus did then (8:6), is used for “drawing, delineation,” “drawing of maps,” a “diagram, figure,” “delineation in profile,” as “in bas-relief,” “marking out,” “engraving of an inscription.”¹⁰ By New Testament times, the verb meant to “write” or “draw figures.”¹¹ Was Jesus doodling, as he thought it over, or buying time as he prayed for guidance? Was he sketching the angry crowd, so they could see themselves as he saw them, or, as the original silent Jesus film classic *The King of Kings* (1927) depicts, writing in the sandy dirt the sins of each of her accusers?¹² Whatever the function of his drawing was, when he stood up, his answer confounded them. Then he went back to drawing in the dirt. When he stood up a second time, they had slunk away. The audience of accusers was gone.

No one knows if this tradition is suggesting Jesus was a pictorial artist as well, but we do know he was a carpenter, which might suggest he was adept in fine cabinet making and carving designs and engravings as he sculpted in wood, possibly along with the usual gang work in throwing up structures or even making rough crosses that some scholars and filmmakers have supposed. One of the few light scenes in Mel Gibson’s heartrending *The Passion of the Christ* (2004) shows Jesus taking delight in showing his mother his model for a futuristic-style chair. It underscores his primal identity as the Master Crafter and his role now as creative artist.

One of the marvelous scenes in the silent *The King of Kings* depicts a group of children requesting that, since Jesus can heal limbs, he fix a broken doll. In response, the divine crafter fashions a dowel to reattach the limb and “heal” the doll to the delight of the children. It is a tender and beautiful depiction of Jesus as creative woodworker by the great character actor H.B. Warner and the iconic director Cecil B. DeMille.

JESUS THE MASTER ORATOR

What we do know for certain is that Jesus focused his artistic power on his consummate use of the oral arts: he was a master orator, a crafter of the spoken word.

So renowned was Jesus’s love of metaphor, that, when the Syrophenician woman wanted to appeal to him, she cleverly answers him in metaphor. He states, “It is not good to take the bread of the children and throw it to the house dogs.” She answers, “Yes, Lord, and then the dogs eat from the fallen crumbs from the table of their master.” Jesus is so pleased at her respectful and artful response, he praises her faith and grants her wish (Matt. 15:22-28; Mark 7:25-30).

Jesus Uses Puns

Like all literary speakers, Jesus employs an entire rhetorical arsenal to fire at his hearers. He delights in puns from the very beginning of his ministry, setting Simon up for the eventual “rock” pun, as he renames him “stone” (John 1:42; Mark 3:16; Luke 6:14). A.T. Robertson, an astute expositor, Erdmans, 1971], 883). And Bruce Metzger agrees, “The story of the woman taken in adultery, for example, has many earmarks of historical veracity; no ascetically minded monk would have invented a narrative that closes with what seems to be only a mild rebuke on Jesus’ part” (*The Text of the New Testament*, 319). These commentators, all of notable scholarly stature, agree that this account fits as a true tradition within John’s category of recordings of the “many things Jesus did,” that, if written down, all the books in the world could not contain them (John 21:25).

¹⁰ *Katagraphē*, LSJ, 887.

¹¹ Frederick William Danker, Walter Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 516 (BDAG).

¹² “Trace, draw” is the translation choice of Max Zerwick and Mary Grosvenor in *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament*, 5th ed. (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1996), 310.

points out that this Greek word *petros* is “usually” used for “a smaller detachment of the massive ledge” (Matt. 16:18). So I might read this as Jesus making a word-play contrasting himself as the ledge and Peter as one of the stones of the ledge on which the church will rest. A.T. Robertson does caution us, however, that “too much must not be made of this point since Jesus probably spoke Aramaic to Peter which draws no such distinction.”¹³ But, even given that warning, we can see that Jesus is engaged in a high level of playing with words, as, for example, when he intrigues the Samaritan woman at the well with the lure of a “water” that she won’t have to draw by parlaying his request for a drink of well water into a contrasting image of the continual spiritually refreshing draft of good news he can give her (John 4:10-15). These are but two of many lighter moments in the Bible that escape most of us when we read the text. God is certainly serious about our welfare and the divine plans for the world. But it does not follow that God has no sense of humor or that God does not take delight in this world God has created. That enjoyment is seen clearly before the fall as God creates and then strolls through that creation in the balmy breezes of the late afternoon into the early twilight (Gen. 3:8). God-Among-Us continues that delight, inventing pet nicknames for some of his disciples, as he dubs James and John the “sons of thunder” (Mark 3:17), and calls Simon “the Zealot” (Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15).

Jesus Uses Personification

Jesus also enjoyed playing with personification, for example, counseling the crowds not to let their right hands know what their left hands are doing (Matt. 6:3), as if hands could keep secrets from one another. In his word pictures, flowers and grass wear clothing much finer than Solomon’s (Matt. 6:28-30). The earth has a heart (Matt. 12:40). A day worries about itself (Matt. 6:34). Jerusalem is a city that has daughters and children, kills the prophets, has its house left desolate, and must bless Jesus’s name to see him again (Matt. 23:37-39; Luke 13:34-35).

Jesus Uses Hyperbole

The images Jesus uses are sharp and poignant and they arrest one’s attention and make one pause and think. That is the point of one of Jesus’s favorite devices: hyperbole, the extreme statement for shock effect. His sermons are filled with examples. Anger and insults are equivalent to murder, thunders Jesus, and lust equals adultery (Matt. 5:21-22, 27-28). If your right eye or right hand causes you to sin – gouge out and amputate! (Matt. 5:29-30; see also Matt. 18:8-9; Mark 9:43-47.) In danger of misleading a child? Best to go drown yourself! (Matt. 18:6; Mark 9:42; Luke 17:2) Do not resist any evil, he recommends, in fact, invite someone who slaps you to hit you again; if they sue the shirt off your back, toss in your coat as well. Did the army draft you into forced servitude? Do double the work! (Matt 5:39-42; Luke 6:29-30). Other instances of hyperbole include Jesus’s warning that we overlook sins the size of planks in our own eye (Matt 7:3-5; Luke 6:41-42) and that giving good teaching to the unworthy is tossing jewels to pigs (Matt. 7:6). Peter becomes “the devil,” when he tries to dissuade Jesus from fulfilling his mission to die for humanity’s sins (Matt. 16:22-23; Mark 8:32-33). Jesus also employs the exact phrasing that his cousin John the Baptist used toward the good but self-righteous Pharisees, when he calls them snakes and offspring of snakes (compare Matt. 3:7 and 23:33). Everyone doing sin is a “slave of sin” (John 8:34), child of the devil (John 8:44), whitewashed tomb (Matt. 23:27), unmarked grave (Luke 11:44). They devour widow’s houses (Mark 12:40; Luke 20:47), straining at gnats and swallowing camels (Matt. 23:24). Those who pause to care for their parents, rather than follow Jesus, are dead people burying dead people (Matt. 8:21-22; Luke 9:59-60). In fact, he orders his followers to call no one on earth “father” or “leaders” (Matt 23:9-10). Rich people trying to enter heaven are like a camel trying to squeeze through the eye of a needle (Matt. 19:24; Mark 10:25; Luke 18:25). His audience responds as did John the Baptist’s hostile hearers: they determine to kill him. Artists that deal in truth don’t always receive the acclaim their skills merit.

13 A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 1 (Nashville: Broadman, 1930), 131.

But, Jesus's use of hyperbole is not always condemnatory. It can be positive too, as he assures those destined for heaven that their task is to proclaim that godly message that his still, small voice whispered in their ears in their own loud announcements from the very housetops (Matt. 10:27). Their prayers can toss mountains into the sea (Mark 11:23). And he counsels them they must cry out their praise, or the very stones will do it (Luke 19:40). Their worth to God is far more than that of sparrows (Matt. 10:29-31; Luke 12:6-7).

Such sharp memorable contrasts have made impressions that still resonate in our age. No wonder the multitudes were amazed, astonished by the potent strength of his richly illustrated lectures (Matt. 7:28-29).

Jesus Uses Synecdoche

Memorable too is his use of synecdoche, letting a part represent the whole, or a whole a part, particularly a part of his mission singled out to represent the whole. Often the most significant spiritual truth is presented by this technique. For example, Jesus foretells his greatest victory, when he states, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25) or "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35-58), bread being symbolic for nourishment and, therefore, a representative part of all one's necessary daily sustenance (cf. Matt. 6:11, Luke 11:3). A profound truth is symbolized in each of the representative images of these "I am" statements. Jesus is the road to heaven, the truth about heaven, the life heaven gives (John 14:6). Sometimes he refers to his own presence grandly as "the kingdom of God," which is among them (or in their midst, *entos*) (Luke 17:21), meaning, where the King walks, the kingdom is present. And sometimes he simply calls himself "the Teacher" (Matt. 26:18; Mark 14:14; Luke 22:11). The Holy Spirit too is reduced to one memorable image: The Helper (which can also mean Counselor, Encourager, Exhorter, Comforter) (John 14:16; 15:26; 16:7). Of those who follow him, not one hair of their head will perish in the end times, even if they suffer earthly death (Luke 21:18), but they will be gathered "out of the four winds" or "from all directions" and, literally, "from the extreme limit of the heavens until its extreme limit," or one side of the sky to the other (Matt. 24:31; Mark 13:27). Jesus himself is present in the least of his followers and acts done to them are symbolically done to him (Matt. 25:31-46). The end times themselves he describes by depicting two men in a field or two women grinding (one is destroyed, the other left alive) (Matt. 24:40-41).

As the end of his earthly life neared, Jesus's use of synecdoche, as a kind of analogic shorthand, increases. One of the most dramatic incidences is when he takes a piece of bread and a cup of wine and uses them to symbolize his body broken and blood poured out for humanity's redemption (Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20). Drama will figure significantly, as we will see, in his final artistic lessons.

But one of the most powerful techniques he uses is to draw his imagery from people's lives and adopt this imagery to his hearers.

JESUS DRAWS HIS IMAGERY FROM PEOPLE'S REAL LIVES

The original fashioner of the universe, Jesus, in his incarnation (i.e., becoming flesh), now uses the oral techniques we have been describing as a refashioning strategy. By their use, he subtly forces hearers to understand answers only by placing themselves within the worldview he, as God-Among-Us, has set. To understand what he says to them, his hearers have to accept Jesus's analogical worldview. They have to think in God's framework, not their own. His is a model all artists follow, since art poses questions intended to enable illumination in beholders, but really only in those who are willing to adjust to its presuppositions. Those who won't adjust but want art to fit into theirs, simply peer at it from all angles and finally grunt: "I don't get it."

Therefore, as a quintessential artist, Jesus takes the material of life around him and shapes it for his audience, re-shaping people's perspectives through using his formidable arsenal of oral

techniques. But, as strong as his presentation obviously was, it was matched by the power of his astute selection of imagery that created analogies to their own experiences, taken no doubt from the material of his followers' daily lives, but shaped now creatively to illustrate his teaching. The sheer breadth of his references is impressive.

Amidst numerous nourishing images of the coming of God's kingdom, how we, as kingdom people, should act with each other, what we should value, what Jesus's task was here on earth, etc., Jesus salts in a number of parables imaging himself and his heavenly Father in a familial relationship of love. While, as a rule, these did not involve the Holy Spirit explicitly, they were enough to introduce his hearers to the idea that Jesus is divine and at one with the heavenly Father, whom they worshiped as God above all, and in that way he introduces the plurality in the Godhead. These we find embedded in a rich treasury of images as Jesus adopts his teaching to the experiences and understanding of his hearers.

Carpentry

Jesus was reared among the working class, and, appropriate to the nature of the great creating God-Among-Us come humbly to earth, he was trained to design and build things in his stepfather's carpentry trade. Therefore, he was equipped by his experience to draw a wealth of material from construction to illustrate significant spiritual truth.

"House" imagery, for example, becomes a frequent and changing metaphor for him. Familiar is the famous early story of the homeowners who build respectively on the rock or the sand, illustrating the need to act on Jesus's teaching (Matt. 7:24-27; Luke 6:47-49). But "house" also represents the world as Satan's dwelling that Jesus has invaded, overpowering the evil one, and plundering it of what it possesses: people's wills (Matt. 12:29; Mark 3:27; see also Luke 11:21-22). People's minds are also depicted as "houses" demons occupy, leave, and to which they return (Matt. 12:43-45; Luke 11:24-26). Heaven too is like a house with rooms Jesus is building for his followers (John 14:2-3). In fact, when he is about to return, he will be "upon the door" (Matt. 24:33). Meanwhile, Revelation 3:7-20 notes, Jesus opens "doors" for churches and "knocks" at their doors, since, as he depicts himself like a woman sweeping the floorboards of her house, looking for the coin she has lost, he is engaged in a search to rescue the precious wandering people he is seeking (Luke 15:8-10).

Jesus also quotes Psalm 118:22-23, presenting himself as a cornerstone, rejected by earthly builders but chosen by God, the Master Builder (Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10-11; Luke 20:17). A cornerstone in ancient architecture was the first stone laid on a foundation to guide the laying of all future stones. So, as the keystone, he is the chief measuring guide for his followers, but he is also the chief stumbling block for his opposition (Matt. 21:44; Luke 20:18). He can also call others "stumbling blocks," (literally, "a trap," but used metaphorically for tripping someone up morally into sin,¹⁴ see Matt. 16:23; 18:7-8; Luke 17:1-2). Before one follows him, one must oneself be like a builder calculating the cost of a tower, because following Jesus's design for us is a costly venture. One has to consider whether one has the spiritual resources to undertake it, because, once committed, one cannot turn away without being left spiritually bankrupt (Luke 14:28-30). Remodeling St. Augustine's City of Humanity into the City of God is daunting, since "the one consists of those who wish to live after the flesh, the other of those who wish to live after the spirit."¹⁵ That is going to take a complete renovation, spiritually speaking.

¹⁴ *Skandalon*, BDAG, 926.

¹⁵ Augustine, *The City of God*, 14.1. For a fuller discussion, please see my chapter, "Rebuilding the City of Enoch with the Blueprints of Christ" in Seong Hyun Park, Aida Besançon Spencer, William David Spencer, eds., *Reaching for the New Jerusalem: A Biblical and Theological Framework for the City*, Urban Voice Series (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013). I contend "there is a battle of definitions raging around us" regarding the city. As a result, "we have been deluded into trading the center of humanity for the periphery, thereby handing the locus of action over to evil and all its nefarious work to undermine our reliance on each other, destroy community, isolate individuals, and mug them as surely as was the victim in Jesus' parable. Clearly, many of us need to rethink the city" (3).

We see in Genesis 4:9-17 that the first city of humanity was built by the disenfranchised Cain after he had lost all human contact but his immediate family. He was lost in the land of “wandering” (the meaning of the Hebrew word *nod*), until this first juvenile delinquent settled down, starts a family and then a settlement to alleviate the communal aspect of his sentence. He names the city for this son, Enoch: the pathos of a prodigal child wanting something better for his own son. Countless eons have replicated cities of Enoch across the world. How can we build within them towers that symbolize the redeeming message of Christ? The inference is clear. We need to calculate whether we are willing to invest everything we have in this venture, just as Jesus did, before we invite his will to be the guiding cornerstone of our lives and our work.

One of the most dramatic of his building metaphors comes when Jesus cleanses the Temple, charging his Father’s house has been turned into a market (*emporion*, John 2:16) or a hideout (*spēlaion*,¹⁶ Matt. 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46) for robbers.¹⁷ Challenged, he switches the metaphor to signify his own body, as he cries out, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again” (John 2:19; see also Matt. 26:61; 27:40; Mark 14:58; 15:29). He does this by using the verb, *egeirō*, which is not primarily employed for restoring a building, but for waking someone up, or raising them to a standing position.¹⁸

He tells his would-be disciples to pick up their crosses (that is, take on his difficult and perhaps fatal service) and follow him (Matt. 16:24; Mark 8:34; cf. 10:21; Luke 9:23). This is one wood metaphor that becomes painfully real for him. Finally, in his passion, on the way to die, when he has struggled to carry his own heavy, wooden cross, Jesus reverts to one last wood metaphor, asking those watching his torment, “If in the green tree these things they do, in the dry what will happen?” What he means is: if such a heinous act as the execution of God-Among-Us who came to bring us redemption can happen in peacetime, what are his persecutors capable of at the fall of Jerusalem? (Luke 23:31).

Fishing

When he invites the fishermen to follow him, he uses imagery drawn from fishing. To Peter and Andrew, he calls, “Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of people [not specifically men only, but the plural form of *anthrōpos* for humans]” (Matt. 4:19; Mark 1:17; Luke 5:10). All of heaven, he explains, will ultimately fish up humanity in his story of the dragnet. The angels will be saving the righteous and discarding the evil, like fishing folk dividing up their catch (Matt. 13:47-50). In Luke 11:11, he observes, a father will not give his child a snake for a fish, and in John 12:32 he uses a nautical term for hauling in a net (*helkō*)¹⁹ when he announces that, when he is lifted up, he will “draw” all people to himself.

Being God-Among-Us, Jesus has the power to demonstrate his teaching in a kind of participatory art - like a living installation - the artwork becomes alive and the disciples can walk around in it. So, he provides the miraculous catch of fish in Luke 5:1-11 to demonstrate he can indeed make these earthly seafarers uniquely successful heavenly fisherfolk. Like his real Father, Jesus can symbolize by using the actual matter of the world. Lest they miss the point of his symbolic miracle, immediately afterwards he reiterates to Simon, “Do not fear, from now on people you will be catching [*zōgreō*, capture alive]”²⁰ (Luke 5:10). He even teaches his followers to obey God the heavenly ruler, as well as earthly governments by having Peter catch their tax contribution out of the sea, a lesson the former tax collector Matthew is careful to record for posterity (Matt. 17:27).

After the cataclysmic events of the crucifixion and the resurrection, his followers seek the salve

16 BDAG, 938.

17 Cf. Isa. 56:7; Jer. 7:11, Thomas and Gundry, *NIV Harmony*, 174.

18 BDAG, 271.

19 BDAG, 318.

20 Michael Burer and Jeffrey Miller, *A New Reader's Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 55.

of routine, attempting to pick up their old lives as earthly fishermen again, but Jesus meets them on the shore and cooks a fish breakfast for them (John 21:9-14), demonstrating that he will provide their needs, just as he did at the feeding of the 5,000 and the 4,000 with multiplying fish and bread.

Farming

Among his followers were farmers, shepherds, homemakers, and Jesus uses many images from these occupations throughout his teaching.

