

# AFRICANUS JOURNAL

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## Goals of the *Africanus Journal*

The *Africanus Journal* is an award-winning interdisciplinary biblical, theological, and practical journal of the Center 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., D.Min., Ed.D., Th.D., ST.D., Ph.D., or equivalent degree program.

Two issues normally are published per year.

<https://www.gordonconwell.edu/boston/africanus-journal/>

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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.xxi.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 Pinggera, eds., William Adler, trans., *Iulius 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, J. Saemi Kim, Seong Park, Nicole Rim, John Runyon, Aída Besançon Spencer, William David Spencer

### Resources:

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### Summary of Content:

Seven articles celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary by its first president and six of its multicultural graduates with advice for future seminarians. The book reviews discuss church life, Bible commentaries, theology, domestic violence, and fiction.

# *Africanus* THE AFRICANUS GUILD *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.

# Inaugural Acceptance Speech Fall 1969<sup>1</sup>

HAROLD JOHN OCKENGA

Mr. Chairman; Mr. President of the Board of Trustees; Dr. Billy Graham; Trustees; members of the honored platform party; members of the academic community; members of the faculties; students; staff; friends; ladies and gentlemen: I am very much moved, of course, by these words and I willingly and humbly accept the opportunities and the responsibilities which devolve upon me in the inauguration as President of Gordon College and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. I have asked myself, and other people have asked too, why, when I was engaged in a rewarding and satisfying field of service in a day of student insurrection, revolt, riot and protests, when apparently college presidents are abdicating their responsibilities and fleeing their posts, that I should come to a campus with its tumultuous conflicts and tensions. I suppose I owe an answer to that, to myself and to my peers of the day.

The primary answer would be, I believe, that God wants me there and that is why I am accepting this responsibility, and am entering into these opportunities. However, I might say a few things by way of response. One of these concerns my purpose in accepting such a great responsibility. It is to claim the Covenant position for the young people of the church. Does that mean that we are not concerned about the masses of young people out in the world who do not call themselves Christians? Of course not. We are tremendously concerned about them. But when we establish a Christian college and a Christian theological seminary, we are concerned with young people of the Church. We are concerned with those who are in the Covenant position as the children of God. And that means then, several things.

I think it means that these young people who are under the pressures philosophically, socially, and personally, by the attacks upon the Christian position, can survive the confusion in which so many find themselves at this time. Young people are faced with a sense of futility, with nihilism, with the meaninglessness of life; they are resorting to all kinds of answers, except the answer the Church can give and which we can give through our Christian faith.

I believe there must be an instruction that is given in basic Christian teaching. This is what we call Christian theism – not a mere belief in God and absolute law and the value and responsibility of man, but a theism which is revealed in God's Word, is redemptive through Jesus Christ and which acknowledges the sovereign reign of deity. I believe that we have to move out of the mere realm of philosophy and bring theism into the area of Christian life. Now this means the creation of an atmosphere for Christian education, which is conducive to these things. I am getting awfully tired, and I hope some of you are, of the sophisticated viewpoint that to be intellectual and to be educated you have to be physically dirty, be a moral pervert and a social revolutionary. I don't believe it is so.

I believe that we can be intellectual and we can have an academic atmosphere and be in an academic community and reemphasize the virtues, the Christian virtues of purity, honesty, and industry and charity and courtesy, and the other things that traditionally we would accept in a Christian community. That does not mean that we want hothouse education. In the Song of Solomon the author invokes the north wind. He says, "Come, O north wind, blow upon my garden, that the spices may flow out thereof." In other words, we do not create a hothouse in which we are going to inculcate certain attitudes in the lives of these young people. We want them to have true freedom of person and research. But it is a fallacy of the first order to say that to make a value judgment on drug addiction or on sex perversion, or upon alcoholic indulgence you have

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<sup>1</sup> This is the acceptance speech on Oct. 22, 1969 by Rev. Dr. Harold John Ockenga as president of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and Gordon College. It followed a sermon by Dr. Billy Graham.

to participate in them. You can make a value judgment by resistance to these things, as well as by participation in them.

In my opinion then, we ought to have the communication of knowledge within what may be called the Christian framework of philosophy. There was a day, of course, when the great intellectual institutions did that. But from the days of the Harvard Report on, it has been commonly accepted that there is no integration in modern learning or modern education. This is a time when we need once again to call at least some of our educational institutions back to this theistic position in which we affirm that God is there, that God's law is based upon His existence, that God is, that this is woven into the warp and woof of the universe, including the nature of man, that man has been made in the image of God and although that image is perverted today, he is still responsible according to the law of God, that man is capable of infinite potentialities for good or evil, that he may be redeemed from any perversion which is there through the fall, and that he may live with a redemptive influence in society itself.