To him, his followers are like oxen exchanging a heavy yoke of sin and the ritual law's burden for his light yoke of repentance and obedience (Matt. 11:28-30). People are also trees who bear good or bad fruit (Matt. 7:16-20; 12:33; Luke 6:43-45) (as are nations, Matt. 21:43), while his opponents are like "the offspring of snakes" a farmer might turn over in a field (Matt. 12:34). Jesus himself is like a mother hen who wants to gather up Jerusalem's citizens like chicks who need protection (Matt. 23:37). He is also like a vine to which his followers must stay attached to flourish (John 15:1-17). In this extended metaphor, God his Father is the vineyard tender, Jesus is the vine, people the branches, either fruitful or not, depending on their connection to him. This is an illustration of Jesus as humanity's life giver, as John 1:4 explains, but, since John 1:11 laments, he was not welcomed, he mourns in Matthew 8:20 (Luke 9:58), he is more homeless among his own people than the temporarily sheltered fox or bird.

His coming death he depicts as a wheat grain dying to enter a new stage of fruitfulness (John 12:24). So, his life-giving ministry is also rendered in farm terms: healing, especially on the sabbath, is paralleled with watering a donkey (Luke 13:15-16) or retrieving an ox or even a child from a pit (Luke 14:5). To Jesus, this should be intelligible to people who, when asked for an egg, would not give their own child a scorpion (Luke 11:12).

As noted, parables are simple analogic stories, extended metaphors and similes, with a strong spiritual or moral point. Jesus's first ones are almost brief sayings, sewing a patch on a garment or pouring wine in a leather flask (Matt. 9:16-17; Mark 2:21-22; Luke 5:36-39), but they soon become developed illustrations, so poignant that many nations' literatures are built on them, for example: "the Good Samaritan" (Luke 10:30-37), presented at an angle to correct a lawyer, attempting to justify himself (vv. 25, 29); "The Rich Fool" (Luke 12:13-21), aimed at every form of greed, precipitated by a brother angling for part of an inheritance. With this anchoring tale, he extends his teaching with a series of complementary illustrations involving farming and nature imagery: blackbirds that do not harvest but eat well (Luke 12:24), lilies that do not manufacture textiles but are lovelier than the greatest king's finery (vv. 27-28). Jesus also presents the misadventure of "The Prodigal Son" (Luke 15:11-32), who envied the food of the pigs he tended, a lesson on God's salvaging sinners, ending, as in the case of the reluctant prophet Jonah, with a judgmental elder son challenged to forgive (cf. Matt. 12:39-41; 16:4; Luke 11:29-32). He also describes "Two Praying Men" (Luke 18:9-14), a tax collector and a religious leader, in which he teaches that humility before God is necessary for forgiveness. Enduring stories, every one of them, and so, too, is the "Parable of the Sower," one of Jesus's most developed and intriguing illustrations (Matt. 13:3-23; Mark 4:2-20; Luke 8:4-15). The point of this early parable is to help those being saved to understand what is happening to them. In that sense, it is a kind of performatory utterance. Jesus is sowing truth among them. Those being saved understand the seed on good soil represents the faith growing within them that Jesus is planting, while those being lost do not understand that their shallowness does not support good growth and that is why their spirits wilt and their loyalty to him fades in the face of opposition and worldly concerns.

Still, Jesus's art can be so obscure to the just-beginning-to-be-illuminated mind that even those being saved are confused, so he must interpret the point of his parables to his disciples. They welcome Jesus's plain speech, but it comes with a warning. If they do not understand this parable, he

cautions in Mark 4:13 (see also Mark 4:23-25; Luke 8:18), how will they figure out all the teachings he will be encasing in his parables? Jesus's concern is central, because the point of this present parable, as of so much of his illustrated teaching, is the spread of God's kingdom.

When my wife and I were researching *The Prayer Life of Jesus*, we were amazed at how many references to the kingdom of God appear in Jesus's teaching, some 148 or so that we counted.²¹ Particularly, these occurrences are in the parables or presented analogically. For example, Mark 4:26-29 notes God's reign spreads like a seed that springs shoots overnight. Satan tries to stop the good growth, recounts the parable of "The Wheat and Tares," by sewing weeds in among the wheat, infiltrating the church with predators and hypocrites (Matt. 13:24-30). But, though it begins fragilely, as the smallest seed that the Jewish farm folk used, God's reign eventually overpowers all other growth and becomes a haven of refuge (Matt. 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19), an image Jesus also uses for faith (Matt. 17:20, Luke 17:6).

Jesus illustrates the work of God's rule as planting and harvesting. Serving Jesus is a lot like plowing (Luke 9:62). Jesus's followers gather for God's kingdom while others scatter (Luke 11:23). God roots out satanic weeds that the Father did not plant (Matt. 15:13). God is master of a field who hires laborers at God's chosen wage, each recompensed equally with grace (Matt. 20:1-16) to bring sinners in from the fields (Matt. 9:37-38; Luke 10:2). The devil, of course, wants to do its own form of harvesting, seeking, for example, to grind Peter like one sifts wheat (Luke 22:31).

Sinful humanity makes God's harvesting difficult. The tale of the vineyard owner with one son initially unresponsive but later repentant and the other story of an easy-promising slacker (Matt. 21:28-32) teach how important is keeping one's vows to God. The parable of the unruly tenants at harvest who kill the vineyard owner's own son is a prophetic warning to the Temple authorities to reconsider what they are plotting to do to Jesus (Matt. 21:33-41; Mark 12:1-9; Luke 20:9-16). His hearers realize that those who attempt to thwart the spread of God's kingdom deserve to die at God's hands—and the kingdom will spread anyway (Matt. 21:41).

Therefore, not all of God's harvesting will result in salvation. The fig tree that does not yield is in danger of being uprooted (Luke 13:6-9). The more embattled Jesus becomes, the more he seems to rely on metaphors and imagery and the more ferocious some of these warning illustrations become. He cannot become more graphic than he does when he curses the fig tree and it withers for being unfruitful (Matt. 21:18-22; Mark 11:12-21). Like the weather image he hands to the Pharisees and Sadducees when they gang up on him and demand a sign (Matt. 16:1-4), the fig tree tells the season, if one knows how to read it (Matt. 24:32-33; Mark 13:28-29; Luke 21:29-31). Jesus can turn even agricultural images into graphic warnings.

Shepherding

Another rich source of imagery for Jesus was sheep herding. The people, he considers, are like "sheep without a shepherd" (Matt. 9:36; 10:6; Mark 6:34). His little flock of followers (Luke 12:32) contrast as sheep struggling against opponents who are depicted as wolves (Matt. 7:15; 10:16; Luke 10:3). He hopes they will become as wise as serpents, while remaining as gentle as doves (Matt. 10:16).

He himself is like a trustworthy shepherd, his sheep will know his call (John 10:25-30). He heals them as a shepherd lifts a sheep from a pit, whether it is the sabbath or not. In fact, he makes a point of healing on the sabbath to underscore that part of his loving nature (Matt. 12:11-13). He will even leave the ninety-nine to go and find a straying one (Matt. 18:12-14; Luke 15:4-7). Contrasting with the thieves and robbers who came before, Jesus will die for his sheep's safety (John 10:1-18). In fact, he announces the hour of his passion is here by referring Zechariah 13:7, where the shepherd is struck and the sheep scattered (Matt. 26:31; Mark 14:27).

21 William David Spencer and Aida Besançon Spencer, *The Prayer Life of Jesus: Shout of Agony, Revelation of Love, A Commentary* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990), 19.

After his resurrection, Jesus's concern appears to be solely for his flock. In one of his final charges to his disciples, Jesus tells Peter three times in succession to “tend [or herd, *boskō*] my lambs,” so that the vacillating disciples will take this task to heart (John 21:15-17). Jesus warns he will take the work back over eventually, this time as a herder separates sheep from goats, assigning some to everlasting life and others to eternal death (Matt. 25:31-46).

Cooking

Jesus expands his rich illustrative detail from the farmyard to the courtyard where sifted grain is prepared and baked into bread. The culinary arts run all through his illustrations.

Salt is a recurring image. Sometimes it is negative: the damned are salted with fire (Mark 9:49). At other times it is positive: the good are filled with salt that causes pleasant relations, as salt preserves food and makes eating it pleasant (Mark 9:50). Thus, his followers need to stay pure, so they can season the world, not becoming adulterated with sin or completely sidetracked by worldly concerns and commitments and therefore useless to God (Luke 14:34-35).

He speaks of his suffering as drinking a cup (a recurring Old Testament image is God's cup of wrath and punishment²²; Matt. 20:22-23; Mark 10:38-39). As with grain or wine, the Pharisees have been filling up (*plēroō*) the “measure” (*metron*) of guilt (Matt. 23:32) and that adds to this “cup” with which he struggles with his Father over drinking in his Gethsemane prayer (Matt. 26:39, 42; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42; John 18:11). John notes Jesus must drink that cup of guilt and destruction for humanity, so Jesus announces on the cross: “I am thirsty” (John 19:28). Immediately after he receives that symbolically sour wine, he dies (John 19:30).

Jesus has drained the dregs of punishment for humanity, so he can serve his followers that post-resurrection meal, showing them that God will continue to provide for their needs spiritually and physically (John 21:1-23), just as one day they will drink the wine of salvation with him in God's kingdom (Matt. 26:27-29; Mark 14:25, cf. Luke 22:20, 1 Cor. 11:23-26).

Bread preparation begins with grain and yeast and Jesus has both a positive and negative take on the imagery of yeast. Leaven spreads throughout a mound of dough, changing all its composition. So, for Jesus it can be positive as it depicts the spread of God's reign throughout earth (Matt. 13: 33; Luke 13:20-21), or it can be pernicious, as was the false teaching of the Pharisees, which had become so widespread (Matt. 16: 5-12; Mark 8:14-21; Luke 12:1).

Bread serves Jesus as a metaphor very early on, as he used this basic, physical staple to represent spiritual nourishment (Matt. 6:11; Luke 11:3). When the crowds who have recently eaten his miraculous gift of bread in the wilderness connect it up with Moses's feeding Israel with manna in the desert (and obviously begin thinking concretely of another forty years of free lunches—just as the Samaritan woman envisioned well water on an internal, eternal tap [John 4:15]),²³ Jesus picks up their reference and reinterprets it for them in John 6:30-59. First, he explains, “Not Moses... but my Father” gives you “the true bread out of heaven” (v. 32). Second, the only bread they get now from God “is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world” (v.33). They are excited and begging Jesus, “Lord, always give us this bread” (v. 34), when he replies, “I am the bread of life” (v. 35). That is not what they want to hear and they grumble, “How is this one able to give us his²⁴ flesh to eat?” (v. 52). Does Jesus explain his metaphor? No. He just goes on provoking them, extending his analogy, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Humanity²⁵ and drink his blood, you do not have life in yourselves” (v. 53).

22 E.g., Ps. 75:8; Isa. 51:17, 22; Jer. 25:15-17; 49:12.

23 Jesus provides the well of the Holy Spirit from which people drink rivers into themselves (John 7:37-38).

24 The early manuscripts P(apyri)⁶⁶ and the codex Vaticanus include “his,” but P⁷⁵ in a passage hard to read and codex Sinaiticus omit it. Bread becomes key to Jesus's teaching, as he used this basic physical staple to represent spiritual nourishment (Matt. 6:11; Luke 11:3).

25 The term Jesus uses, *anthrōpos*, is inclusive, referring to all human beings, not the sex-specific *anēr*, which would specify male or man. So, “Son” (*huios*, which is sex-specific, since Jesus became a male human on earth) “of Humanity,”

The end result? A ministry disaster for church growth experts: “Because of this, many of his disciples left” (v. 66). But, Jesus, using his artful approach, is winnowing out those who really do not believe (v. 64), so he could concentrate on the truly called who would be protected and empowered by God to survive the devil’s own pernicious winnowing when the hard times come. So, Jesus uses a tale about a man begging bread from his neighbor to teach persistence in prayer (Luke 11:5-10).

So great an impression did Jesus make when breaking and blessing bread, that after the resurrection his breaking of bread was the symbolic moment in which Cleopas and his companion from Emmaus recognized Jesus (Luke 24:30-31). Thus, along with the fish, he feeds his disciples bread at the final seaside meal (John 21:13), teaching them one last time that God will provide their nourishment, physical and spiritual.

Family

Family metaphors figure all throughout Jesus’s teaching. In a way, the entire incarnation can be seen as a metaphorical performative utterance, as Jesus, who dwells in eternity as a full Person of the Godhead, yet enters creation, becoming a baby to mature and demonstrate what a perfect child of God should be like (John 3:31-36). Jesus uses this relationship as a teaching tool throughout his ministry (e.g., Luke 10:22; 22:70) and it gets him into terrible conflict with the Pharisees who realize sonship means a claim of equality with God (John 5:18). They attack his parentage, snidely asserting they know who their fathers were, legitimate Jews, making them officially recognized sons of Abraham. But, since everyone knows that Joseph is not Jesus’s biological father, they reject Jesus, calling themselves legitimate sons of God and refusing to believe in the Holy Spirit’s direct intervention in Jesus’s birth (see the battles in John 8:19-59).

But Jesus is not daunted if they doubt and attack the truth about his origin. He still goes right on and uses the information about his holy birth didactically to teach Nicodemus (John 3:16), pointing out what it takes spiritually to be God’s child. To the disciples, he explains God gives good gifts to God’s children (Matt. 7:9-12; Luke 11:13), so one must be child-like, and innocent of sin to please God (Matt. 19:14; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-18).

Jesus also uses familial metaphors to describe his relationship with humanity. We saw how he employs the Old Testament image of Humanity’s Son in his New Testament teaching (Matt. 9:6; 20:18,28; Mark 2:10; 10:33-34; Luke 5:24, 18:31; John 9:35-37; 12:23). He also paradoxically refers to humans as his children, calling the paralytic man who is lowered down to him “child” (*teknon*, Matt. 9:2; Mark 2:5). He notes he does not want his followers to be abandoned orphans (John 14:18), though Judas is a son of destruction (John 17:12) and the Pharisees’ father he calls “the devil” (John 8:44). After the resurrection, Jesus calls his disciples “children” (*paidion*, John 21:5), a fact that is literally true since he created them and was returning to his glory as their God. Of course, they were literally young men (as was Jesus when on earth).

Finance

Very powerfully, Jesus uses these metaphors from occupations we have seen so far, but he is not limited to the working population in his data. He was a keen observer who noticed everything around him and all of it became material for his marvelous sayings and memorable stories.

To explain the Sovereign God to his hearers, he pictured a king forgiving a debt (Matt. 18:21-35). Robert Thomas and Stanley Gundry point out that Jesus spoke in the Temple treasury, “that part of the court of women in which thirteen trumpet-shaped collection boxes were located (cf. Mark 12:41, 43 and Luke 21:1). This court was a gathering place for both sexes, and teaching was permitted there.” They add, “Interestingly, it was quite near the meeting hall of the Sanhedrin, the

would be a more accurate rendering of what he is communicating: that he is a full human being, even though completely divine, and, as Ezekiel before him, the representative emissary of God (Ezek. 2:3-8),

official council of Judaism that was determined to dispose of Jesus.”²⁶ We have already noted he used the metaphor of a person’s nature as one’s treasury (Matt. 12:35; 13:52; Luke 6:45).

Therefore, he uses financial stories like “The Tale of the Talents” (Luke 19:11-27) to teach people to use their God-given gifts to work for God’s kingdom. And, while teaching his disciples, he also edifies the Pharisees, who, Luke 16:14 tells us, were “loving possessions,” with the clever account of the wasteful manager who makes friends with his master’s creditors by “cooking the books,” as a backhanded lesson to make friends with God by currying God’s favor with acts of generosity (Luke 16:1-15). He hammers that point home with a tale of what happens to a rich man who does not use money kindly and wisely to impress God by caring for the poor sufferer at his gate and ends up suffering himself in hell (Luke 16:19-31). Pleasing God is banking in heaven (Matt. 6: 19-21; Luke 12:32-34). That treasure is unassailable and worth everything one has, like selling all to obtain a treasure found in a field (Matt. 13:44). As a result, true servants make wise spiritual investments in advancing God’s reign, as they wait patiently for it (Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27), no matter how arduous that investing might become (Luke 6:20-23), and some day that generosity will be returned by God just the way an employer pours a full recompense into the lap of an employee being paid and honored for hard work and good service (Luke 6:38). Knowledge itself is an accessible treasure chest, for it has a key (Luke 11:52).

Governing

As a king himself (John 18:36-37), Jesus can speak with familiarity of kings and rulers, despite being reared in humble circumstances. He begins preaching with a governmental metaphor: the kingdom (or reign or rule) of God in Mark 1:15 (or kingdom of Heaven in passages like Matt. 4:17). This metaphor extends throughout his preaching (e.g., Matt. 12:28; 16:28; Mark 9:1; Luke 8:1; 9:27; 10:9-11; John 3:3, 5). I call this a metaphor because God is not merely a king – God is God. Kings do not create their subjects or rule from always to always, or make universal decrees that affect not only all inhabitants of this world, but all worlds.

Jesus fills his teaching on the kingdom with rich picture language. His kingdom has keys (Matt. 16:19), a child illustrates what its citizenship is all about (Matt. 18:1-5; Mark 9:33-37; Luke 9:46-48).

Jesus sees a correspondence between the earthly reign he is setting up spiritually and the heavenly one over which the Godhead presides. What is done in God’s earthly kingdom is done in the heavenly one (Matt. 16:19). Eventually, citizens of this realm will feast with Jesus there (Matt. 26:29; Mark 14:25).

Jesus’s kingdom is at war with Satan’s (Matt. 12:22-29; Mark 3:22-27). Therefore, when choosing to follow him, one must assess, as an earthly king does before waging war, if one has the strength (Luke 14:31-33). Satan’s kingdom is entrenched; it has set up battlements behind which are imprisoned the people of this world. Jesus’s kingdom is the invading force that smashes into those gates and breaks them down. They cannot resist it (Matt. 16:18).

How important is this message to Jesus? He invests the forty-day final briefing post-resurrection period in teaching about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). So, it is central to his mission.

Similarly, Jesus is clearly Earth’s Lord and Master, even when he is washing his disciples’ feet to teach them to serve one another (John 13:3-17). Therefore, he is comfortable in using many illustrations and employing many demonstrations to depict how he expects his followers to serve him, drawn from the examples of servants and masters they see around them.

For example, he is like a master and his followers are like servants who await him in the night (Luke 12:35-48). As householder, he locks people out who have not entered in the proper manner or time (Luke 13:24-30), like the wedding guest who shows up in inappropriate clothing (Matt.

²⁶ Thomas and Gundry, *Harmony*, 133, note d.

22:11-13), or foolish maidens insufficiently prepared to persevere until the bridegroom arrives (Matt. 25:1-13), or the disrespectful business tycoons who spurn the summons and kill the messengers and will be replaced by beggars (Matt. 22:2-10; cf. Luke 14:16-24).