Now this is our Christian viewpoint. We need to inculcate this in a framework within which we do our research. Christian research is not limited because it works upon presuppositions because all research is based upon certain presuppositions, and we must admit the bias which we have in calling for this kind of Christian institution. I submit to you that if we are to have a Christian institution today—and we unabashedly and without apology announce that this is what we intend to have—then it will be upon such a framework.

That means, I suppose, that I ought to say just a word about my own philosophy: a philosophy that is based upon Biblical theism. It is the fact that God is there. It is the belief that derived from this, there are certain moral standards and truths and values which do not change with the changing of the times. Today we resist the vast influence of what we call "circumstantial or environmental ethics," as such. We believe that there are certain standards that are derived from the Revelation of God, given to us in Scripture. And with this viewpoint, then we approach the whole educational scene. This means there must be an interpretation of the movements of the day in the light of what is given to us by God, that which has been revealed in his Word. Also it means that in the disciplines of the classroom, there is an integration of learning with the presuppositions with which we approach these various tasks of our educational responsibilities.

Practically, this means we turn to our faculties and we believe that these men on our teaching staff, having such a commitment, will be able to re-state the Christian faith with relevance for our own day; that they will be able not only to re-state it, but they will be able to apply it unto the various phases of life which are the points of tension and conflict facing us today. They will be able to re-introduce these integrating factors into all aspects of our existence, relating to education, entertainment, the economic order, our family relationships, the cultural scene, and what has been called the great "divorce" can end. It means that we can bridge the gap.

If we are to do this, it will certainly demand the support of the Christian community. It will demand your assent; it will demand your prayer support, your material support. There is no use talking in the Christian community about what we call a "Christian university," unless we can establish at least a Christian college and an overarching great theological institution dedicated to revealed Christianity. We believe we can have this and that there can be once again inspired in the lives of young men and women a love of their country instead of shame of their country, defense of instead of an apology for their country. They can see their nation in the great sweep of history, what it has achieved and what it has offered to the world; the refuge it has been to the peoples of the world and the moral leadership it has given to the world, with the result there can be once again an honest and devout patriotism – a Christian patriotism without saying "my country, right or wrong." I believe that we can inculcate this.

I believe that in our young people today there can be instilled a motivation for service. Not some disdain for these things, but an honest motivation because of their gratitude to God and their love of Jesus Christ, resulting in an investment of their lives in such things as self-sacrificing service which the evangelical community has accomplished through the centuries. I believe also that it can give them a challenge to move into the humanitarian areas where there is no “divorce” in the Gospel between a personal gospel and a social gospel, but where both are brought together in the conviction of the individual so that he expresses his life in a social framework and responsibility. This can be done.

Perhaps this may seem an anachronism to some of you. It may seem that we are trying to turn the clock back, but I believe that if we can do this, it will be a catalyst in society, in the great educational system of our day, and if it can be multiplied in enough instances, it could save this nation from the holocaust which seems to be imminent if we do not have that kind of change.