Jesus expects his servers to attend him (Luke 17:7-10) and serve no other master (especially not money) (Matt. 6:24). They need to be watchful as does the master who must be away and does not know when a thief will strike (Matt. 24:42-44). This analogy is used by Jesus for the sudden coming of the end of the age. The Master will arrive and the servants will be surprised if they are not watchful (Matt. 24:45-51; Mark 13:34-37). So, despite being persecuted, as was their master, good servants need to be steadfast in love (John 15:9-14). For those who persevere in faithful service, Jesus the Master can also elevate faithful servants to the status of friends (John 15:15-17).

An Arsenal of Images

So, Jesus employs images from carpentry, fishing, farming, shepherding, cooking, finance, government, and social relations. But, even these do not exhaust the range of Jesus's knowledge. For, in addition, he draws from many wells of human activity for his illustrations.

He taps into current events, like the recent Galileans killed by Pilate or workers crushed by a toppling tower (Luke 13:1-5). He summons up urban images, representing heaven as entering a narrow city gate (Matt. 7:13-14; Luke 13:24). Hunting images depict the end times which spring on humanity like a trap snapping shut (Luke 21:34). He employs craft metaphors to explain the Pharisees are like pottery, clean on the outside, filthy within (Matt. 23:25-26; Luke 11:39-41).

He employs legal references, counseling his hearers to settle with an opponent before a trial (Matt. 5:25-26; Luke 12:57-59), warning that God's court is stricter than any human court (Matt. 5:20-22). But it is also much more merciful than the court of "The Unjust Judge" (Luke 18:1-8). So, if their corrupt magistrates may be moved by perseverance, the faithful can expect so much more the Perfect Judge, God, will be moved by persistent prayer.

We have seen Jesus use meteorological images for the end times. He uses one to describe Satan falling like lightening from heaven, when the seventy-two he sent out to preach return (Luke 10:18).

A favorite image for Jesus is light. He is the light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5; 12:35-36, 46), encapsulating his whole mission for Nicodemus by this imagery, explaining God's light – Jesus himself – has come into the world and is revealing the true nature of human actions (John 3:19-21). So, Jesus's teaching is a lamp that must not be hidden (Mark 4:21-23; Luke 8:16-17). It provides the understanding that is like the light that illuminates one's body (Matt. 6:22-23). And his second coming will be sudden as the lightening that illuminates the sky (Matt. 24:27; Luke 17:24). The next several chapters will explore the use of this light imagery more thoroughly.

As the divine physician, Jesus draws metaphors from the curing or medical arts, practicing the art of healing (Mark 6:55-56). For him, even the dead are only asleep (Matt. 9:24; Mark 5:39; Luke 8:52, John 11:11), for he is a doctor who can actually give life. Some of his therapeutic actions seem very strange to contemporary medical practice, as putting fingers in deaf ears, and spittle on blind eyes or dumb tongues (Mark 7: 33-35; 8:22-26; John 9:1-11). But, as the blind are given sight, the hearing-impaired hearing, the disabled mobility, Jesus is demonstrating through action what his life-giving words are revealing: God's kingdom has come among us (e.g., Matt. 15:31; Mark 7:37). He also uses blindness as a metaphor to contrast himself with the Pharisees' recalcitrance (Matt. 23:17-24; cf. John 9:39-41). He is the exact opposite of the false teachers who fall blindly with their spiritually sight-impaired students into the pit of ignorant catastrophic error (Luke 6:39). When the Pharisees complain that Jesus eats with sinners, he employs imagery to portray himself as a doctor treating patients (Matt. 9:12; Mark 2:17). And a medical metaphor of a woman suffering birth pangs describes for him the natural cataclysms of the end times (Matt. 24:8; Mark 13:8).

JESUS ALSO USES ARTFUL TECHNIQUES IN DISCUSSIONS

What makes Jesus's skill as a storyteller so interesting is that he does not simply employ the technique for public discourse, but uses imagery in private instruction as well. In addition to his puzzling reference to being lifted up for healing as Moses's wilderness snake so that everyone may have "life eternal" (John 3:14-15), he baffles Nicodemus with two metaphors, one personal (a birth motif to describe enrolling in the coming kingdom of God) and the other natural (the wind for the Spirit of God at work) (vv. 3-8). Nicodemus misunderstands the first (v. 4), as well as the second (v. 9), as will everyone else, including his disciples. All were assuming Jesus as Messiah, rather than insisting on their rebirth into a heavenly kingdom not of this world (John 18:36), had been born to replace Herod and overthrow Rome (Acts 1:6).

Similarly, Jesus mystifies the Samaritan woman, building a spiritual lesson out of asking her for a drink by offering her eternal water. As the baffled Nicodemus objected, I'm too grown to fit back in the birth canal (John 3:4), she too is confused, unable to see how anybody without a bucket could put living water inside her (John 4:11). Then, while the Samaritan woman is rushing back to tell her friends about the man who offered her "living water," Jesus extends the comestible metaphors to his disciples, telling them he does not need further nourishment than the "food" (John 4:31-32) they know nothing about. This prompts them to ask each other if anyone had brought him something to eat (v. 33). What a week! In two chapters he has confused over a dozen people who have conversed with him.

When a prostitute anoints his feet with perfume and tears, Jesus explains her actions to the affronted Pharisees with a tale about a moneylender's two defaulting clients, midwifing out of his host the realization that those who are forgiven much are filled with great gratitude (Luke 7:36-50). And, even at his ascension, at the last utterance Luke records, Jesus is employing a tailoring image, promising his followers will be clothed (*enduō*) with power (Luke 24:49).

So, all these images enrich Jesus's teachings. But he does not stop with words. He takes his presentation a step further. For Jesus, in public or in private, his message of repentance and forgiveness is illustrated in work as well as word. He acts his words out dramatically: Jesus is an actor and his stage is real life.

Drama

Jesus often illustrated his powerful speeches in action, even recommending symbolic gestures to his followers, as shaking the dust off their feet as a testimony against their rejectors (Matt. 10:14; Mark 6:11; Luke 9:5; 10:11). From the very first miracles at the wedding of Cana (John 2:1-11), where wine presages communion (1 Cor. 11:25-26), and the feedings of thousands illustrated divine compassion (Mark 8:1-9), Jesus makes his miracles literal events that are symbolic actions as well. Cleansing the temple was also one such symbolic action. "Destroy this temple," he cries, "and in three days I will raise it" (John 2:19).

His greatest drama comes in his passion, when he illustrates in the most graphic way the love of God for humanity: the sacrifice of the sinless paschal lamb for fallen humanity (see John the Baptist's identifying of Jesus as such in John 1:29, 36). He has told people repeatedly they must carry a cross to follow him (e.g., Luke 14:27). What was metaphorical is now actual (John 19:17).

When he dies and resurrects, the drama envelopes the onlookers as the temple veil tears in two, the earth quakes, the sun is darkened, the dead saints are raised²⁷ and the wise realize that his sym-

²⁷ One eyewitness, the articulate apologist Quadratus, in his defense of the faith to Trajan's successor, Emperor Hadrian (AD 117-138) affirms, "Our Savior's deeds were always there to see, for they were true: those who were cured or those who rose from the dead were seen not only when they were cured or raised but were constantly there to see, not only while the Savior was living among us, but also for some time after his departure. Some of them, in fact, survived right up to our own time," recorded by Eusebius in his *Church History* 4.3. No one who wanted to stay alive lied to a Roman emperor, so such a bold and clear statement was undoubtedly true.

bolism has been actualized in the natural world (Matt. 27:51-54). What would have remained symbolic for a mere human, for Jesus becomes actual. Humans speak of healing, Jesus cures. Humans speak of living again, he raises the dead. Humans speak of expiation, he dies for humanity. And he leaves behind him one great installation to continue his work: the Church.

SUMMARY

Was Jesus an artist? Yes, clearly, as the gospels reveal:

- 1) Jesus is a crafter of worlds and words.
- 2) He is introduced with music.
- 3) He alludes to music, dance. He may have sculpted in wood and may have even drawn. And he could cook.
- 4) He was clearly a speaker of consummate skill and a storyteller of unforgettable tales.
- 5) He was a performing artist who amazed the crowds with his symbolic actions, a dramatist who acted dramas out in real life.
- 6) Did Jesus use his words and works to enlighten his audience about himself, his heavenly Father, and even the Holy Spirit? Yes.

Thus, given its use by Jesus, we can conclude that the use of metaphorical language to illustrate God's nature and the way God is at work in the world and in our lives is initiated, is legitimate, and is approved by God.

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The God Who Is Jealous and True Worship in the Asian Immigrant Church¹

LANCE PAN

In *Counterfeit Gods*, Tim Keller writes that, while most people think of “idols” as literal images and statues, internal idol worship within the heart is universal. When we take the incomplete joy of this world and build our entire lives on it, that is the definition of idolatry.² When good things, be they a degree from a prodigious university or a coveted job at a large tech firm, are turned into ultimate things and become the center of our lives, Christians are provoking the anger of Jesus the jealous bridegroom who demands the true worship from His Church.

As a member of the Asian American Christian Community, I sometimes wonder that, in conforming to our cultural heritage of valuing educational excellence, have we overlooked the spiritual power of false gods leading believers to worship cultural practices to which they are more accustomed than the true object of their worship?

THESIS AND INTRODUCTION

This article will evaluate idolatry as abhorrent to a jealous God through an Old Testament and New Testament word study, the failure in human nature to abandon idolatry, and God’s mercy and steadfast love in bringing His people to true worship. The principles gleaned from this study will be used to address false idols from cultural influences in the Millennial Asian American church and offer practical ways to move away from these idols and truly worship God.

OLD TESTAMENT STUDY OF THE JEALOUS GOD

In the Decalogue (Exod 20:4-6), Moses specifies idolatry as abhorrent to God. God’s children are forbidden to bow down to idols and serve false gods. The punishment for idolatry is harsh: “I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me ...” (Exod 20:5).³ God forbids them from idolatry because He created them to worship Him and to trust in His provision. Meanwhile, God shows His “steadfast love to thousands of those who love him and keep his commandments” (Exod 20:6).

While he was away for forty days, Moses then documents the Israelites worshiping false gods despite this direct divine decree to worship only Adonai⁴ (Exod 32:1-6). The Israelites followed the sinful cultural customs from their Egyptian slave masters in selecting the golden calf as the false deity to represent their desires for earthly prosperity, pleasure, and joy. God reiterated His demand that they worship no other gods, for His name, his very public identity, “is jealous, a jealous God” (Exod 34:14). The exclusive worship of the one true God is a covenantal relationship that they shall not “enter with the inhabitants of the land (i.e., the world)” (Exod 34:12-16).

Moses repeats this warning to the Israelites in Deuteronomy that God’s jealousy relates to the covenant and is analogous to “a consuming fire” (Deut 4:23-24). In Psalm 78, the psalmist noted that people provoked God to anger “with their high places and moved him to jealousy with their idols.” He thus “rejected Israel and forsook his dwelling” among humanity (Ps 78:56-61).

1 This article is an adaptation of a term paper class assignment dealing with an attribute of the nature of God for Theology Survey I of fall 2020 at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary Boston campus taught by Rev. Dr. William David Spencer.

2 Timothy Keller, *Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex and Power, and the Only Hope That Matters* (New York: Penguin, 2016), xi, xvi.

3 All Bible quotations are from the ESV 2007.

4 David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1999). “*Baruch attach, Adonai Eloheynu, Melekh-ha’olam, haMotzi leckem, min ha’ aretz,*” translates: Praise be you, Adonai, our God, King of the Universe who brings bread from the earth,” 52.

On his last days, Joshua told the Israelites that they were “not able to serve the Lord for He is a holy God, a jealous God” (Josh 24:19). He said this not to discourage them from worshiping God but because he knew the deep-rooted power of sin over a people with a culture of worshiping “false gods beyond the River and in Egypt” (Josh 24:14). The people’s inability to worship God truly does not preclude His grace and mercy from assisting them in doing so. God promised to restore the house of worship for the people of Israel, bless them, and have pity on them, as He is jealous for “His land” (Joel 2:18-22) and His “holy name” (Ezek 39:25-29). This exceeding jealousy will lead Him to return and dwell in their midst: “Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city” (Zech 1:14-17; 8:1-3).

From these passages we can draw the following Old Testament principles: God is jealous of the worship of His children and will not tolerate idolatry as they are in a covenantal relationship with Him (Exod 20:4-6; 34:12-16, Deut 4:23-24; Ps 78:56-61).⁵ Human beings’ inability to worship Him truly due to their sinful nature and cultural influences does not preclude Him from showing His steadfast love and enabling them to have a covenantal relationship with Him (Josh 24:14-28; Joel 2:18-22; Ezek 39:25-29; Zech 1:14-17; 8:1-3).

NEW TESTAMENT WORD STUDY

Matthew 21 offers a glimpse of true worship to Jesus the Messiah when “most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road” (Matt 21:8) and shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” (Matt 21:9) at his triumphant arrival at Jerusalem. Shortly after, Jesus drove out the merchants and money changers, defiling the place of worship on a Passover. His disciples remembered the Old Testament passage: “Zeal for your house will consume me” (John 2:13-17). Jesus showed His jealous rage (zeal), affirming God’s demand for exclusive, true covenantal worship and detested counterfeit forms of worship polluted by commercialism and cultural norms of His day.

Paul warned Christians against idolatry with the pagans (1 Cor 10:14). He asked the rhetorical questions of the sin of idolatry: “Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?” (1 Cor 10:22). James’s caution that God “yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us” (James 4:4-5) is another example of an apostle affirming the Old Testament teaching on God’s jealous love for His people.

John the Baptist presents Jesus as the bridegroom for the bride, the Church: “The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete” (John 3:29). In 2 Corinthians, Paul explains: “I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ” (2 Cor 11:2).

The bride, the Church, was to be presented as a pure virgin to Him “in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:27). The power to overcome sin (idolatry) is found in her relationship with the bridegroom, who shed His blood as a cleansing atonement. He has the right to be jealous as His sacrifice was great (Eph 5:25-26). The bride, deeply moved by the loving act of substitutionary atonement and love for her, can detach her heart from sin (idolatry). When Jesus the jealous bridegroom returns for His bride, all the saints will “rejoice and exult and give Him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready...” (Rev 19:7).

From these passages we may draw these New Testament principles. Jesus and the apostles affirmed God’s jealous love for His people and demanded God be the exclusive object of their

⁵ The Hebrew word *qanna* (קָנָא Strong’s 7067) is an adjective translated as “jealous” which occurs six times in the Old Testament referencing the jealous and protective nature of God. It is derived from *qana* (קָנָא, Strong’s 7065) which means to be jealous, zealous or envious. “Zealous” indicates one who is protective over someone or something. James Strong, *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*, <http://biblehub.com/hebrew/7067.htm>.

worship (John 2:13-17; 1 Cor 10:14-22; James 4:4-10). Jesus is the personified jealous⁶ bridegroom who made the ultimate sacrifice for his Church, a bride whose worship is precious to Him (John 3:29; 2 Cor 11:2-3; Eph 5:25-27). His zealous love calls her to repent of her idolatry and be zealous for Him (Matt 21:8-9; Rev 19:7).

PRINCIPLES DERIVED FROM OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES OF THE JEALOUS GOD

In summary, God commands His children to worship Him in a covenantal relationship and punishes idolaters to the third and fourth generations (Exod 20:4-6; 34:12-16; Deut 4:23-24; Ps 78:56-61; John 2:13-17; 1 Cor 10:14-22; James 4:4-10). Jesus is the prophesied Messiah and jealous bridegroom who sacrificed His life to bring salvation to His church, a bride whose worship is precious to Him (John 3:27-30; 2 Cor 11:2-3; Eph 5:25-27). God's zealous and steadfast love can overcome believers' attachment to false idols and draw them into a soul-satisfying, eternally joyful union with Him (Josh 24:14-28; Joel 2:18-22; Ezek 39:25-29; Zech 1:14-17; 8:1-3; Matt 21:9; Rev 19:7).

In *The Global God*, Aída Besançon Spencer writes that God uses human attributes about Himself to remind people of the actions they should take – God is not a “bigamist.”⁷ Millard Erickson explains in *Christian Theology* that “the goodness of God is most effectively demonstrated in his moral attributes of purity, integrity, and the entire complex of characteristics that are identified as his love.”⁸ The three dimensions of God's moral purity - holiness, righteousness, and justice - determine that God desires and demands an exclusive covenantal relationship with His people in order for Him to dwell among them. God and idols cannot coexist, and those who worship both cannot survive His judgment.

THE ISSUE: THE NEED FOR TRUE WORSHIP IN THE ASIAN AMERICAN IMMIGRANT CHURCH

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines worship as “to honor or show reverence for, as a divine being or supernatural power,” and “to regard with great or extravagant respect, honor, or devotion.”⁹ Thus, worship is not about the style of praise music, hand gestures, voiced or silent prayers, tithes, etc., but about the object of one's attention, adoration, and obedience. Delesslyn A. Kennebrew writes that worship is a non-negotiable priority for Christians as one's lifestyle should express the beauty of holiness through an extravagant or exaggerated love for God.¹⁰

Asian Americans represent a complex group of religious diversity in the United States according to a comprehensive, nationwide survey by the Pew Research Center on Asian Americans in 2012:

Christians are the largest religious group among adult Asians in the US (42%), compared to 75% in the general population. In terms of faith, Asian-American evangelical Protestants rank among the most religious groups, higher than white evangelicals in weekly church attendance (76% vs. 64%). Asian-American Evangelical Protestants are strongly inclined to believe their religion is the one, true faith leading to

6 Several Greek words with the same root are used in the New Testament to indicate “jealous, zealous, or envious”: *zeō* (2204, noun), *zēlos* (2205, noun), *zēloō* (2206, verb), and *parazēloō* (3863, verb). *Zeō* and *zēlos* refer to a burning emotion (inner feeling boiling over, as with Spirit-fueled zeal to serve the Lord). The root (*zē-*) is used both negatively (“jealousy”) and positively (“zeal”) depending on the context. *Parazēloō* combines *para* (3844 “close behind”) and *zēloō* meaning “provoking someone to jealousy.” James uses another word *phthonos* (5355, noun) meaning “jealous envy with a negative feeling of displeasure at another's good” Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*.

7 Aída Besançon Spencer, “The God of the Bible,” in *The Global God: Multicultural Evangelical Views of God*, eds. Aída Besançon Spencer and William David Spencer (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 30.

8 Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2013), 254.

9 *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* s.v. “worship,” accessed October 17, 2013, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/worship>.