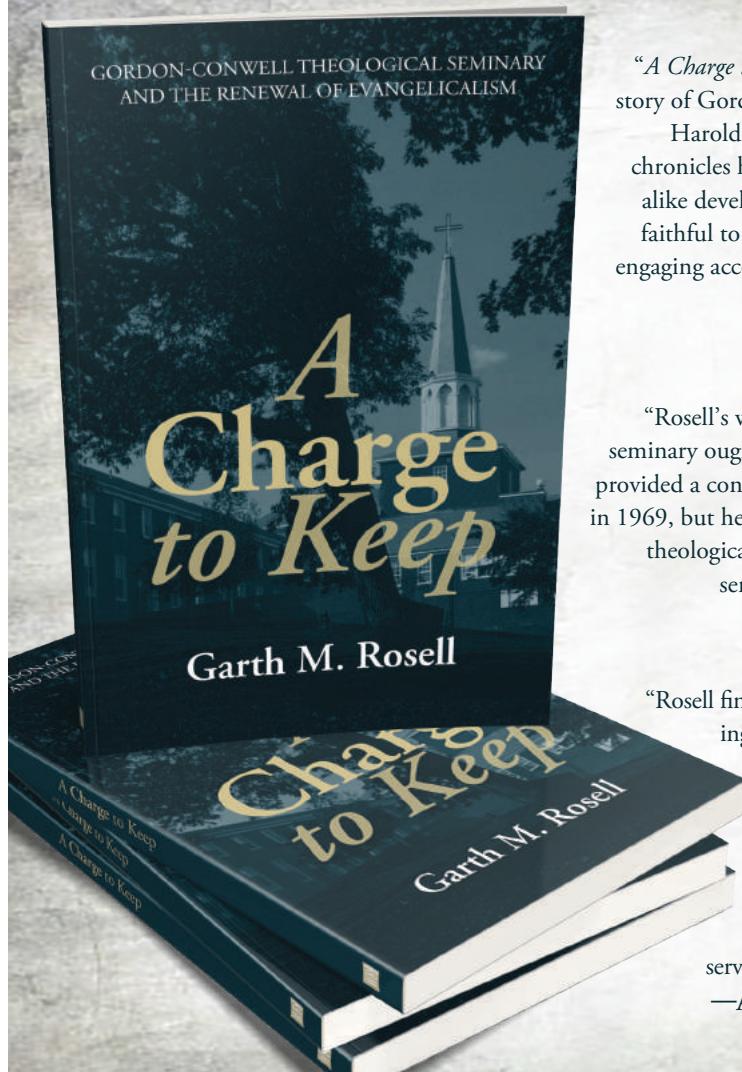
I certainly would support what Dr. Graham said about the young generation, that we face the fact of their sincerity, their dedication, their willingness to sacrifice and to see change. I believe this is all a challenge for good. I believe the time has come when we as individuals must accept something more than the autonomy of the human mind, something more than a return to the Aristotelian dictum that man is the measure of all things. We have to return to the “Given” on which ground western civilization was built, maintained its greatness and achieved its influence throughout the world. This is the great Judaeo-Christian tradition of the belief in God, in absolute moral law, in the value and responsibility of man, and in the expression of this in the society in which we live. If we do, we certainly can live.

I trust that at Gordon, both the College and the Theological Seminary and any other school that may be established in the future, we will devote ourselves to this end. Certainly I dedicate myself to this task.

Thank you very much.

For nearly half a century, Harold John Ockenga's name was virtually synonymous with that of evangelicalism as he voiced its concerns and convictions and provided leadership for nearly every one of its institutions: serving as founder and first president of the National Association of Evangelicals for United Action; as president of the American Board of the World Evangelical Fellowship; as president, co-founder and later Chairman of the Board of Fuller Theological Seminary; as Chairman of the Board of *Christianity Today*; as a director of the Christian Freedom Foundation; as a member of the board of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association; as editor of the Evangelical Book Club; as chair of the National Association of Evangelicals' International Commission; and as the founding president of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. In addition to these tasks, he found time to write some fifteen books including *Our Protestant Heritage* (1938); *The Comfort of God* (1944); *Our Evangelical Faith* (1946); *The Spirit of the Living God* (1947); *Women Who Made Bible History* (1961); *A Christian Primer* (1966); *No Other Lord* (1969), and scores of articles, to produce over one hundred archival boxes of letters, journals, date books, and memorabilia, to produce nearly three thousand manuscript sermons and addresses and to leave a legacy of active ministry around the world. A native of Chicago, his own education included degrees from Taylor University, Westminster Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh along with several honorary degrees. Before taking on the role of president of Gordon College and Divinity School, he was the pastor of the influential Park Street Church in downtown Boston for 33 years.

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*A Charge to Keep* is an accessible, scholarly history that tells the story of Gordon-Conwell from its founding by Billy Graham and

Harold Ockenga to the present day. Dr. Rosell thoughtfully chronicles how professors, students, administrators, and trustees alike developed an academically rigorous culture that remained faithful to the confessional tradition. I was inspired to read this engaging account of how powerfully my alma mater helped shape and advance the evangelical movement in America."

—CHRIS CHUN, Gateway Seminary

Rosell's work offers a model for how the story of a theological seminary ought to be written. . . . He shows how the seminary has provided a consistently strong evangelical witness since its founding in 1969, but he also acknowledges painful moments of personal and theological tension. In short, in Rosell's hands, a distinguished seminary receives the distinguished history it deserves."

—GRANT WACKER, Duke Divinity School

Rosell finds at the heart of Gordon-Conwell a vision of providing rigorous biblical training for Christian thinkers as an antidote to anti-intellectualism in the evangelical church. This deeply researched and insightful history is in part a celebration of that vision and the extraordinarily committed faculty, staff, and community members who made it a reality; and in part a prophetic call for the seminary to continue to serve, at a high level, the intellectual needs of the church."