10 Delesslyn A. Kennebrew, “What is true worship?” *Christianity Today: Christian Bible Studies*, 2012, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/bible-answers/spirituallife/what-is-true-worship.html>.

eternal life, more so than white evangelical Protestants (72% vs. 49%).¹¹

Indeed, Asian churches in America as a whole represent a strong beacon for biblical orthodoxy, the authority of Scripture, evangelism, and traditional family values in a postmodern society influenced by secularism and atheism.

Asian Americans are among the best educated, highly compensated, and fastest growing ethnic groups in the United States: 53% of Asians received bachelor's degrees, compared to 36% of Whites, 24% Blacks and 17% Hispanics.¹² The impressive educational achievement is said to be the result of an immigration policy that favors the applications of highly educated immigrants from Asian countries.¹³ This is a majority-immigrant group, as 74% of the adults were born abroad. They are more satisfied than the general population with their lives and finances, and they place more value on marriage, parenthood, hard work and career success.¹⁴ As of 2019, the median annual household income for Asian Americans is about \$98,000 compared to \$76,000 for Whites, \$56,000 for Hispanics, and \$45,000 for Blacks.¹⁵

Although these statistics indicate Asian American Christians are richly blessed by God and remain committed to the evangelical faith, a cultural undercurrent exists that competes for churchgoers' priorities and desires as the object of worship. This cultural force is often presented as a virtue in pursuit of excellence through better education and career advancement, but its origin can be traced to imperial examinations in ancient China with strong Confucianist characteristics. This influence remains strong in modern-day China, South Korea, Vietnam, and other East Asian nations, and among immigrant populations in the United States.

Emperors in China used a standardized exam system to select officials by merit rather than from hereditary aristocracy. Established during the Tang Dynasty (AD 617-907) until 1905, the system developed into a rigid three-tiered (local, provincial, and royal court) exam structure that required students to devote most of their time to a narrow set of test subjects from a young age.¹⁶ The bureaucrat-elite hierarchy formed the base of a centralized government and a quasi-caste system. It also became the major path to wealth, power, and family honor for many commoners.

This tradition remains strong in the cultural psyche with much of the anxiety, frenzy, and terminology transported to college admissions. On college exam day throughout East Asia, parents visit temples, wear good-luck garments, and consult *Feng Shui* to boost their children's chances. Asian immigrant parents in the United States view their child's acceptance to a prestigious university as a form of assurance of job security, familial pride, and acceptance into the majority culture.

Asian churches in the United States face syncretistic challenges due to the percentage of first-generation believers with a tendency to mix the Christian belief system with elements from Buddhism, Confucianism, animism, and pseudoscience. Pastors and other church leaders may be less alert to the dangers of excessive pursuits of educational enrichments and other endeavors for

11 "Asian Americans: A Mosaic of Faiths," *Pew Research Center: Religion & Public Life*, July 19, 2012, accessed October 17, 2020, <https://www.pewforum.org/2012/07/19/asian-americans-a-mosaic-of-faiths-overview/>.

12 "Educational Attainment, by Race and Ethnicity," *American Council on Education*, accessed October 17, 2020, <https://www.equityinhighered.org/indicators/u-s-population-trends-and-educational-attainment/educational-attainment-by-race-and-ethnicity/>.

13 Dora Mekouar, "Why Asian Americans Are the Most Educated Group in America," *VOA News*, April 11, 2016, accessed October 17, 2020, <https://blogs.voanews.com/all-about-america/2016/04/11/why-asian-americans-are-the-most-educated-group-in-america/>.

14 "The Rise of Asian Americans," *Pew Research Center: Social & Demographic Trends*, updated April 4, 2013, accessed October 17, 2020, <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2012/06/19/the-rise-of-asian-americans/>

15 Erin Duffin, "Median Household Income in the United States in 2019, by Race or Ethnic Group," *Statista*, September 23, 2020, accessed October 17, 2020, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/233324/median-household-income-in-the-united-states-by-race-or-ethnic-group/>.

16 "Imperial examination," *Wikimedia Foundation*, last edited on October 16, 2020, accessed October 17, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_examination.

their children. These pursuits compete for the worshipers' time, attention, and financial resources.

In *Counterfeit Gods*, Tim Keller points out that modern societies are not fundamentally different from ancient civilizations that worshiped their favorite deities and built shrines around their images for worship. Secular cultures are dominated by these nonmaterial idols, complete with their priests, totems, and rituals. The shrines are office towers, beauty salons, gyms, and stadiums. Worshipers make sacrifices to receive “the blessings of the good life and ward off disaster.” The gods of money, power, beauty, and achievement grow to mythical proportions in individual lives and societies. When societies place no higher value than wealth and prestige, child “sacrifices” are performed every day and families and communities are ignored.¹⁷

Emphasis on education is a virtue in almost all cultures. However, when scholastic activities such as the Math Olympiad, Science Bowl, and debate competitions crowd out worship services, Bible studies, mission and service projects, the church should be cognizant of the danger of “education idolatry.” Compared to straightforward pagan religious practices, this form of idolatry sometimes is seen as a less important issue among Asian churches, especially when pastors and church leaders along with the general congregation face similar challenges. At some of these churches, raising the issue to the level of idolatry may be too controversial or offensive.

APPLICATION OF SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES TO THE ISSUE OF CULTURAL IDOLATRY

Obsession with educational status is not an issue unique to Asian cultures. The 2019 college admissions scandal involved several top universities and dozens of celebrities and wealthy parents of different ethnicities.¹⁸ Symptomatic of the larger culture is seeking assurance in life through any means possible, from physical idols to invisible and spiritual ones, such as wealth, social status, and knowledge. As the Israelites, driven by fear and anxiety after their leader Moses was away for forty days, turned to the golden calf despite God's explicit warning, people in modern times are driven by fear and anxiety to seek opportunities to help them secure a good spot in life (Exod 32:1-6; 34:15; James 4:4).

For some Asian Christians as minorities in a Western society, this may mean reaching back to the false gods in their cultural heritage “beyond the River” (Josh 24:14) to secure a spot for their children. Status in education as a form of idolatry deserves more attention in Asian churches because the jealous God commends his children to worship Him solely in all circumstances (Exod 34:12-16). All forms of idolatry, including false religions *and* “good” things that become essential to one's happiness, provoke God to anger and are strictly prohibited (Exod 34:15; Deut 4:23-24; Ps 78:58). Jesus the jealous bridegroom requires the virgin bride, the church, to be holy unto Him (John 2:16-17; 1 Cor 10:21; 2 Cor 11:2). Moreover, God does not tolerate His children lusting after promises from false gods and presenting them as “burnt offerings” and “peace offerings” to Him, whether they be status in education, a prominent career, prosperity, even family unity or eldership in the local church (Exod 32:1-6; Ps 78:59-61).¹⁹

In the Ten Commandments, God warned that the punishment for idolatry is severe and He will punish this sin by “visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the child to the third and fourth generation” (Exod 20:5). This does not mean God will literally strike down children of idolaters, but that later generations will suffer the consequences of the sins committed by their elders. When immigrant parents who received Asian-style education rest their children's financial security on better schools rather than faith in Christ alone, they may sow the seed of idolatry for later generations and influence their sense of self-worth and their object of worship (Ps 78:56-57). Scripture warns us that, when the Israelites provoked God to anger with their high places, He

¹⁷ Keller, *Counterfeit Gods*, xiii, xiv.

¹⁸ “2019 College Admissions Bribery Scandal,” *Wikimedia Foundation*, last edited on September 16, 2020, accessed October 17, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2019_college_admissions_bribery_scandal.

¹⁹ Tae-Ju Moon, “The Korean American Dream and the Blessings of Hananim (God),” in *The Global God*, 180.

rejected them and forsook His dwelling among them (Ps 78:60). By the grace of God, Jesus the redeeming lamb, called sinners back to Him to repent of their sins (Ezek 39:25; James 4:5-7). However, when we withhold parts of our heart, mind, and soul for other idols, we are preventing ourselves and our children from receiving God's full and wonderful blessing (1 Cor 10:21).

The marvelous truth from Scripture is that the jealousy of God comes as a packaged deal with His steadfast love to those who love Him and keep His commandments (Exod 20:6). As Joshua told the elders of Israel, we as sinners may never return the same agape love for Him as He loves us. As Jesus has paid the ultimate price for the sin of idolatry, those who believe in Him are reconciled with God and need not fear the wrath of the "consuming fire" (Exod 34:14; Eph 5:25). Our inability to worship God truly on our own does not stop Him from showing His grace and mercy on us. He will enable us to lay down our false idols, our hope and fear for the temporal realm, and come before the one true God as the object of our adoration (Ezek 39:25; Zech 8:2-3). When we fully appreciate the heavy price Jesus paid for our transgressions and iniquities, His zealous love and radiant light will draw us near Him (Eph 5:27; Rev 19:7).

Worth pointing out is that reorienting worship towards God does not mean lowering educational standards or abandoning aspirations for intellectual and professional excellence. Quite the contrary, when we seek to know God and dedicate our lives to know, love, worship, and obey Him, the power of resurrection transforms education as a means to honor Him as the fountainhead of all knowledge, wisdom, and skills. Free of fear, anxiety, vanity, or self-aggrandizement, educational excellence can be a marvelous fragrant offering at the altar.

While status in education may be a delicate idolatry issue, we are relieved and blessed to know that God is in control (Exod 20:6; Ezek 39:25; Zech 8:3). Jesus desires our undivided worship, and He calls us to Him (John 3:29; 1 Cor 10:15-16). Despite egregious idolatry committed by Israel and Judah, God promised to restore the house of worship for His people, bless them, and have pity on them for the sake of His holy name (Joel 2:18; Ezek 39:25). In today's materialistic culture, false idols are no defense against God's jealous love for His worshipers (Joel 2:19b; Zech 1:16). When we let the Word of God shine through our faulty confidence in worldly knowledge and human reasoning and let the Holy Spirit drive out our fears and anxiety, we can turn our eyes fully on Jesus as the only object of our hearts' desires and restore Him as the center of worship (John 3:29; James 4:7-8).

CONCLUSION

From this word study in the Old and New Testaments, we drew out principles about a jealous God who forbids idolatry to inform the Asian American church of the heart of true worship free from the idolatrous influences from its cultural background. While God is a consuming fire for sinners after false cultural idols, His steadfast love and the atonement by Jesus Christ have the power to draw believers away from these false idols. These scripture-based principles help bring the church to a better knowledge of God, the essence of true worship, helping the Asian American church to enter an even deeper cherished relationship with Jesus the Lord and Savior.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO INFORM THE ASIAN AMERICAN CHURCH OF TRUE WORSHIP

1. Pastors and lay leaders should teach the scriptural principles of true worship stated in this article so that the church can study and pray these Scriptures, fully understanding and growing in a loving and intimate relationship with Jesus as His beloved bride (Exod 34:14; Ezek 39:25-29; Matt 21:8-9).
2. Sunday school lessons should reference these Scriptures to demonstrate that God created humankind to worship Him alone (Exod 20:5). Jesus should be the object of true human worship and a protective bridegroom with the church His bride (James 4:8; Eph 5:25-27).
3. The church should hold cross-congregational workshops and retreats between the

immigrant adults, native-born young adults, and youth groups to discern cultural idols in our spiritual lives in an honest and constructive cultural criticism guided by Scriptures (Exod 32:1-6; 34:13-16; Josh 24:14; 23).

4. Pastors and lay leaders can lead the congregation in Scripture praying, reflection on changes to their time and activities, and implementation of the Sabbath around the Scriptures represented in this study. This will enable the church to understand fully its rightful relationship with Jesus so that true worship of Him will flow from each church member's heart (Exod 20:4-6; Josh 24:21; Joel 2:19; Ezek 39:29; Zech 1:16-17; Matt 21:9).

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Overcoming Evil with Good: Applying the Missing Step to Kant's Ideal and Non-Ideal Theories of Addressing Moral Dilemmas¹

XUAN JOSHUA YANG

In *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Immanuel Kant puts forward a mandate, called a categorical imperative. Kant believes it is the duty of rational beings to act following the categorical imperative and it should be fulfilled unconditionally. This kind of extreme ideal imperative seems implausible and unacceptable in specific cases, and even results in very bad consequences. Christine Korsgaard analyzes it in-depth and modifies it by introducing a double-level theory in contrast to Kant's ideal single-level theory. I would like to propose that overcoming evil with good (Rom 12:21) is a higher concept than Kant's single-level theory.

One of Kant's most rigorous applications of his imperative is his attitude about lying: that in any circumstances, people should not tell a lie. Kant defined "lying" as intentional untruth:

In the doctrine of Right an intentional untruth is called a lie only if it violates another's right; but in ethics, where no authorization is derived from harmlessness, it is clear of itself that no intentional untruth in the expression of one's thoughts can refuse this harsh name.²

In "On a Supposed Right to Lie from Altruistic Motives," Kant mentions a case of a murderer at the door to encourage people not to tell a lie in any condition because the categorical imperative categorically commands it. Kant asserts that "it would be a crime to lie to a murderer who asked whether our friend who is pursued by him had taken refuge in our house."³ Kant believes lying is wrong essentially since it is against the duty of following the categorical imperative. This is an implausible assertion. I will introduce why Kant believes lies violate the categorical imperative and Korsgaard's comments on Kant's views.

Kant believes a good will has the most moral worth and "duty...contains that of a good will, though under certain subjective limitations and hindrances."⁴ It is the duty of rational beings to obey the categorical imperative that is driven by pure practical reason. Morality is not only a requirement of actions but also a requirement of volition. He believes morality depends on whether agents are willing to abide by the categorical imperative rather than getting the benefit they desire or avoiding the punishment they are afraid of.

An action from duty has its moral worth not in the aim that is supposed to be attained by it, but rather in the maxim in accordance with which it is resolved upon; thus that worth depends not on the actuality of the object of the action, but merely on the principle of the volition, in accordance with which the action is done, without regard to any object of the faculty of desire.⁵

For example, a storekeeper is moral when he offers a reasonable price because to do so

1 The original paper was developed under the curriculum of Dr. Ian DeWeese-Boyd's Spring 2016-2017 Ethics course (PHIL 315) at Gordon College. This paper was rewritten and expanded from the original one to be a term paper in the Spring 2020-2021 ethics course given by Dr. Choi Yoon. It refers to and adopts feedback and suggestions made by Dr. Ian DeWeese-Boyd and also received guidance and constructive comments from Mark C. Shan during the later phase of development after the courses took place.

2 Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals (Texts in German Philosophy)*, introduction, translation, and notes by Mary Gregor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), [429], 225.

3 Immanuel Kant, "On a Supposed Right to Lie from Altruistic Motives," in *Absolutism and Its Consequentialist Critics*, edited by Joram Graf Haber (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1994), 15.

4 Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, edited and translated by Allen W. Wood (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 4:397.

5 *Ibid.*, 4:399-400.

confirms the categorical imperative rather than to do so can bring him more profit. Therefore, according to Kant, morality requires agents' actions following the categorical imperative but also requires them to have a good will such that they act morally only because it is good rather than because of their preference.

The categorical imperative forms a principle of moral laws and it has three formulations. They are the formula of universal law, the formula of humanity, and the kingdom of ends, respectively. Through these three formulations, people could examine which moral principles should be followed unconditionally. In Christine Korsgaard's essay, "The Right to Lie: Kant on Dealing with Evil," she criticizes the first formulation and points out that, even if people follow the formula of universal law, some particular lie is still permissible. Moreover, she agrees the formula of humanity and the kingdom of ends give credible reasons why lying is wrong, and the rigorism of his categorical imperative points to an ideal human relationship under Kant's ethical philosophy.

THE FORMULA OF UNIVERSAL LAW

The formula of universal law claims that people should act in accordance with a principle that could become a universal law at the same time. In other words, people should take action only if they allow all others to act in the same manner. Kant believes this formula intrinsically contains a necessity:

For since besides the law, the imperative contains only the necessity of the maxim, that it should accord with this law, but the law contains no condition to which it is limited, there remains nothing left over with which the maxim of the action is to be in accord, and this accordance alone is what the imperative really represents necessarily.⁶

Since Kant's categorical imperative only concerns the morally necessary, without any attention to preference, its formula must contain necessity. What is clear is that people cannot find such maxims through the will, given that they always tangle with many different goals and preferences. Therefore, people should use their reason to discover a maxim which does not contain any conditional limit to meet the criteria of the categorical imperative. When a maxim can be allowed by all rational beings, it will repel any individual preferences, only its necessity will be left. Thus, only maxims which can be universalized will conform to the categorical imperative. They are the basis for formulating universal laws.

Kant suggests agents "act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law."⁷ Some actions will produce a negation of themselves such that these actions will destroy themselves once they are universalized. That means these actions fail to accord with the formula of universal law. This kind of self-contradiction makes them fail to be moral actions:

Some actions are so constituted that their maxim cannot even be thought without contradiction as a universal law of nature, much less could one will that it ought to become one...One easily sees that the first conflict with strict or narrow (unremitting) duty.⁸

Lying is one of them. Although people will allow themselves to tell a lie under some specific circumstances, they are not necessarily willing to allow all others to do so. The reason is that, if everyone would tell a lie, people are not going to be able to trust each other, with the result that there is no room for a promise. Then, the lie a person has told is not trusted by anyone and it will forfeit its supposed effect or cease to work. This is the situation that if lies are used universally, lies will eventually destroy themselves such that lies do not work anymore.

⁶ Ibid., 4:420-421.

⁷ Ibid., 4:421.

⁸ Ibid., 4:424.