—ADRIAN CHASTAIN WEIMER, Providence College

# Serving the Global Church as a World Christian

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8 NIV).

DAEWON MOON

## A Calling to Serve the Global Church

Having grown up in an evangelical Presbyterian church in Seoul, South Korea, as an undergraduate, I was involved in the international mission organization Youth With A Mission (YWAM). I attended YWAM’s Mission Conference every summer, where I heard about and met missionaries from all around the world. In addition, I participated in several short-term mission outreaches to China, the Philippines, and Hong Kong. Through all of these experiences, I came to realize that God was calling me to serve as an international missionary. This calling was not merely a temporary passion but a strong conviction that grew clearer and firmer year after year.

Right after our marriage in 2006, my wife and I moved to Switzerland for missionary training with YWAM. In Switzerland, we explored a distinctive cross-cultural environment. As we realized how much we enjoyed our life and ministry with people from different cultural backgrounds, it became even more obvious to us that God invited us to serve His people beyond our own culture. After our training concluded, we served for a year as short-term missionaries in Uganda, Burundi, and Madagascar. During that time, God confirmed our calling as missionaries to Francophone Africa, where there was more need for missionaries than there was in Anglophone Africa.

## Theological Education in Boston

After much prayer and consideration about my future, I decided to pursue advanced theological studies in the United States to equip me to teach well and to train local pastors in Africa. I began my theological study at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Hamilton in 2007. I chose Gordon-Conwell because of its evangelical piety and academic excellence. The interdenominational nature of the seminary attracted me to a great extent because I desired to serve the global church across denominational boundaries. In many ways, Gordon-Conwell was a perfect place that God prepared for me.

During my M.Div. years, I enjoyed studying biblical languages and exegesis, which are the crucial foundation of all Christian ministries. The exegesis courses that I took provided strong biblical bases for mission and evangelism. For example, I was excited to read books like *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* by Dr. Walter Kaiser, President Emeritus of Gordon-Conwell. As a prospective missionary, I was particularly fascinated to take mission courses with Dr. Timothy Tennent and church history courses with Dr. Garth Rosell. Their insight and expertise opened my eyes to see mission movements from a broader historical perspective. After Dr. Tennent left Gordon-Conwell to become the President of Asbury Theological Seminary, I concentrated on studying the history of evangelical missions with Dr. Rosell. I greatly benefitted from my independent research course with him about nineteenth-century mission history.

In my final year at Gordon-Conwell, my academic and spiritual mentor Dr. Edward Keazirian encouraged me to study with Dr. Dana Robert at Boston University. Until that point, I hadn’t even thought about pursuing a doctorate. By God’s grace I was admitted to BU’s Ph.D. program. Under Dr. Robert’s exceptional supervision, I was introduced to the emerging field of research called World Christianity. I have learned that the history of Christian mission provides a wonderful framework for grasping the meaning of Christianity as a multicultural global religion. I was thrilled to explore mission history that demonstrates a unique characteristic of the Christian faith: that it is both universally applicable and locally inclusive. My personal calling to mission and scholarly understanding of World Christianity became integrated during my doctoral program in Boston.

## Broadening a Perspective on World Christianity

While studying at Gordon-Conwell, I was honored to attend the Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in Cape Town, South Africa in 2010. Thanks to the warm support of Dr. Doug Birdsall, who at that time was the Executive Director of the Lausanne Movement, Gordon-Conwell sent seven current GCTS students to the Congress to serve as stewards. This historic Congress—often referred as “the most representative gathering of Christian leaders in the 2000-year history of the Christian movement”—was an eye-opening opportunity for me to experience and comprehend the reality of World Christianity across ethnic, linguistic, and cultural boundaries. In particular, I’ll never forget participating in Holy Communion with 4,500 Christians from 198 countries. That was indeed a foretaste of the heavenly banquet of the Lamb of God (Rev 19:9). In 2011, I was selected as one of the student leaders to attend the Biannual Lausanne Leadership Meeting in Boston. In 2016, I had the privilege of participating in the Lausanne Younger Leaders Gathering in Indonesia. These global mission conferences were wonderful opportunities for me to learn firsthand how God has worked in many nations through combined, strategic efforts to spread the gospel of Christ.

On the academic side, I have been active in presenting my doctoral research (on an early-twentieth-century revival movement in East Africa) at national and international conferences, including those of the Yale-Edinburgh Conference, the Ecclesiastical History Society, and the International Association for Mission Studies. In these contexts, I received insightful critiques and helpful questions from prominent scholars of the history of Christianity, including Lamin Sanneh, Brian Stanley, David Bebbington, and Kevin Ward. With the emergence of World Christianity as a prominent field of study, more and more scholars celebrate the rise of a positive polycentrism in which many centers of Christianity have unique opportunities to contribute to and learn from one another. As a scholar from the non-Western world, I strive to contribute to a clear awareness of transnational and multicultural features of the Christian faith and its manifestation in the twenty-first century.

## Holistic Mission in Africa

After I completed my doctoral coursework and qualifying exams, I moved with my family to Burundi, a small landlocked country in East Africa. Since 2012, I have been teaching at International Leadership University (ILU), first as a visiting lecturer and currently as Academic Dean. ILU, which was established by an American mission organization in 2011, is the only university in Burundi that offers English-based degree programs. It is committed to developing future leaders of integrity and vision based on the biblical worldview. As of 2020, a total of roughly 850 students from ten different countries are enrolled at the bachelor’s and master’s level in ILU’s three schools: the School of Leadership, School of Business, and School of Theology.

My administrative role at the university is to supervise academic programs and develop teaching staff. I sometimes attend academic meetings of the Inter-University Council for East Africa, which consists of 114 member universities in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Burundi. On the Council, ILU represents twenty private universities in Burundi. I also teach graduate-level courses in the School of Theology. In 2019, ILU established a memorandum of understanding with the National Council of Churches of Burundi for theological education. As the official institution of the Council, ILU offers advanced learning and practical training to leading pastors in Burundi’s major denominations. Several Korean churches provide generous scholarships to promising African pastors studying at ILU.

In recent years, God has broadened the scope of my mission work in Burundi. In partnership with Daegu Dongshin Church in Korea, my wife and I started a ministry for pregnant women in rural areas. We facilitate weekly meetings for fifty women and offer spiritual and practical teaching. We provide them with nutritious meals and proper medical care. Through our holistic mission for

pregnant women, we aim to demonstrate God's love and care for one of the most disadvantaged groups in the country. Almost all of the women have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior during or after the project, and we have helped them get connected with local churches.

Recently we led another project to provide a water well for people in a mountainous area of Burundi. Seoul Light and Salt Church gave a generous gift to drill a new well, and an American Non-Government Organization (NGO) called Think East Africa handled the technical details. It took almost a year to make the plans, drill the well, and install the associated equipment such as a solar panel system, water pipes, and water tank. With this new well, approximately 2,000 people can get clean water from a public tap, free of charge every day. In the Bible, water is described as the source of life in both a physical and a spiritual sense. For example, Prophet Isaiah used the image of water as he announced God's promise of salvation (Isa 12:3; 55:1). Jesus also described his salvation as a spring of water welling up to eternal life (John 4:14). We pray that through this water project, the mercy of the Lord may quench the physical and spiritual thirst of people in this rural area of Burundi.

My experiences on the mission field have taught me that mission is—and should be—holistic. We cannot draw a neat line between spiritual life and physical life. We cannot conveniently separate physical need from social or spiritual need. Everything is closely connected, because human beings are, after all, holistic. I cannot say what initiative is most important among all the mission work I have been doing. All of them are important, because they serve people in different ways. I also have learned that partnership is essential for holistic mission. No individual missionary can effectively address all the aspects of people's lives. We should work as a team with other people who have different gifts. I'm often expected to play a mediating role between local partners, government officials, and supporters at home. I strongly believe that God calls all believers to collaborate together in partnership for His mission to bless the nations (Eph. 4:4–10).

### Important Books that Shaped Me as a World Christian

Throughout my academic and ministerial journey, many important books have shaped my historical and theological perspective as a world Christian. I'll share briefly, below, about four of them. In particular, I have been fascinated to study mission history not merely as the story of missionary activities, but more importantly as the story of the Christian gospel challenging, correcting, and transforming the traditions of both sending and receiving societies. World Christianity is now perceived as a process (and result) of various indigenous responses to the Christian faith.