Korsgaard reasonably and sufficiently states a particular lie is still permissible under the formula of universal law. I believe her strategy is to do a critique on the way of universalizing. Lying cannot be universalized, but a certain conditional lie can be. In the case of the murderer at the door, we may call it an urgent lie. That means that, although an agent would not allow others freely to tell a lie, the agent who encounters a murderer at the door would allow others to do so, if they are in the same situation. Also, this urgent lie would not destroy itself. In this special case, an important premise is that the murderer does not know that the agent knows that he is facing a murderer, and the murderer has already taken an unmanifested lie pretending that the murderer is in actuality a kind person rather than a murderer. Therefore, the murderer does not know the agent knows the agent is in a situation that he can tell an urgent lie to the murderer. This premise keeps this lie from destroying itself. Obviously, when a victim of a lie never knows he will be given a lie, this lie is always efficacious, even if this lie is universalized. Therefore, telling a lie, in this case, is permissible, even under the formula of universal law. Korsgaard gives a precise description that the murderer “placed himself in a morally unprotected position by his own deception. He has created a situation which universalization cannot reach.”⁹

THE FORMULA OF HUMANITY

The formula of humanity is the second formulation of the categorical imperative. In Kant’s view, a human will has the property of freedom. Free will signifies humans as rational beings that are different from all other things. Kant asserts “the will is a species of causality”¹⁰ and freedom refers to a kind of independence, which means that a person will not be restricted or regulated by other things. A free will is signified by that a rational being can have an end and spontaneously starts a causality to achieve this end by means. In contrast, means or tools never have an end, rather they are used by people for achieving their ends. Therefore, humanity is distinguished in this free will, having the capacity to have an end to determine what is going to happen. Kant believes people have a duty to respect each other’s humanity. To respect humanity is to respect the free will that makes humans be human. Respecting a person’s humanity is to let him or her keep his or her opportunity and capacity to decide what will happen, thus identifying themselves as more than mere means:

Every man has a legitimate claim to respect from his fellow men and is in turn bound to respect every other. Humanity itself is a dignity; for a man cannot be used merely as a means by any man (either by others or even by himself) but must always be used at the same time as an end. It is just in this that his dignity (personality) consists, by which he raises himself above all other beings in the world that are not men and yet can be used, and so over all things.¹¹

In short, humans should always be treated as an end rather than means, and people should always treat one another accordingly. Thus, the categorical imperative requires people to “act so that you use humanity, as much in your own person as in the person of every other, always at the same time as end and never merely as means.”¹²

Lying is not allowed under the formula of humanity, since a liar treats the victim of a lie as a means rather than an end. Lying will veil a liar’s real end that would happen to the victim. The victim has no power to assent to the occurrence of the real consequence and has no choice to be involved in this end. The liar, by lying, makes the victim believe he or she has an end and can make a contribution to it. But, in fact, what the victim does not know is that he or she unwittingly

9 Christine M. Korsgaard, “The Right to Lie: Kant on Dealing with Evil,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 1989, Vol. 15, No. 4 (Autumn, 1986), 330.

10 Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:446.

11 Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, [462], 255.

12 Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:429.

contributes to the liar's real end rather than the end that the victim imagined. Thus, the victim is only a means having no right to involve or refuse this end. In fact, it does not matter whether the victim will assent to this real end, and the matter is that his capacity of having an end is deprived. The liar shows no respect for the humanity of the victim. Since, the liar does not admit the victim's free will, he does not treat the victim as an equal human or a rational being. The liar puts the victim at a lower place, which is, equal with that of means. The liar has a kind of arrogance, as Kant notes, "arrogance...is a kind of ambition...in which we demand that others think little of themselves in comparison with us."¹³ Therefore, lying is immoral since this action shows no respect for others' humanity.

THE KINGDOM OF ENDS

The third formulation of the categorical imperative is called the kingdom of ends or autonomy. The kingdom of ends is an ideal situation of universalizing the formula of humanity. When the formula of humanity is ideally applied, every rational being treats everyone else as ends rather than means. According to Kant, in this ideal situation, all rational beings are legislators who can lay down universal laws to themselves. Here, everyone will have autonomy, that is, people will treat themselves as legislators, such that they promulgate moral laws for themselves according to their own pure practical reason. If all people are autonomous and share laws they lay down, then all people will form a systematic union called the kingdom of ends. People who lay down universal laws in this union are members of the kingdom of ends. Kant argued that:

The concept of every rational being that must consider itself as giving universal law through all the maxims of its will in order to judge itself and its actions from this point of view, leads to a very fruitful concept depending on it, namely that of a realm of ends.¹⁴

The kingdom of ends is an ideal world where all people have autonomy. Consequently, the third formulation of the categorical imperative is "Do no action in accordance with any other maxim, except one that could subsist with its being a universal law, and hence only so that the will could through its maxim at the same time consider itself as universally legislative"¹⁵ or "act in accordance with maxims of a universally legislative member for a merely possible realm of ends."¹⁶ Kant admits that, although this ideal situation cannot be actualized completely and cannot be always beneficial for the agent who follows it, people should still attempt to achieve it, only because it commands categorically.

The simple reason why lying fails to accomplish the third formulation is that lying is unallowable by the formula of humanity. Why is that? Because a liar does not respect the victim of lying as a possible member of the kingdom of ends, since the victim is not treated as an end by the liar. The autonomy of the victim is deprived. As a legislator, an agent has the right to determine laws according to his own reason so that he can get consequences to which he could assent. However, lying makes the victim lose this capacity. That is to say, the liar deprives the victim's authority as a legislator. The effect opposes forming the kingdom of ends. Therefore, lying is not allowed, because it harms the achieving of this ideal world.

Kant suggests morality means people obey the categorical imperative. Thus, people should act following the categorical imperative. Nevertheless, Kant still makes some compromises. He asserts "whoever may have told me a lie, I do him no wrong if I lie to him in return, but I violate the right of mankind"¹⁷ and "Hence there is no case in which a necessary lie should occur, save where the

¹³ Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, [465], 257.

¹⁴ Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:433.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 4:434.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4:439.

¹⁷ Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, edited by Peter Heath and J. B. Schneewind, translated by Peter Heath (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), [27:447], 203.

declaration is wrong from me.”¹⁸ This kind of lie he calls a weapon of defense. This compromise contradicts his solid moral compass. He proposes the categorical imperative as an unconditional moral principle. So lying is always immoral. Rational beings should follow it only because it categorically commands without caring about agents’ desires. Lie as a weapon of defense seems permissible to Kant but he does not believe it is moral to tell it even though others have already told a lie. He says,

Yet although the rational being might punctiliously follow these maxims himself, he cannot...count on everyone else’s being faithful to them, nor on the realm of nature and its purposive order’s harmonizing with him, as a suitable member for a realm of ends that is possible through him, i.e., on its favoring his expectation of happiness; thus the law...still remains in full force, because it commands categorically.¹⁹

The contradiction will be, if when people follow the categorical imperative strictly, they could not use lying as a weapon of defense. There is a way to solve this contradiction. Kant believes a lie as a weapon of defense is not wrong but still immoral given that it violates the formula of humanity. This is a dialectical interpretation that sometimes people are not wrong to do something immoral and it can be understood in Korsgaard’s double-level theory.

KORSGAARD’S DOUBLE LEVEL THEORY

Inspired by John Rawls’s “division of moral philosophy into ideal and non-ideal theory,”²⁰ Christine Korsgaard’s double-level theory analyzes Kant’s moral philosophy. In her view, the ideal theory is applied to a world where all people act perfectly and this world has already met the relevant conditions of an ideal society. On the contrary, the non-ideal theory is applied to an imperfect world where people do not always act perfectly. Such an imperfect society, where all fallen humans live, is caused by both outside objective natural conditions and the imperfect subjective morality of humans. The double-level theory is dialectical such that it cares about both ideal commands and needs of expediency. An ideal theory tells which acts intrinsically contain moral value, and “we are always to act as if we were living in a Kingdom of Ends, regardless of possible disastrous results.”²¹ A non-ideal theory permits us to take expediencies to avoid a bad consequence such that people should weigh consequences to decide what they will practically do. Hence, a double-level theory gives considerations to both sides, so that people should abide by the categorical imperative, but also people are allowed to violate them for preventing an unacceptable consequence. Therefore, Kantian views can be understood in the structure of the double-level theory. The categorical imperative is an ideal theory such that it categorically commands. Korsgaard writes:

The Formula of Humanity and its corollary, the vision of a Kingdom of Ends, provide an ideal to live up to in daily life as well as a long term political and moral goal for humanity. But it is not feasible always to live up to this ideal, and where the attempt to live up to it would make you a tool of evil, you should not do so...And even in the worst circumstances, there is always the Formula of Universal Law, telling us what we must in not in any case do.²²

But Kant’s compromise is a non-ideal theory such that it is not wrong (although still immoral) to use a lie as a weapon of defense.

In ethics, the double-level theory’s dialectical attitude should be focused on more. Based on definitions of ideal theories, people act justly and social conditions are perfect so that there is no

18 Ibid., [27:448], 204.

19 Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:438-439.

20 Korsgaard, “The Right to Lie,” 341.

21 Korsgaard, “The Right to Lie,” 344.

22 Ibid., 349.

moral dilemma. For instance, the case of a murderer at the door is impossible, since there are no murderers in an ideal society. For another example, there is no hard choice such as whether a child should tell a lie to a seriously ill parent for comfort, since people would not have any fears when dying in an ideal world. Conversely, the non-ideal world, as the one in which we live, is filled up by many moral dilemmas. As far as a root cause, a non-ideal world does not have linear consistency as would an ideal one. The meaning of consistency is that moral actions always bring good consequences in an ideal world. It is not true in a non-ideal world such that sometimes a good consequence can result only from immoral actions. In the case of the murderer at the door, lying is a clear violation of the categorical imperative but it can bring a good consequence of saving an innocent person's life. The double-level theory, in this case, suggests people lie in order to save one's life since lying is expedient in facing the inconsistency of the non-ideal world.

I will reject two reasons made by Kant that persuade others not to tell a lie in the case of the murderer at the door. Firstly, Kant tries to assert that we better not tell a lie in this case since the future is uncertain. Telling a truth, in this case, does not inevitably bring good consequences. For instance, if the agent lies that his friend is not in his house, but he does not know his friend has slipped away without telling, then it is possible that the murderer just caught him when he left because of the lie. On the other hand, there could be a good consequence that the agent tell a truth and his friend had slipped away resulted in the murderer would miss him. Secondly, from the perspective of law, a person should be pardoned if he keeps truthfulness even if someone dies. But once a lie does not work, the one who told it should be treated as an unwilling accomplice. Kant expresses that he should take responsibility for any possible consequences if he lied, and he will not be condemned if he did not. Hence, in terms of formal law and consequence, "to be truthful (honest) in all declaration, therefore, is a sacred and absolutely commanding decree of reason, limited by no expediency."²³ Kant's argument contains some sophistry since he ignores the possibilities. If the possibility of the murderer catching the victim is always half, whether the agent lies or not, he should be honest without doubt, since his lie will not affect the consequence. But it is clear that his lying will largely increase the possibility of surviving of the innocent. When people need to save people, they should take the way with a higher success rate rather than hoping for a small incident, therefore, "a principle asserting that one must rely upon the most probable (or weighty) of the alternative views."²⁴ Therefore, in a moral dilemma, an action that is more likely to lead to better consequences should have a priority. This thought experiment tries to show a separation between moral actions and good consequences. The double-level theory permits the possibility of an expedient lie by caring about both moral laws and good consequences. For the second objection, if a person tells a truth in the case of the murderer at the door just because he wants to avoid any possible blame from the law, it seems to persuade people not to lie since being honest is always a self-interest choice. This argument is unconvincing because Kant opposes action based on interest. At the same time, the topic of possibility arises again. In this case, being accused by law is a risk with a small possibility. It is implausible that the agent should give up the chance to improve possibilities of survival of victims for avoiding this risk.

In a non-ideal world, people have to make a choice from two alternative duties. This kind of intense moral conflict is why we call the case of the murderer at the door a dilemma. In this case, both truthfulness and saving a life are our conflict duties since we should fulfill both of them to accord with the categorical imperative. People have to make an exclusive choice between them. Therefore, we have to distinguish which duty has priority to be fulfilled. I will provide my opinion about the priority of conflict duties under the framework of the double-level theory. I believe the ideal theory leads that moral duties cannot be compared to each other for a priority. However, the non-ideal theory provides that people have to decide which duties should be priorly followed in a

23 Kant, "On a Supposed Right to Lie from Altruistic Motives," 17.

24 J. Philip Wogaman, *Christian Ethics: A Historical Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 135.

special situation based on weighing the consequences that different actions will bring. According to the ideal theory, all moral duties are the same and we cannot tell which one is more moral since they are all commanded by the categorical imperative. I believe moral worth cannot be compared since each duty has immeasurable moral worth. For example, the duty of saving a life is not always prior to protecting property and vice versa. Because both of them are good and have moral worth. Also, there is no need for people to compare them in an ideal world. Therefore the ideal theory does not give us a clue for which duties should be priorly fulfilled. On the contrary, in a non-ideal world, people should choose which duties should be practically fulfilled based on consequences. Kant asserts “imperatives are only formulas expressing the relation of objective laws of volition in general to the subjective imperfection of the will of this or that rational being.”²⁵ The categorical imperative does not lay out a prior order of duties and it only makes people decide which actions violate morality. Overall, it is unreasonable to compare duties themselves. There is a need to compare them only in the non-ideal world and people only can compare conflict duties based on consequences.

Socrates has already pointed out that there is no necessary priority of some certain duties. On the contrary, we need to weigh the consequences of different actions: “Suppose, for example, a friend who had lent us a weapon were to go mad and then ask for it back, surely anyone would say we ought not to return it. It would not be ‘right’ to do so; nor yet to tell the truth without reserve to a madman.”²⁶ If Socrates refuses to return this weapon, he has made his promise a lie. But promise-keeping is not a prior thing to be done in this case since the consequence of returning is more unacceptable. Therefore, the solid priority of duties is impossible, since, as far as the ideal theory is concerned, all duties are good to be fulfilled. But the non-ideal theory allows people to compare consequences in specific situations.

Although duties cannot be compared, people have to decide which one should be priorly fulfilled in a specific situation in the non-ideal world. Duties are morally the same from the perspective of their nature, so, people’s decisions should be based on consequences. For example, in a fire, firefighters will give priority to saving lives rather than property. This does not mean that, protecting people’s lives is essentially more moral than protecting property in terms of the ideal moral theory. Rather that people’s lives always have much more practical value than property, and saving people will bring a better consequence. Similarly with that good is immeasurable, I believe evil is theoretically the same since there is no such essential difference between a larger evil and a smaller evil, since they both violate the categorical imperative. But they are practically different and should be distinguished in the non-ideal theory. For an instance, stealing \$250 is not more evil than stealing \$10, rather they are the same evil since both are violations of moral principles. They are the same in terms of their evil nature, but people have to make different practical judgments on them. Since people judge in the non-ideal world, they have to weigh practically which one is worse, which is more evil, and give an appropriate punishment. They are the same in terms of nature, but different in terms of quantitative content and consequence. Stealing \$250 brings worse consequences so it is more immoral in terms of the non-ideal theory. Thus, in essence, duties cannot be compared to each other in an ideal world. The needs of comparison arise from moral dilemmas people meet in the non-ideal world, and, as a result, people have to compare the consequences of their actions when they make moral choices. Kant will agree with that and although he believes ideal morality should exclude any considerations about consequences, he is not reluctant to talk about non-ideal choices from practical perspectives.

People can decide the priority of duties only based on weighing consequences. Therefore, the non-ideal theory requires people to adopt the principle of acting for beneficial consequences. For

²⁵ Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:414.

²⁶ Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, translated with introduction and notes by Francis MacDonald Cornford (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 7.

example, in the case of the murderer at the door, people should tell a lie for saving an innocent person's life. This requires the agent to judge what to do will bring the highest benefits. It does not mean that good consequences determine duties in ideal theory. On the contrary, duty is commanded by ideal theory. It also does not mean that all people can correctly judge what to do that can bring good consequences but people have to make practical decisions in the non-ideal world. This means people should not make decisions arbitrarily: "When in doubt, the informed conscience must be free to follow its own judgment--provided it has the authority of serious reasons and thinkers to back it up."²⁷ This means that people must use their reason to judge seriously. For instance, people should not tell a lie to make money since rational people never believe to do so will bring a good consequence (such as it may destroy social credit). In addition, the non-ideal theory allows that different people may take different actions for good consequences. For the example of the murderer at the door, people can certainly subdue the murderer only if they are powerful enough to do so. In short, a non-ideal theory asks people to act on what is available to them so that they can get good consequences, even if people should understand this does not mean that it is moral to take the expediencies wanted.

CONSEQUENTIALISM

The double-level theory is not consequentialism. Korsgaard believes consequentialism is a single-level theory:

A double-level theory can be contrasted to two types of single-level theory, both of which in a sense fail to distinguish the way we should behave in ideal and in non-ideal conditions, but which are at opposite extremes. A consequentialist theory such as utilitarianism does not really distinguish ideal from non-ideal conditions.²⁸

The basic idea of consequentialism is that it is moral for people to take actions that could bring happiness. Consequentialism follows this proposition, for example, hedonism equals goodness with individual happiness and some ideal utilitarianism suggests people seek rational collective happiness. John Mill defines utilitarianism as:

The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness.²⁹

For consequentialism confuses the ideal theory with the non-ideal theory; the double-level theory is different from it. However, under the double-level theory, we can have a better understanding of consequentialism. The truthfulness of consequentialism comes from the consistency between moral actions and good consequences in the ideal world such that good consequences must result from moral actions. In an ideal world, people can easily distinguish moral actions since they always result in good consequences. This consistency leads consequentialism to equal moral actions and good consequences. But an effect cannot be a determination of the cause. That means a good consequence as an effect never makes moral actions be moral. Therefore, good consequences never determine what is good. In the non-ideal world, this consistency does not work. Therefore, consequentialism mistakenly brings the consistency between moral actions and good consequences in the ideal theory into the non-ideal world to guide people's actions. However, consequentialism can be regarded as a non-ideal theory such that it is not moral for people to take expediency for good consequences but necessary. Consequentialism has the practical meaning such that it tries to find a way to help people find most fit expediency for good consequences. In conclusion, in an ideal world, moral actions must be those that can bring good consequences, but it is not true in a non-ideal world. Therefore, consequentialism should be treated as a non-ideal theory that has practical value, but it fails to determine what is good.

27 Wogaman, *Christian Ethics*, 135

28 Korsgaard, "The Right to Lie: Kant on Dealing with Evil," 344.

29 John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Waiheke Island, Zealand: Floating, 2009), 14.

Since consequentialism confuses ideal and non-ideal theory, the division and connection of the ideal and non-ideal theory help us to distinguish double-level theory and consequentialism. Ideal theory tells what actions are moral and non-ideal theory tells people they should take expediences if they need to. The bridge between these two theories is that people sometimes should take expedencies but keep in mind that they are violating moral laws. Therefore, Korsgaard states people should regret if they fail to obey duties such that they take expediency for good consequences:

We will regret having to depart from the ideal standard of conduct, for we identify with this standard and think of our autonomy in terms of it. Regret for an action we would not do under ideal circumstances seems appropriate even if we have done what is clearly the right thing.³⁰

Such regret is a clear rejection of consequentialism. That is, she asserts people should regret their expediency since expediency is not justified as moral by good consequences.

A HIGHER CONCEPT: OVERCOMING EVIL WITH GOOD

I will put forward another ethical standard, that is, to overcome evil with good. This is a concept that arises in Romans 12:21: “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”³¹ This concept, when applied to ethics, pits perfect goodness against evil, achieving both moral means and good consequences. Overcoming evil provides integration and progress between ideal and non-ideal theory. In fact, Korsgaard does relate these two. She believes the ideal theory sets the ideal moral standard, and the non-ideal theory permits us to do something immoral for a good consequence. Regretting should be taken if people fail to act morally in some specific situations and they have to make expedient conduct choices. However, overcoming evil introduces higher requirements. It requires people both to keep the categorical imperative (such as to fulfill all duties at the same time) and produce good consequences. In other words, it requires agents to act in the non-ideal world as if in an ideal world, such that they take moral actions but also their actions have a consistency that agents’ moral actions always bring good consequences. This goal can be expressed as that God’s kingdom comes and God’s “will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10). In the case of the murderer at the door, overcoming evil cannot be satisfied by lying since it breaks moral duties but also cannot be satisfied by being strictly honest since an innocent life will be lost. Whether lying to save someone or letting someone be killed is a compromise with evil, thus, in effect, the agent is overcome by evil. Conversely, overcoming evil means saving a life by being honest. Therefore, overcoming evil with good becomes the moral-worthiest end and highest pursuit in the non-ideal world.

Of course, we are left with the question of how “overcoming evil with good” is possible in the non-ideal world. One way is we could tell the murderer the truth and convince the murderer to give up this killing. Even we could lead the murderer to regret the evil intention to murder by showing our love and honesty, such a possibility of overcoming evil comes from Jesus, as a complete man. When Jesus is facing evil temptation, he insists not to yield to the evil and refuses to make a stone be bread. This did not bring bad consequences in this circumstance for him because he lived by faith. The ethical significance of Jesus, which is showing the possibility of overcoming evil by good, is worth noting since overcoming evil with good relies much on Christian religious faith which is beyond the limits of human reason and human will. Therefore, overcoming evil with good contains both ethical and religious meanings. Hence, people cannot act to overcome evil with good only by their own wills. If someone lacks Christian faith and arbitrarily tells a truth to a murderer, it is normally impossible to overcome evil because of the lack of enough wisdom and power. Hence, overcoming evil with good requires us to act according to our faith, for “everything that does

30 Korsgaard, “The Right to Lie: Kant on Dealing with Evil,” 346.

31 All Bible quotations in this paper are from the NIV.

not come from faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23). It can be said that the power of overcoming evil with good comes from God. Faith gives us a practical criterion by which to act. For example, if we have enough faith and believe in God’s power because of it, we could act morally to the murderer to overcome evil with good. However, if we lack sufficient faith, we should probably lie to the murderer following the double-level theory. Therefore, overcoming evil with good is the highest pursuit in a moral dilemma and the double-level theory should be treated as a choice of expediency. The choice between overcoming evil with good and double-level theory depends on whether the agent has enough faith and power from God.

Here, we should specify the highest criterion beyond morality to the ethics we have been considering. Kant’s categorical imperative, of a strong persistence of moral principles, is good, but it is not as satisfying as a higher concept of overcoming evil with good. Hence, morality is obviously not the ultimate requirement of ethics because overcoming evil with good is a concept higher than Kant’s moral imperatives. Higher than morality, holiness and perfection should be the ultimate pursuit of ethics. Perfection entails both our conduct being moral as well as consequences our conduct result are good. Although we should admit holiness and perfection cannot be done all the time in this non-ideal world, they should be our goal and our ultimate ethical end. Worthy to note is that the notion of perfection contains an inner requirement for people: that is, people should not only act morally but also should think morally. Similarly, Kant believes a good will has the highest moral worth. John Wesley has asserted,

It is only of grown Christians it can be affirmed, they are in such a sense perfect, as, ... to be freed from evil thoughts and evil tempers. First, from evil or sinful thoughts. Indeed, whence should they spring? ‘Out of the heart of man,’ if at all, ‘proceed evil thoughts.’ If, therefore, the heart be no longer evil, then evil thoughts no longer proceed out of it: For ‘a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit.’³²

This inner duty requires people to think morally, rather than only have kind and moral conduct. Only if both a person’s inner and behavioral duties are fulfilled, can perfection and holiness be reached. Therefore, perfection possesses three requirements: inner morality, behavior morality, and good consequence.-

Korsgaard notices people should regret when they fail to obey duties and they take expediency for good consequences. Under the notion of overcoming evil with good, this regret has another meaning. People should regret that they are too powerless in facing evil to overcome it. As far as failing to overcome evil with good based on lacking faith, I will use the word “repentance” that has more religious meaning to replace “regret.” In other words, people should repent since they are not perfect enough to overcome evil with good. This is not only to repent for breaking the ideal standard of conduct as Korsgaard points out, but also for failing to pursue or achieve the highest good in the non-ideal world. Actually, people should always repent, since they cannot be like Jesus, but are so powerless that they are harmed by evil. In the case of the murderer at the door, both lying and losing one’s life are harmed by evil. When the murderer at the door rejects our lying and our friend is harmed by evil and killed by our failure to overcome that evil, evil results. On the other hand, having to lie in order to save our friend is also harmed by evil because it means we have to do something immoral. The positive meaning of this powerlessness is that the agent cannot overcome evil and the passive meaning is that the agent is harmed by evil.

Miroslav Volf talked about the necessity of repentance from another perspective:

To repent means to resist the seductiveness of the sinful values and practices and to let the new order of God’s reign be established in one’s heart...It “humanizes” the victims precisely by protecting them from either mimicking or dehumanizing the oppressors.

32 John Wesley, “A Plain Account of Christian Perfection,” in *Readings In Christian Ethics: A Historical Sourcebook*, edited by J. Philip Wogaman and Douglas M. Strong (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 175-176.

Far from being a sign of acquiescence to the dominant order, repentance creates a haven of God's new world in the midst of the old and so makes the transformation of the old possible.³³

Volf clearly points out that, in addition to the violation of duties and the confession of personal powerlessness, the significance of repentance lies in the hope that the victims can bring God's new order through it. Then repentance will become the bridge between the ideal and non-ideal worlds. Repentance is a response of humans in a non-ideal world to the ideal world, because repentance for powerlessness means that one's ethical pursuit is perfection rather than morality. Only if everyone acts perfectly, the world can be a perfect world, and people can apply the ideal theory. Repentance is instigated by awareness of human powerlessness for evil and a desire to be perfect.

Here, we could use Kant's moral philosophy, Korsgaard's double-level theory and overcoming evil with good to outline a basic analytical way of making ethical choices. There are four steps: First, examining whether a specific act or behavior can be assured to bring in ideal goodness. That is to say, whether it breaks any ideal moral standard, or whether it breaks any duties Kant suggests people must obey. Second, considering that, under some specific non-ideal circumstances, bad conduct should be taken as expedient for preventing a bad consequence. This is based on examination of possible consequences, and determination whether disobeying some duties is necessary for addressing a specific moral dilemma as Korsgaard clarifies. Third, commitment to overcome evil with good by considering possible actions while measuring one's abilities and faith to determine whether one is able to perform such required tasks in order to assure one overcomes evil with good (if one is not able, one should turn to a non-ideal expedient action). Fourth, (if people take expediency) repenting based on failing to be holy and perfect in order to understand clearly, evaluate, and reflect on our conduct and, thereby, make ideal choices even in a non-ideal world.

We could apply this four-step method to war. For a war, no matter if it is offensive or defensive, savage or good in purpose, it will usually be accompanied by bloodshed and killing. Killing, by its very nature, is immoral. It must break the ideal moral standard and it is not allowed according to ideal theory. Therefore, we could conclude that war, in which killing is the chief means of accomplishment, is intrinsically evil. It is clear that some wars are necessary in the non-ideal world. For example, if a group of people comes to attack us, we have to fight them for self-protection. This means that war sometimes has to be used as an expedient choice to achieve good consequences, based on the double-level theory, if a war is necessary to agents and they are powerless to overcome evil with good. Nevertheless, it is possible for people to achieve good consequences without war, so as to overcome evil with good. For example, people do not necessarily need to eliminate backward regimes through war but through peaceful evolution, given that people desiring good change have enough power and sense of justice to benefit all people being impacted. On the other hand, according to overcoming evil with good, people should be strong and just enough that others will not attack them, which means that they will not be harmed, and there will be no need for defensive war, and an oppressor's consciousness will be raised that war on others is not good. But, if people have to make war, they should repent of it since they cannot be perfect to fight peacefully or be able to prevent possible harm. This is the analysis of the war by the four-step method.

Therefore, when people have to get into a war, they should not primarily regard this war as just, but as necessary. People, if they are unable to overcome evil, should take expediency for good consequences. In order to ensure that the war does bring about better results rather than side effects, Augustine talks about a theory of just war:

Nonetheless, through emphasizing the classical conditions of just cause and proper authority, as well as, crucially, the more Christian concern of charitable disposition

33 Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 116.

(correct intention), Augustine provided later writers with a framework within which the legitimacy of specific wars could be assessed. Following the classical tradition, Augustine insisted that war was not an end in itself, but a means for obtaining peace, which was a state of tranquillity founded upon justice. Wars should not be fought by choice but according to necessity...Every just war, then, must have as its cause the restoration of justice.³⁴

While I am not trying to overthrow the terminology of just war, we do need to consider the differences between different choices of terms. In the non-ideal theory, this kind of war is called a “necessary” war and Christian philosophers call it a “just” war. Therefore, we need to draw a distinction that, from humans’ perspective we wage a necessary war, but from a religious perspective, it is a just war. According to Christian philosophers’ statements about the possibility of a just war and the fact that war is not forbidden in the Bible, some people are reluctant to regard war as purely evil. Francisco de Suárez asserts “Our first conclusion is that war, absolutely speaking, is not intrinsically evil, nor is it forbidden to Christians.”³⁵ The fact that God commanded people to make war in the Bible would seem to reveal God as evil, if the war were intrinsically evil. This is unacceptable: a perfect God cannot be evil, but given that war essentially includes killings, evidently, war itself would be intrinsically evil. People make war since they treat it as expediency for good consequences. In this sense, it is a necessary war and it is not a just war at all. But, God commands people to make war because humans are too powerless to overcome evil with good, the emphasis being on people’s inadequacy, with no reference to any inability in God. However, if God claims people to be righteous (even though still a sinner), then the war that is waged by righteous people, becomes a just war because of God’s justification. In this sense, such a war is both just and necessary, physical death by killing not being its final, or even primary goal.

In summary, Kant’s moral philosophy provides strict duties in its ideal formulation. As a non-ideal theory, however, it allows people to take expedient measures for good consequences. This simultaneous recognition of ideal moral standards and permissible expediencies is called the double-level theory. If people need to solve moral dilemmas in practice, they should compare duties. In fact, duties are essentially the same and only can be compared by their consequences. Therefore, people should always take appropriate expediencies, based on pursuing the greatest good. In ethics, I seek to provide a higher moral standard, that is, to overcome evil with good. People need to decide whether they must take expedient actions, or they are able to overcome evil with good according to their own faith in God. This strategy provides ethics with a higher requirement than morality, namely, goodness, holiness, or perfection. At the same time, perfection requires people to abide by inner morality, behavior morality, and good consequences. Finally, Kantian moral philosophy, Korsgaard’s two-level theories, and perfection lead to the four-step methodology.

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34 Rory Cox, “The Ethics of War Up to Thomas Aquinas,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Ethics of War*, edited by Seth Lazar and Helen Frowe (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 106.

35 Francisco de Suárez, “A Work on the Three Theological Virtues: Faith, Hope, and Charity,” in *Readings in Christian Ethics*, 157.



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Review of *If Jesus Is Lord: Loving Our Enemies in an Age of Violence* by Ronald J. Sider (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019)

RODNEY L. PETERSEN

This book will be attractive to persons across the Christian spectrum. It is grounded in the early Christian sources of faith. It gives attention to the on-going debate around pacifist and just war social ethics. It surveys Christian approaches to violence and nonviolence in church history. The intended audience includes lay readers and ministers, all who recognize, as Stanley Hauerwas puts it in the foreword, that “nonviolence is not a side issue in Jesus’s ministry but rather is at the very heart of what the kingdom Jesus proclaimed is about” (xi). This is a book for the twenty-first century.

Sider’s thesis or goal through this book is embedded in the question, would “Jesus ever want his disciples to kill in order to resist evil and promote peace and justice?” (2). Sider begins by distinguishing several terms. First, he calls attention to differences between *coercion* and *violence*, arguing that, while coercion, moral suasion, is inevitable, violence with the intent to harm and even kill the neighbor is never permissible. The *pacifism* which Sider upholds does not imply passivity or a nonresistance to evil and injustice, but “a vigorous nonviolent resistance to all evil” (4), as Sider demonstrates in his book *Nonviolent Action: What Christian Ethics Demands but Most Christians Have Never Really Tried* (2015).

Chapters 1-6 offer a textual study of Jesus’s gospel, his actions, his teaching in the Sermon on the Mount and other teachings that seem to point toward a rejection of violence. Each chapter begins with a helpful summary of what is contained in a more detailed fashion in the argument of the chapter. This adds to the readability of Sider’s argument.

For example, in the midst of early first century messianic expectations forecasting the liberation of Israel often by military means with messianic violence, here drawing upon N. T. Wright, Jesus’s gospel of the kingdom of God is shown to reject the model of violent revolution. Identifying with the “Son of Man” (Daniel 7), Jesus saw himself bringing in the kingdom not through violence but by offering forgiveness: “Forgiveness, not violence and vengeance, was the sign of the messianic kingdom” (17). Drawing from Richard Hays’s *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (1996), as he frequently does, Sider concludes Jesus’s programmatic vision of the messianic community is seen in the Sermon on the Mount. Citing N.T. Wright, Sider writes, “Jesus saw his death as central to his belief that the kingdom of God that he had announced was actually arriving in his own person” (19). The implication of this position is that Jesus not only died for our sins but calls us to ethical obedience characterized by nonviolence.

Jesus’s actions in response to temptations by Satan, his refusal to become king, the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and the refusal just before his arrest of calling in his defense legions of angels tell us what he was thinking about violence. Citing Richard Hays, Sider notes, “At every turn he renounces violence as a strategy for promoting God’s kingdom” (23).

Of particular interest is discussion by N. T. Wright around Walter Wink’s interpretation of Matthew 5:39-42, the verse “do not resist” (*antistēnai*), to turn the other cheek, suing for one’s coat before a judge, and going the second mile. The directive to love enemies is without boundaries, the religious, the political, and the personal are all spheres of life taken into consideration. Sider continues by evaluating different reasons people give for failing to deal with Jesus’s fully orbited ethic: Jesus’s message is spiritual, not social; Jesus taught an interim ethic; radical ethics are for a special class of Christians; Jesus’s radical ethics call us to repentance, not discipleship; Jesus’s ethics are for some future eschatological kingdom, not the present; Jesus’s command not to kill enemies applies to private not public roles (43-49). Sider offers detailed arguments which affirm

his contention that Jesus taught his followers never to kill. He bolsters his case by turning to other teachings by Jesus as well as those in the rest of the New Testament.

Chapters 7-14 move from what might be called Sider's textual study to a more synthetic approach to foundational theological issues, problems with pacifism, problems with just war thinking, killing in the Old Testament, and additional considerations, "if Jesus is Lord."

Chapter 7 begins by asking the question of Jesus's identity, contrasting early Ebionitic (Jesus truly human but not fully divine) understanding with Gnostic (Jesus as truly divine but not fully human) interpretation. Sider notes that, if Jesus is not true God, then the argument for nonviolence based on his teaching is weak; if he is not fully human then we have little possibility of meaningful achievement. Sider's argument is bolstered by Jesus's resurrection, which signifies that Jesus will ultimately prevail. The "already" kingdom signifies that the proclamation of the messianic message is not postponed to the millennium but is for the present age. Further, the proclamation of the kingdom is not as Albert Schweitzer imagined, an imminent end to space-time history. While Sider sides with Reinhold Niebuhr in assessing the depth of sin, Sider maintains a more robust understanding of the power of the resurrection and work of the Holy Spirit in the importance of sanctification. The argument of the US Catholic bishops in 1983 that Christians are called to live in the tension between the vision of the reign of God and its concrete realization in history, concluding with an affirmation of just war at times, is rejected by Sider. Sider writes that, with the help of the Holy Spirit, Christians should and can live Jesus's radical kingdom ethics.

Moving from textual to synthetic argument, Sider gives more attention in the final chapters of this book to questions of Jesus's Lordship in the history of the church. The church has a significant role to play in society according to Sider. It is the new community being created by God which models the radical love of Jesus and his followers shown among its enemies. It calls for the forgiveness of sins, as with Niebuhr, but asks for more, in that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and grounding in the resurrection enables the church to play its significant role. Following Yoder and Hauerwas, Sider agrees the first task of the church is to be the church.

In his chapter on "Problems with Pacifism," Sider deals with love of neighbor, responsibility for history, peace and justice, an optimistic view of human nature, and naive idealism. He takes up the problems that the church as community faces. For example, what to do when our neighbor undergoes harm: Do we turn the other cheek and overlook the harm? Pointedly, Sider argues that this assumes there are only two options to dealing with violence, whereas there is always a third option. Moving beyond his earlier citation of Walter Wink and the discussion over "resisting evil," Sider continues by citing the many nonviolent "third" options in recent history, adding the surprising forms of innovation of such "third" options – Gandhi's nonviolent campaign for Indian independence, the civil rights movement of Martin Luther King, the overthrow of Filipino dictator Marcos, the Solidarity movement in Poland, change in East Germany, engineering President Charles Taylor of Liberia's stepping down, and one might continue. The conclusion to studies on social violence, cited by Sider, is that nonviolence campaigns were nearly twice as likely to achieve full or partial success as their violent counterparts.

Moving from his defense of pacifism, Sider next takes up the problems he finds with just war arguments. He begins with an evangelical thrust, asking how can one kill someone who is to be invited to accept Christ? How can one obey Christ's command to love one's enemies? Further, just war criteria have not prevented or stopped war. The great failure of just war principles and practice is seen in the slaughter of Christians by Christians in World War I and II. Critical of the failure of such theories to stave off violence, Sider takes up the question of how one is to read the Old Testament, which appears to be a picture of savagery to both pacifist and just war theorists. Sider writes about killing in the Old Testament that, whereas the history of Israel is set in a context of violence, Jesus sought to make disciples. Following Yoder's "canonical-directional" approach, we find Israel is called out of a violent culture with the charge that the descendants of Abraham will

bles the whole world. Sider moves beyond a static interpretation of the Old Testament.