Andrew Walls is one of the earliest scholars to analyze insightfully the church's transformation from Western Christendom to World Christianity. In his groundbreaking book *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, Walls examines Christian history from a global perspective as a history of the gospel's complicated interaction with local cultures and traditions.<sup>1</sup> According to Walls, the Eurocentric version of the institutional history of Christianity is no longer capable of taking account of the transnational and multicultural features of World Christianity. Along the same line, Dana Robert maintains that cross-cultural mission has functioned as the central historical process in the formation of Christianity as a world religion. Her book *Christian Mission* discusses how the multicultural face of contemporary Christianity originates from the continuing complex interactions between the Christian gospel's universal nature and the diverse local contexts into which it is transmitted.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> Dana L. Robert, *Christian Mission: How Christianity Became a World Religion* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

Contextualization (or inculturation) is arguably the most important issue in theological discourse about World Christianity. In his remarkable book *Translating the Message*, Lamin Sanneh claims that a key to the phenomenal growth of World Christianity is the vernacular nature of Christianity and its empowering openness to all languages and cultures.<sup>3</sup> As Sanneh aptly notes, the “translatability” of the Christian message—the fact that the New Testament was written in a different language from Jesus’ spoken language—is the most distinctive feature of Christianity, which affirms every culture and language as a legitimate vehicle of God’s salvific message. Observing the dramatic shift in Christianity’s center of gravity, Timothy Tennent ardently calls for interdisciplinary, cross-cultural Christian theology in his book *Theology in the Context of World Christianity*.<sup>4</sup> God is much bigger than Western theology conceives of Him, Tennent asserts, and all Christians from various traditions of the world can offer unique contributions to the fuller understanding of God.

### Serving the Global Church as a World Christian

While visiting and ministering in thirty countries on four continents over the past two decades, I’ve found that examining the Christian faith with global eyes helps expose my own cultural bias and reveals profound insights for Christianity. My life and ministry in Africa have taught me how to overcome the tendency to confine the universal scope of God’s salvation within my culture and tradition. While the truth of Christianity is timeless and universal, new contexts bring new questions, new understandings, and new expressions. I’m convinced that our God is not the savior of a certain group of people, but the savior of all the nations.

I’m grateful that God equipped me for this global ministry through my theological studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. What I learned from the seminary was not only biblical knowledge and sound doctrines, but also Kingdom consciousness and Christ-like character such as integrity and humility. Upholding the spiritual heritage of the New Evangelicalism, all Gordon-Conwell faculty emphasized the cosmic nature of God’s redemptive work. They also modelled servant leadership through their words and behavior toward students. Following the remarkable examples that I encountered at the seminary, I consider my mission work in Africa to be much more than a religious obligation; it is an honorable privilege to be part of God’s great story of salvation.

As a non-Westerner educated in the West, a mission scholar with extensive field experience, and an evangelical engaged in interdenominational collaboration in mission, I hope to bridge the gaps between different groups of people who work for world mission. I believe that all Christians must be Kingdom-focused in their life and ministry, and the Kingdom of God must always supersede national, denominational, and institutional loyalties. Since our God loves all nations without showing favoritism (Acts 10:34–35), we—as His redeemed people—are also supposed to follow Him in loving and serving the whole world. In this sense, Christianity is (and will be) always World Christianity, as it has been from the very beginning.

Originally from South Korea, Rev. Dr. Daewon Moon serves as Academic Dean at International Leadership University in Burundi. He received his M.Div. from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Hamilton, MA and Ph.D. in World Christianity from Boston University. He has published articles in *The International Bulletin of Mission Research*, *Studies in World Christianity*, *Lausanne Global Analysis*, and *The World Christian Encyclopedia*. His forthcoming book with Brill, *Becoming Saved Ones*, examines the history of the East African Revival with attention to the ways in which African revivalists appropriated and shaped Christian beliefs and practices during the 1930s and 1940s. He has been involved in the Lausanne Movement since 2010.

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<sup>3</sup> Lamin O. Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church Is Influencing the Way We Think about and Discuss Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007).

## Not by Might or Power but by My Spirit

URSULA WILLIAMS

It was hot in the office. In March in northern Benin the temperatures can easily surpass 100°F, yet we kept working. We were checking the translation of Colossians 3:15. “It is impossible to say ‘let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts’ in Nateni,” Esaïe, a Beninese translator, explained. “That is why we translated ‘let the peace that Christ gives be in your liver.’” “I understand,” I said, “For the Natemba, the seat of emotion and decision making is the liver, not the heart; but the real difficulty is the metaphor of ‘rule’ in this context. In the Greek text, the word βραβεύω is used. It means to judge or decide, in the sense of directing and guiding decision making. In other words, the peace that Christ provides should inform what we think and decide.” “I see,” said Esaie. “In that case, I think we need to reword our translation …” I smiled. It is a rewarding experience to be in a position to give input into the translation of the Bible into a minority language. To help translators better understand the biblical text in order to improve their translation so that many people will hear God speaking to them in the language they understand best - that’s a joy! I am constantly aware of the tremendous privilege I’ve been given to be trained and equipped for this role, and I am humbled in the face of this enormous task of translating the Bible. How did all this come about? Let me share with you a bit of my story.

My mother and stepfather (who was a refugee from Germany during the second World War) came from a Roman Catholic background. During my childhood, my parents made sure that my four brothers and I regularly attended services at the Roman Catholic church. So, I became familiar with some of the biblical stories and knew a bit about Jesus. I remember a very positive experience as a young child: when I had received Communion (*das Himmelsbrot* Bread of heaven) for the first time, my heart was filled with joy and excitement! By the time I reached my teenage years, those childhood experiences had faded and I wondered what life was all about. I realized that, though I was a young person, one day I would be an old person — provided I had the chance to get old at all! And then I would die. Death seemed the most certain fact of life. But I was hungry for life and eager to find meaning in it.

By God’s grace, it wasn’t long before the scales came off my eyes. The miracle of conversion took place in my life at a mission event when I was seventeen years old. That day I signed a little card, a short “contract” that said four things: I accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior; I believe that my sins are forgiven through his death and his resurrection; I will seek fellowship with other believers; I will seek to share Jesus with others. Later that night, I had one more question: “How will I know that this is all true and that Jesus is alive?” The answer I was given: “Read the Bible!”

I began reading the Bible and experienced God speaking to me through His word. His Spirit assured me of God’s love and presence, but also challenged my innermost thoughts and my interactions with other people. He helped me understand what it means to be a child of God and a follower of Jesus. I joined a Baptist church in Bonn, and a year later, while at a youth camp in Sweden, I heard about overseas missions for the first time. Deeply moved by the presentation, I saw this obvious truth: as the Father sent Jesus into the world, so Jesus sends us into the world. At that moment, I offered my life in full-time service to the Lord in overseas missions. It would be another eight years before I set foot in Africa.

During my training as a pediatric nurse, my plans began to take shape. I heard about the work and mission of Wycliffe Bible Translators and became very interested. In fact, a new dimension of life opened up! I was clueless as to how many languages existed in the world and how many of them had no writing system. I discovered that there were millions of people who had no access at

all to the Bible in their mother tongue.<sup>1</sup> The thought of millions of people living without the transforming truth of Scripture deeply distressed me.

The more I learned about the fascinating and challenging work of Bible translation, the more I became convinced that “this is the way, I shall walk in it.” I joined Wycliff Germany in 1986 and then took a number of their training courses, including various linguistic and cross-cultural studies. I spent another two years at All Nations Christian College in England, earning a diploma in Biblical Studies and Missions. Finally, I was ready for my overseas assignment. At that time, the late 1980s, there were many opportunities in French-speaking West Africa. Consequently, more schooling! I spent over a year in the beautiful town of Besançon, France, studying and learning to speak French.

Then, finally, in September 1992, with an assignment to work with Wycliff’s partner organisation SIL<sup>2</sup> in Benin I left for Africa, together with my friend and colleague Brigitte Nedellec. We had embarked on what would be a long-lasting adventure. With great anticipation we moved into a small house made of mud in the village of Tayakou in northern Benin. This village would be our home for the next nine years, allowing us to live among and learn from the Natemba people. Our first assignment: become familiar with their culture and language.

In the early years there, it took all our energy to adapt to this new way of living - no running water or electricity, oppressive heat, a whole new diet, all kinds of creatures in and around the house - some of them potentially harmful. Through it all, we discovered that humor and laughter are wonderful remedies for what ails the body and soul. As we struggled with sickness and physical weakness, we experienced the care of the Nateni community. Indeed, getting to know the people, learning to speak their language and to appreciate values that were different from our own, mutually sharing struggles, pains, and laughter, all of it created in us a deep certainty of our “being in the right place.” Through it all, we “tasted and saw how good the Lord is”! (Ps 34:8) We had an overwhelming sense of privilege and purpose which never faded, in spite of struggles and setbacks. It was palpable - the Holy Spirit was doing his work among the Natemba people, through, and in spite of, our weakness and frustrations. “Not by might or power but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts” (Zech 4:6), indeed!