Sider asks, “What if most (or all) Christians became pacifist”? This question raises intriguing arguments to the claims of some for the superiority of Western civilization. If “most (or all)” persons became Christian and refuse to give into violence, this would be a recognition that the risen Lord Jesus is now “ruler of the kings of the earth” (Rev. 1:5). Sometimes God allows for martyrdom and sometimes prevents that, but we know where history is going in God’s time. Further, pacifist Christians have much to contribute to the conflict between the world’s two largest religions, Christianity and Islam. Much of the anger of the non-western world has Christian failure in its crosshairs. We must help stave off that anger by the ways in which we live. Thus, the call to Just Peacemaking and its implications bears promise for pacifists. Christian Peacemaker Teams have encouraged nonviolence. Mennonite John Paul Lederach has led in developing peace-building processes. Beyond potential conflict as different civilizations rub up against each other, the principles and practices of restorative justice can lead to less violence-prone societies. Community policing is another nonviolent activity that is growing in interest as is the idea of a Civilian-Based Defense (CBD) as argued by Gene Sharp, the training in nonviolence of an entire population. Sider continues by adding further ways in which nonviolence can be practiced.

The principles and practices articulated are not part of an abstract calculus but rest in the cross. Sider takes up nonviolence in relation to theories of the atonement. Jesus’s call to love one’s enemies is grounded in the nature of God, or ultimate reality. Referring to an argument made in chapter 1, Jesus’s unconventional teaching on God’s prodigal forgiveness and unorthodox view of a suffering Messiah, the cross reminds us that love of enemies does not always work. Various challenges to the idea of the atonement are raised by Sider. J. Denny Weaver argues that Jesus’s death accomplished nothing, that satisfaction in any form depends on divinely sanctioned violence. God becomes the author of Jesus’s death. Sider finds Weaver’s views unbiblical at several points and charges Weaver underestimates the agony of persons of the Trinity to the suffering of Jesus.

Drawing on N.T. Wright, Sider follows by arguing that the goal of the atonement is not only the forgiveness of sins but it also offers freedom from the power of sin. As argued by C. H. Dodd, for Paul, God’s wrath is not against individual sins but aimed at an “inevitable process of cause and effect in a moral universe” (185). The cross offers liberation from the power of sin. The atonement involves Christ conquering evil (*Christus victor*), and not Christ offering himself as a substitute for our sins. There are multiple metaphors of the atonement each of which enhances our understanding.

Sider offers, as if by way of a summary, different Christian attitudes on violence and killing in Church History, the period before Emperor Constantine, the Constantinian period, the Age of the Reformation, the era of Early Holiness and Pentecostal denominations. He cites prominent individual pacifists over the past two hundred years, reflects on Liberal Pacifism, Nuclear Pacifism, and a growing Catholic affirmation of Pacifism.

If Jesus is Lord, Sider argues in this fulsome treatment of the question: “At the center of his topic Christian faith is the belief that the ‘The teacher of love from Nazareth is true God as well as true man’” (213).

The author’s sources and credentials are impeccable. This volume represents a life’s work on the question and extent of the “lordship” of Jesus the Christ. I highly recommend it as espousing the principles of the Africanus Guild and it is recommended as a purchase by every seminarian.

Rodney Lawrence Petersen, PhD, is Executive Director, Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries; Visiting Researcher, Boston University; Executive Director, The Lord’s Day Alliance in the U.S. He has wide ecumenical and interfaith experience, having taught in the schools of the Boston Theological Institute (BTI) and overseas. In his capacity as BTI director, he initiated the Religion and Conflict Transformation program, now located at the School of Theology, Boston University. An ordained PCUSA minister, he has a wide bibliography dealing with issues of church history, conflict, and violence. Presently, he offers workshops in forgiveness and reconciliation for Cooperative Metropolitan Ministries of Boston.



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Review of *Christian Egalitarian Leadership: Empowering the Whole Church according to the Scriptures*, edited by Aída Besançon Spencer and William David Spencer, House of Prisca and Aquila Series (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2020)

OLGA SOLER

This book is published by the Spencers through their publishing series House of Prisca and Aquila (HPA). The mission of HPA, included in the book’s introduction, outlines the Spencer’s position in *Christian Egalitarian Leadership*: House of Prisca and Aquila refers to Acts 18:2 where Prisca and Aquila more accurately expounded to Apollos “the Way of God.” HPA’s mission is “to produce quality books that expound accurately the word of God to empower women and men to minister together in a multicultural church.”

Jeff Miller, in his recent *Priscilla Papers* review of *Christian Egalitarian Leadership*, puts the Spencer’s perspective on Christian Egalitarian Leadership in historical perspective: “Essay collections have been important to the thriving of evangelical egalitarianism over the last few decades....The volume under review here, *Christian Egalitarian Leadership*, takes further steps toward broadening the issues (e.g., it is about more than gender) but also focuses on one essential aspect of the thriving of egalitarianism—leadership.”¹

SUMMARY

This volume’s collection of chapters by distinguished authors is divided by content into “Theory” and “Practice.” Coeditors Aída and William Spencer begin by defining the topic and thesis of this book: “We propose that leadership, especially in the church, should be Christian egalitarian servant leadership” (3)...(and) “Egalitarian leadership includes the equal leadership of men and women, Gentiles and Jews, rich and poor, slave and free, and the lack of permanent or/and innate human hierarchy except between God and humans” (4).

Each contributing author puts a slant on Christian Egalitarian Leadership.

THEORY

John P. Lathrop’s “Egalitarianism and Biblical Authority,” explains that this book’s subtitle “Empowering the Whole Church according to the Scriptures” requires an understanding of biblical inerrancy as the basis for biblical exegesis in the publishing ministry of the House of Prisca and Aquila.

Grace May’s “Women Discipling Men,” uses the accounts of Phoebe, who was a leader (Rom 16:2) (42) to Paul, and Deborah, (Judg 4 and 5) (47) who mentored Barack, as scriptural documentation of Spirit-filled women in leadership with men. Her modern examples, Nancy Hudson, like Phoebe, instructs men in Christian leadership (46–47) and Naomi Dowdy (53), like Deborah, is a Christian leader who disciples men.

Chapter 4, William David Spencer’s “Equal Leadership: God’s Intention at Creation,” challenges the complementarian position: “Has a hierarchy within the Godhead been built into the whole intertexture of the universe that would determine that the refusal to let women lead equally is God’s intention?” (61). He builds a historical argument on atypical translations of Genesis 3 explaining Plato’s influence on major voices such as Philo (a Jew), and in the NLT and the 2016

¹ Jeff Miller, “Christian Egalitarian Leadership: Empowering the Whole Church According to the Scriptures,” CBE International, April 30, 2021, <https://www.cbeinternational.org/resource/book-review/christian-egalitarian-leadership-empowerhole-church-according-scriptures>.

edition of the ESV: “Your desire shall be contrary to your husband . . .” (ESV) (76). Jean A. Dimock, in “Influence of Plato and Aristotle’s Patriarchy on Christian Hierarchy Today,” extends chapter four’s historical documentation of Socrates and introduces Aristotle’s influence on early Church Fathers to distinguish between “those who follow Plato’s and Aristotle’s patriarchal views as they have influenced the interpretation of Scripture and remain in the church today” (107).

PRACTICE

For this section’s opening chapter, Jeanne DeFazio models “The Multicultural Aspect of Egalitarian Leadership,” with excerpts from her HPA books (*Creative Ways to Build Community*, 2013, *Redeeming the Screens*, 2016, *Berkeley Street Theatre*, 2017, and *Empowering English Language Learners*, 2018) of examples of successful multicultural egalitarian leadership consistent with HPA guidelines (127–28). In “Egalitarian Multiethnic Leadership in the United States,” Francois Augustin suggests strategies to reconcile the church racially (144). He concisely identifies the need for clearly exposing that the American pursuit of happiness has produced a culture promoting segregation and restricting the expansion of the Gospel (147). In “Egalitarian Faith Nurturing in the African Context,” Julius K. Kithinji makes a case for the communal nature of Africa being a prominent environment to build relationships of egalitarian leadership (161–63).

“Our Egalitarian Marriage” by Benjamin Fung and Scarlet Tsao Fung, demonstrates that “a happy, fulfilling, and egalitarian marriage is absolutely possible even in this broken and postmodern world” (166). The authors affirm “God’s original intention is for a man and a woman through marriage to complete each other” (168).

Karen Sue Smith, in “Rearing Egalitarian Children,” identifies the need for parents to role-model a God-honoring egalitarian relationship (181). In “Equipping Young People to Build Healthy Relationships,” Sandra Gatlin Whitley explains “why adolescent girls and boys should be taught, nurtured, and empowered to grow up knowing and living out their identity in Christ Jesus based on Ephesians 5:21: ‘Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ’” (195).

In “God’s People for All Seasons: Sharing Ministry with Laypeople,” Lydia Sarandan, retells “stories of ordinary men and women whose hearts, minds, and abilities were offered up to God . . .” (219–20).

Ralph Kee, in “Gender Equality in the Church as a Model for the Neighborhood” explains how churches can model gender equality in their neighborhoods (237).

Lorraine Cleaves Anderson, in “Communal Decision Making and the Fate of Retiring Pastors,” insists that “retired pastors” should not be prohibited from worshipping and fellowshiping in congregations where they served, concluding that “churches cannot afford to prevent” mature Christians from building “the kingdom of God on earth” (250).

In chapter 15 “Egalitarian Leadership in Global Mission,” J. Creamer “surveys the legacy of women’s leadership in global mission from the mid-1800s to the present” (260).

EVALUATION

One great test of any view of Scripture is its pervasiveness. If it is true, one should be able to see the truth revealed from Genesis to Revelation. What I like about *Christian Egalitarian Leadership*, edited by Spencer and Spencer but contributed to by some very credible members of the Christian Body, is it does just that. We see clearly and scripturally how the priesthood of all believers was God’s heart all along even from the foundations of the world. We see evidence in the Old and New Testaments, in indigenous tribes in the Americas, and even in the best modern organizations, that communities where every person is valued as well as employed in the Body with respect and honor grow more and progress in peace and contentment.

Questionable teaching on authority and hierarchy has shut down the body of believers in many ways. It has made room for abuse in the church, in the nations, and in the homes of even true believers. The early church with its “flat” or equalitarian organization was poised to blow the worldwide open to the gospel because every member could work by holy initiative, loving interdependence, and sanctified creativity. By contrast, blind dependence on the visions and commands of only a few produce truncated results and believers who have trouble with the critical thinking of genuinely free people. All the gifts given to the church, accessible to all the members, and facilitated by all the members, see to the needs of all concerned and make for a happier, more informed, and functional community. The flexibility of such a body of believers could easily penetrate any enclave of secularism because it is fluid and led by the Spirit, not dependent on the views and visions of small committees or of individual men.

An authoritarian/hierarchical model of church, which is not approved in the Scriptures, contributes to factions, divisions, vying for power and subterfuge; elements that were never meant to be in the body of Christ. Such power struggles exist as part of fallen human nature but were not sanctioned by Jesus, who encouraged believers to be as servants and children, Paul, who decried power mongering and factions, and any of the biblical writers. It’s time we got back to the biblical model and all of us took up the mantle handed down by the prophets and apostles of the Lord. Then we too could “turn the world upside down” with the good news as they did.

Olga Soler is a performer and artistic contributor to *An Artistic Tribute to Harriet Tubman* and author of *First Book*, *Second Book*, *Third Book* (about a time traveler), and the Frankie series—*Stigma*, *Pestilence*, and *Holocaust* (a modern-day Frankenstein) faith-based science fiction. Also, she is a contributor to HPA books (*Creative Ways to Build Community*, 2013, *Redeeming the Screens*, 2016, *Berkeley Street Theatre*, 2017, and *Empowering English Language Learners*, 2018).

AN ARTISTIC TRIBUTE TO *Harriet Tubman*

edited by **JULIA C. DAVIS** and **JEANNE C. DEFAZIO**
afterword by **WILMA FAYE MATHIS**

"This heartfelt tribute to the great Harriet Tubman, by outstanding African American and Hispanic leaders with whom I have worked side by side for years and whose selfless dedication I have come to admire, is a timely reminder that to God every human is precious."

—WILLIAM DAVID SPENCER, co-editor of *Christian Egalitarian Leadership*

"Harriet Tubman was a powerful, bold, Black woman who risked her life at a time when it was believed by some that Black people didn't have souls. We have come far since then but still not far enough."

—JOZY POLLOCK, author of *Backstage Pass to Heaven*

"A timely tribute to Harriet Tubman in these tumultuous days to promote justice by her Christian sisters and brothers."

—AIDA BESANCON SPENCER, co-editor of *Christian Egalitarian Leadership*

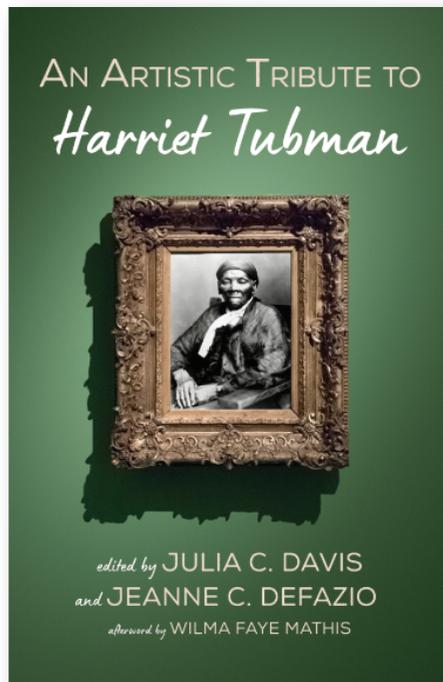
"*An Artistic Tribute to Harriet Tubman* puts history in divine perspective as we see a woman guided by her God emboldened to change the course of history. The abolitionist movement is seen through God's plan and Harriet a chosen vessel divinely sent to destroy the evils of slavery by the power of the Holy Spirit. As God directed Harriet, so too, in this hour, God is leading his children to establish righteousness and truth in the land!"

—GEMMA WENGER, television and radio host

"What gave Harriet Tubman courage to go back, multiple times, to liberate enslaved Black people after having escaped her bondage? What compelled her to risk her freedom and life to rescue others from slavery, time and time again? Faith in God! This work captures in artistry our 'Black Moses,' who inspired by faith in God and Christ overcame fear to set her people free. *An Artistic Tribute to Harriet Tubman* reminds us that faith inspires the extraordinary in ordinary people. An inspiring must-read!"

—DARIN POUILLARD, Senior Pastor, Fort Washington Baptist Church, Fort Washington, Maryland

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JEANNE C. DEFAZIO is the editor of the following Wipf and Stock publications: *Berkeley Street Theatre: How Improvisation and Street Theater Emerged as Christian Outreach to the Culture of the Time* and *Specialist Fourth Class John Joseph DeFazio: Advocating For Disabled American Veterans*, coeditor of *Redeeming the Screens and Empowering English Language Learners* with William David Spencer and *Creative Ways to Build Christian Community* with John P. Lathrop. She edited and authored *Keeping the Dream Alive: A Reflection on the Art of Harriet Lorence Nesbitt* and coauthored with Teresa Flowers *How to Have an Attitude of Gratitude on the Night Shift*.

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Review of *When Did Eve Sin? The Fall and Biblical Historiography* by Jeffrey J. Niehaus (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020)

C.J. GOSSAGE

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary Senior Professor of Old Testament Dr. Jeffrey Niehaus's *When Did Eve Sin?* is predominantly written for a confessional audience (1) and serves to solve a difficult interpretive crux. Genesis 2:17, which relates God's command to the original human couple—"you shall not eat!"—is later retold in Genesis 3:3 in what is often labeled as a contradiction—"God said you shall not eat from it...and you shall not touch!" In the introduction, Prof. Niehaus, taking a singular position, declares that this putative contradiction can be more aptly described as a common historiographical form in which a third-person narration of an event (i.e., Gen 2:17) is later rounded out by an *expansive* first-person recapitulation of that same event (i.e., Gen 3:3). While confessionally oriented, Niehaus is consistently engaged with the perceived shortcomings of both critical and confessional scholarship. The concision of Niehaus's work is refreshing, beginning with his thesis, critiquing typical interpretations, all while slowly arguing for his "historiographical-form" approach.

Chapter 1 offers an initial delineation of Niehaus's distinct view, namely that the Bible itself offers its own unique historiographical form in which a third-person narration is recapitulated later from a first-person perspective with the inclusion of additional information (16). Niehaus precludes the possibility of Eve simply "misremembering," as a sinless state is unlikely to allow such a condition (22–25). Chapter 1 concludes with a brief exploration of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's and Karl Barth's treatments of Genesis 2:17 and 3:2–3, which come to represent, in Niehaus's economy and throughout the book, two typical interpretive pitfalls: 1) the supplementation of unreported details "behind the narrative" as it were and 2) the unwarranted tendency to psychoanalyze Eve (33, 35). This chapter could have benefitted from a more expansive exploration of sin. Niehaus does focus on Romans 14:33—"Whatever is not from faith is sin" (NKJV). However, considering that Niehaus describes Eve's *potential* addition to God's command during her conversation with the serpent (Gen 3:3) as sinful, a deeper exploration of sin would have improved his argumentation.

Chapters 2–3 give an incredibly thorough survey of the history of interpretation of Genesis 2:17 and 3:2–3 divided into Jewish and early Christian (Ch. 2) and early Reformation (Ch. 3) interpretations. Alongside a fair summary of each interpreter's positions and distinctives, Niehaus offers critiques and shortfalls of their interpretations. Seeing as how Niehaus maintains a singular position (133), though a few ancient interpreters come close (46, 50–53, 55), he argues clearly for his position over against his academic progenitors throughout. This section is very detailed, and the reader is greatly served through the summary sections at the end of each chapter.

Not until chapters four and five does Niehaus truly begin arguing his most valuable insight regarding biblical historiography (102–104). At this juncture Niehaus analyzes other examples of a third-person narration accompanied later by a first-person recapitulation. His examples include: Genesis 12 and 20 (106–108, 128), Genesis 12–20 and Gen 26:5 (119, 129), and finally Paul's thrice-recounted theophanic report as experienced *en route* to Damascus in Acts 9, 22, and 26 (ch. 5). Niehaus's first and simplest example is found in Genesis 12:11–13 and Genesis 20:11–13. In the first account, Abraham specifically instructs Sarai in the first-person and in the second text Abraham recounts the habituality of his and Sarai's ploy to Abimelech, this time in the third person (106–108). Niehaus's second example in Genesis 26:5 states that Abraham obeyed "My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws" (NKJV). According to Niehaus, the vast majority of scholarship has misread this statement by failing to take into account the third-person/first-person interchange, leading Niehaus to conclude that Genesis 26:5 is simply a first-

person recapitulation of Abraham's obedient posture throughout his life as voiced by God (130). His treatment of Paul's theophanic experience is exceptionally cogent, arguing that Paul (with Luke as author) is within his rights to include or exclude distinct information in each retelling (Acts 22, 26). Though a New Testament example, Niehaus feels it is appropriate since both testaments adhere to the "divine-human covenant-centered nature of biblical...historiography" and the assumption of "divine providence and intervention" (136). As a result, the much more expansive account offered in Acts 26 too can be explained by Niehaus's third/first-person paradigm. I anticipate that more critical interpreters will claim that Niehaus's pattern is rather a post-hoc explanation for what they would claim are simply contradictory accounts. However, his examples are chosen wisely, and his paradigm has explanatory power: seemingly contradictory information from the third-person account finds "supplementary" or "clarifying" information within the later first-person account (149, 145–149).

Niehaus concludes with a brief note on the presumed eating patterns of the first human couple as it pertains to the tree of life, asking, was a one-time or habitual consumption intended? Niehaus finds merit in both views (156–157). He then ends with a recapitulation of his own, summarizing the entire work while hinting at the serpent's role as the deceiver par excellence.

This work offers a refreshing and erudite evaluation of an interpretive problem that has caused the spilling of much ink. This book offers a useful entry point into one facet of the Old Testament's narrative poetics, demonstrating that the compositional principles therein are far different from modernity's.

C.J. Gossage is a graduate of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary with a M.A. in Old Testament and a M.A. in Biblical Languages (2021). He also holds a B.A. in Liberal Arts from Northern Arizona University and began his Ph.D. (Hebrew Bible and the History of Interpretation) at Hebrew-Union College in Cincinnati, Ohio in the fall of 2021. C.J. has worked as an editorial assistant for both *Africanus Journal* and Dr. William and Aida Spencer's recent release *Christian Egalitarian Leadership: Empowering the Whole Church according to the Scriptures*.

Review of *Seven Transforming Gifts of Menopause* by Cheryl Bridges Johns (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2020)

JEAN RISLEY

This book is for women approaching, experiencing, or recovering from the changes of midlife. It is also helpful for pastors, counselors, and spiritual directors working with women in midlife who are experiencing this transition. The book shows how many aspects of the physical and psychological effects these women are experiencing relate to their spiritual formation and development. *Seven Transforming Gifts of Menopause* describes the physical, emotional, and relational events during menopause and the ways they can be used in a process of significant spiritual growth. Each of the seven transforming gifts is considered in the secular context of personal and relational developmental tasks, but then it is brought into the realm of spiritual development and its contribution there.

Cheryl Bridges Johns speaks as a woman who has come through these experiences with the knowledge and awareness developed in advanced seminary education and extensive pastoral ministry. She builds on the work of Gail Sheehy and Christine Northrup, providing many specific illustrations based on women she has known, and she includes thoughtful questions and suggestions to bring insight into the life of the reader. She currently serves as Chair of Spiritual Renewal at the Pentecostal Theological Seminary.

The critical issue for the author is what psychologists have identified as the separation between the “false self,” the person we project and appear to be to others, and the “true self,” which represents our authentic nature. As children and adolescents, we each discover that there are aspects of our self which are approved and encouraged by those around us, and there are aspects which lead to negative reactions. In order to live comfortably, we tend to accentuate the approved characteristics and conceal or attempt to root out those which disrupt our relationships. After many years of busy living, we can find separating our core nature and character from the public person we have created as difficult to do.

The problem is that our relationship with God and our spiritual life must come out of our genuine, true self. For women, adolescence is a time when girls are particularly responsive to what is acceptable to others, and cultural norms also lead a girl to build a self-understanding that matches her surrounding expectations. This book uses the changes which are part of the transitions in menopause to unravel the false self and reveal the true person that has been hidden over the years.

The book considers each of the stages of discovering and developing the true self. The seven stages of “self” are:

- **uncovering:** The hormonal and relational changes of midlife can bring forward long forgotten or repressed memories of turning points that led to the formation of the false self. Understanding and coming to terms with the choices made can lead to understanding of the aspects of the true self hidden and left behind.
- **anger:** Seeing these events from a mature point of view, one can discover and experience anger at circumstances in the helpless times of childhood and adolescence. Hormonal changes bring this anger forward, but awareness makes it possible to heal from the effects of repressed anger and also to direct that anger forward into compassion and motivated action for justice.
- **authentic self:** Discovering and reestablishing the true self requires attention, time, and self-compassion. One will need to reserve the time and space, claim permission to explore

and change, set boundaries on those who may resist change, and accept and honor the authentic person who is emerging.

- **use of time:** At menopause many of the patterns of life and claims on time are changing. It is a time to take control and establish new patterns for life going forward, including healthy patterns of fitness, sleep, food, work, rest, and Sabbath.
- **spiritual freedom:** With new understanding of the true self, it becomes possible to reexamine spiritual life to separate those aspects which were culturally based by early education, like the assumptions of patriarchy and the stereotypical “good” woman. A newer and deeper understanding of God and of the relationship in which personal purpose unfolds becomes possible.
- **vision:** With the new freedom from many responsibilities, time to discover and act on personal mission emerges. Each person can look inside to find her own passion and then look around to the needs of the world which that passion would lead and motivate her to serve.
- **courage:** With clarified memories and our revived authentic self, it is possible to return to the courage and confidence we had back when we thought all things were possible. Becoming aware of how we lost that confidence makes possible reviving it and bringing it into our newly recovered vision and purpose.

Personal and group reflections are included with each of these areas.

There is a very broad range of examples included with each of the stages, and many will find some of these examples come close to their own life experiences. The underlying culture is one of the baby boom generation, using many of the expectations and changes that women of this generation faced. The examples include a variety of specific racial and ethnic situations which add depth and flavor to the specific events. There is also consideration for those who have been subjected to some forms of abuse, and this can be very helpful for those of us who have felt isolated by our personal history.

The presentation is encouraging and empathetic with the reader’s experience, even as the material can be deeply disturbing. For example, “the waves of perimenopause will drag you where you do not want to go. But for new life to emerge, you must lean into the pain, groaning and crying, all the while anticipating the new life waiting to burst forth” (47). Menopause is a time full of challenging changes, and it is by facing and exploring the depth of the issues that one can truly grow spiritually through it.

Engaging this book requires empathy and maturity. I recommend it for anyone whose ministry will involve working with women in or after midlife, in order to understand the internal world of these women. It is appropriate for classes in pastoral counseling, but since solo pastors may work with women of all ages and stages, it would be helpful in general pastoral ministry. It is also appropriate for those whose role will include spiritual formation, since it is very clear about the range of issues that can affect spiritual development.

Jean Risley is a retired Presbyterian minister interested in spiritual formation, the influence of first century Judaism on Jesus and the early church, moral guidance and growing toward righteousness, dealing with clergy misconduct, working with churches in conflict and transition, and life and ministry in small churches.

Her first career was in computers, working with artificial intelligence, and her second career was as a technical manager, leading teams of programmers to build strategic systems. She was ordained in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and served as pastor of Scotchtown Presbyterian Church in Middletown, New York. Her first book, *A Place Where Everybody Matters: Life and Ministry in a Small Church*, shows how a small church can be a great place to grow disciples.

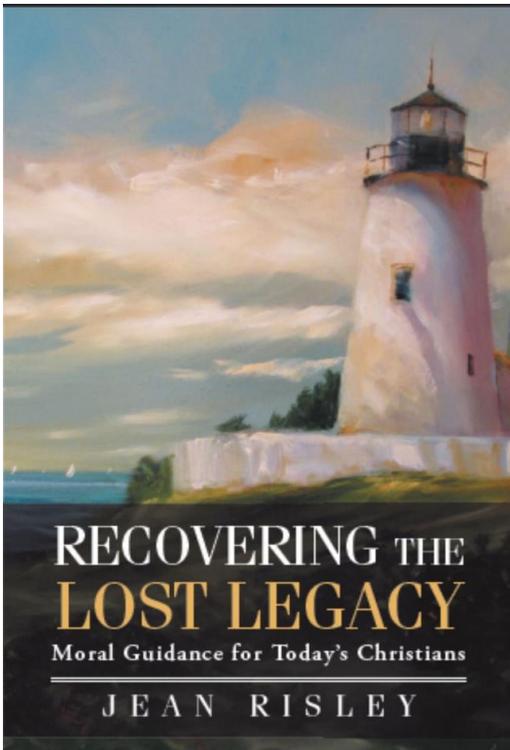
She was challenged by the question, “How do we know which of the Old Testament commandments Christians need to obey?” Since most new Christians in the early church were not Jews, she needed to discover how “righteous Gentiles” were

expected to behave in the first century. Doctoral study with Christian and Jewish scholars and engaging Jewish sacred texts during those doctoral studies led to the ideas in *Recovering the Lost Legacy*.

Dr. Risley served as interim pastor in several churches in the New England area and as a guest preacher and teacher in a variety of churches. In 2017, she was dismissed from PCUSA to ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians, where she served as Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of the Northeast Coast.

Her education includes the D.Min. and M.Div. degrees from Andover Newton Theological School, an MBA from Simmons College, a M.S. in Computer Science from the State University of New York at Buffalo, and a B.S. in Mathematics from Michigan State University.

Recovering the Lost Legacy by Rev. Dr. Jean F. Risley



Holiness, the knowledge of what it meant to be righteous before God was a gift from the Jewish faith of the founders to the whole church. It was the goal toward which each person should be striving. Righteousness, the godly behavior God asked of us, was originally specified through the moral provisions of the law. The moral law was a critical part of the gospel, because it showed us our direction and guided the steps to take on the path of righteousness. It was the great legacy that Judaism gave to the Christian church. Somehow, somewhere, it was lost.

How did this happen? Initially Christianity was considered just another form of Judaism, just another group of ethnic Jews. The first Gentiles accepted into the movement were minority members of a largely Jewish. The expectations in the Hebrew Bible for Gentiles among the people, the moral law, provided the basis for the integration of Gentiles into the communities that became the early church.

Once the majority of people in the church no longer had the common experience of Jewish law, the memory of what it meant to be non-Jewish in a Jewish community was lost. This book uncovers what was lost, exploring the foundations of God's expectations for human behavior that are so desperately needed in today's church. It is available from Amazon and Barnes & Noble and Westbow Press. See <https://jeanrisley.com/recovering-the-lost-legacy>.

Review of *The Progressive Church: A Dangerous Movement Has Begun* by Connie Engel (Santa Monica: Constant Byword, 2021)

JEANNE DEFazio

Redeeming the Screens, a book I co-edited, offers testimonies from world-class relational media evangelists telling their own stories of what brought them to receive Jesus and how the power of his death and resurrection on the cross helped them through the challenges in their lives. In this book, I mention attending Christian meetings hosted by Hollywood producer Peter Engel and his wife, Connie, a successful model and actress. They are two world class relational evangelists whose ministry has impacted many lives, including my own. Driven by her concern for the spiritual wellbeing of those she and Peter have led to the Lord and discipled, Connie's book: *The Progressive Church: A Dangerous Movement Has Begun* is geared for the benefit of the general reader based on Scripture as authoritative and historically accurate as the Word of God. For example, "We, as a Body, must be grounded in the truth of the Word. According to 2 Timothy 3:16-17: 'All Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man or woman of God may be fully capable, equipped for every good work'" (15).

She believes there is evidence that shows that liberalism within the church has not only been planned but executed throughout much of America and the world as another attempt to modernize Christianity. These participants believe that Christians need to rethink Christianity and mix it into the same basket along with the multifaceted world beliefs. To conform, accept, and agree with those multitudes of beliefs and rules is a recipe for disaster (17). Among the doctrinal divergencies from historic orthodox tenets she notes their rejection of the authority of the Bible, a corresponding questioning of the need for the atonement Jesus accomplished on the cross and the reality of hell. Progressive theology undermines Jesus' redemptive work. The orthodox Christian Jesus is the Son of God and second person of the Trinity who died and was resurrected as an act of inter-trinitarian love. Jesus' sinless blood shed on Calvary acts as a substitutionary atonement for sinful humankind. Scripture clearly states that Jesus warns of judgement and hell whereas the Progressive Church insists that a God of love would not condemn anyone to hell. This contradicts the orthodox Christian position that Scripture is historically accurate and fully authoritative as the Word of God. Jesus, in the Progressive Church, is depicted in an Arian image, portraying Jesus as merely prophet, teacher, and holy man (19). Engel defines the Progressive Church as heterodoxy: "There is a dangerous, destructive movement traveling quickly across the globe. Have you heard about it? An emergence of false doctrines, heresies, and lies that formed within the church are spreading from steeple to steeple like wildfire" (9).

In brief, her analysis proceeds as follows. Chapter 1: keying off Matthew 15:89 ("These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship in vain. Their teachings are merely human rules" (TNIV). The author begins by defining the church under scrutiny as heterodox and sounding a warning to all exposed to its influence.

Chapter Two, "Billowing Red Flags," scripturally supports the orthodox Christian doctrine of the atonement (Matt. 26:28; Acts 20:28; Rom. 5:8-11) to underscore Jesus' redemptive work and to counter the Progressive Church's disputation of it:

Often, progressive Christians will refer to Jesus' sacrifice on the cross as horrific or unnecessary. The idea that God the Father would require the blood sacrifice of His Son is perceived to be an indictment on God's character, turning Him into a divine abuser. This is sometimes referred to as "Cosmic Child Abuse." This movement challenges the atonement, on whether it is deemed necessary. They might say that we aren't really born sinners, or that Jesus wasn't divinely ordained for this sacrifice (26).

Chapter Three, “Rituals and Conflicting Doctrines,” historically documents the prayer labyrinth that has been used by some in The Progressive Church as a pagan ritual and cites Paul the Apostle to warn against this practice as heretical: “Labyrinths were rooted in paganism and continued to live on with Catholicism” (44). Recently, a movement called the Emergent Church has embraced the search for open spirituality apart from the Bible as well. Paul warned us of these hollow and deceptive philosophies. For support she cites Colossians 2:8: “See to it that there is no one who takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception in accordance with human tradition, in accordance with elementary principles of the world, rather than in accordance with Christ” (49).

Chapter Four, “What does Jesus Have to Say?” cites Matthew 5:29; 7:13; 10:28; 13:42, and 25:41 to demonstrate that Jesus had a lot to say about the reality of hell to counter The Progressive Church’s denial of it: “Some say that hell isn’t even in the Bible and that it’s not Jewish, it’s not Christian, and that a belief in hell is nothing but pagan” (59).

In short, in this book the Progressive Church’s adherents and seekers receive a crash course in Scripture, skillfully citing orthodox Christian doctrine to denounce this church’s popular postmodern Christian heresy. This is the strength of the book. I found no theological or doctrinal weaknesses in it. Connie Engel’s knowledge of Scripture counteracts those seeking Jesus in a glamorous but theologically flawed belief system. The author provides a great guideline for Christians who want to help Progressive Church devotees find the love of Jesus in Scripture. I recommend that seminary students buy the book, and that professors and pastors of doctrinally orthodox evangelical churches use it as a resource for theology courses that investigate spiritual counterfeits. As the Progressive Church continues to proselytize, readers may soon encounter its teachings’ impact on parishioners. This resource will help them be prepared.

Jeanne DeFazio is the co-editor of *Creative Ways to Build Christian Community; Redeeming the Screens; Empowering English Language Learners; and An Artistic Tribute to Harriet Tubman*. She co-authored with Teresa Flowers: *How to Have an Attitude of Gratitude on the Night Shift*, and edited *Berkeley Street Theatre; Keeping the Dream Alive: A Reflection on the Art of Harriet Lorence Nesbitt; Specialist Fourth Class John Joseph DeFazio: Advocating for Disabled American Veterans; The Commission*, and *Finding A Better Way*. She completed a BA in history at the University of California, Davis, MAR in theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and a Cal State Teach English Language Learners program. From 2009 to the present, she has served as an Athanasian Teaching Scholar at Gordon-Conwell’s multicultural Boston Center for Urban Ministerial Education.

FINDING A BETTER WAY

EDITED BY JEANNE C. DEFAZIO

Forewords by Martha Reyes and Olga Soler

Afterword by François Augustin

This is a wonderful collection of conversations from ethnically diverse contributors using the art form of writing to promote inclusion and as an antidote to structural racism. Thanks to these contributing authors whose conversations allow us to understand the experience of people who have a bias against them. This collection of conversations offers some ideas and strategies. What is the next step?

"Finding A Better Way promotes racial reconciliation that is so important in the midst of the upsurge of racist attacks on Asian Americans. As an American of pan-Pacific Island descent, I recommend this book!"

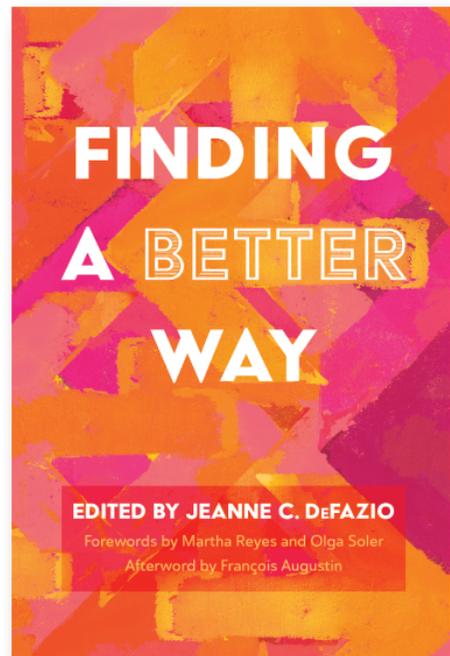
—MICHAEL TAESALI, contributing author to *The Commission*

*"In a world of racism and injustice, there are some who will speak up to defend, enlighten, and encourage others. In the case of *Finding a Better Way*, Jeanne DeFazio takes on a challenge. One that can bring criticism and opposition to her life. Some women stand up for what is right without concern of any backlash. Ms. DeFazio is one of these women. She shares her personal stories along with others' stories to bring these concerns to light and expose them for the betterment of humankind."*

—CONNIE ENGEL, author of *The Progressive Church: A dangerous Movement Has Begun*

"Finding A Better Way shines the light of Jesus on the darkness of racial injustice. As an African American Christian leader, I endorse this book!"

—YVONNETTE O'NEAL, founder of *Ambassadors Network Ministries*



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JEANNE DEFAZIO is the coeditor of *Creative Ways to Build Christian Community*, *Redeeming the Screens*, *An Artistic Tribute To Harriet Tubman*, and *Empowering English Language Learners*. She co-authored with Teresa Flowers *How to Have an Attitude of Gratitude on the Night Shift* and edited *Keeping the Dream Alive*, *Specialist Fourth Class John Joseph DeFazio: Advocating for Disabled American Veterans*, *Berkeley Street Theatre*, and *The Commission*. She is a contributing author to *Christian Egalitarian Leadership*.

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