As we transitioned into the work of developing the Nateni language, we benefitted from the work of our colleagues who preceded us, Ulrich and Ursula Bukies from Switzerland. They had laid the groundwork by establishing the orthography for Nateni and starting a literacy program which continued under the direction of the local literacy association named TITOUA. Indeed, one of our firm goals was and remains to equip local community members to carry out the Bible translation and language development themselves, using their language to help people prosper in all aspects of their lives. The SIL Vision Statement says it succinctly: “SIL desires to see people in all language communities being able to expand their possibilities for a better future by including their languages as a benefit rather than a disadvantage to their development economically, socially, and spiritually. Because we long to see people flourishing in community using the languages they value most.”<sup>3</sup>

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1 As of October 2019, at least 7,000 languages are spoken or signed around the world. More than 1,500 languages have access to the New Testament and some portions of Scripture in their language. Almost 700 languages have the complete translated Bible. At least 1.5 billion people do not have the full Bible in their language — that's more people than the entire continent of Africa! Work is being done in more than 2,600 languages worldwide and over 2,100 of these projects involve Wycliffe Global Alliance partners. At least 2,000 languages still need a Bible translation started. <https://www.wycliffe.org/about/why> May 11, 2020.

2 SIL International is a faith-based nonprofit organization. Founded in 1934, SIL has grown from a small summer linguistics training program with two students to a staff of over 5,000 people from 89 countries of origin. SIL is currently involved in over 1,660 active language projects, representing 1.07 billion people in 162 countries. <https://www.sil.org/about>, accessed 23.4.2020.

3 <https://www.sil.org/about>.

By the end of the 1990s, Brigitte and I had helped to form a Nateni translation committee whose members were representatives from the different churches in the region. The community would be the force guiding the work. Over time, this committee grew into a nationally recognized NGO called APSEN (Association pour la Promotion des Saintes Ecritures en Naténi). We needed to identify and train translators. Esaïe Winrikou, whom I referenced at the beginning, was gifted in the ability to discover the linguistic structures of his own language. It was he who translated the first books of the Bible into Nateni. Later Martin Bonde and Pascal Koudi joined the team.

While many projects begin by translating a New Testament book like Mark or Luke, we began with stories from Genesis and Exodus. We did so for several reasons. For one thing, those stories provided an excellent opportunity for the translators to become familiar with the principles of translation and exegesis, while also learning the historical background of the Bible. It also laid the necessary foundation for understanding the context and teaching of the New Testament. Later, when the first portions of the gospel of Mark were published, and people began to read about the power of Jesus to deliver people from bondage, we witnessed with our own eyes how God's truth sets people free. Sààfo is a good example. She was a woman living near us in the village who had been diagnosed with AIDS. When she read how Jesus delivered a man with an unclean spirit, she recognized herself in those verses and accepted Jesus as her Saviour. Then, if she felt oppressed by evil spirits, she would call out His Name and experience the deliverance of Christ. Sààfo passed on a couple of years later, but she died as someone who knew the power of God to set her free.

After I had several years of experience in a translation project, the SIL leadership suggested that I do further studies with the aim of becoming a translation consultant. In such a role, I would be more involved in the training of national translators, the coaching of different language translation teams and the checking of translated biblical texts for accuracy. When I considered all that, I knew I definitely needed more training in biblical studies!

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, with its extensive courses in biblical languages, exegesis, and biblical studies, caught my attention immediately. Another contributing factor in my choice of GCTS was the fact that my husband, Carl Williams, had attended university in Boston and still had friends and supporters in the area. (Carl and I met in Cameroon at an SIL Africa Orientation course.) I will admit that it was not without fear and trepidation that I started a study program in my mid-forties. Student life in the United States stood in stark contrast to my many years of life and service in Africa. It took me quite a few weeks to get used to it, but then I tasted the bliss of full-time studies and academic learning! I enjoyed the lectures packed with insight and biblical teaching, the library with its extensive resources, the discussions with fellow students, the opportunity for personal research, and, most especially, the study of the biblical languages. The exegesis classes had a particular impact on me. They introduced me to textual criticism, taught me the importance of hermeneutics, and provided me with the tools needed for sound interpretation of the biblical texts. "*Context, context, context*" - a lesson never to be forgotten! In addition to my New Testament program, I was able to fit in several Old Testament classes. Through these, I began to see the biblical story in a new light, much more as an organic whole, rather than separate stories about God and humanity. Apart from the academic studies, the personal example of my professors taught me so much. I was greatly impressed by how the faculty not only provided insight and training in biblical interpretation, but also cared deeply about each student's faith and development of character. To them I say, "Thank you for every encouragement and challenge that you gave me!"

For the last semester of my program, I was able to study in Israel at the Jerusalem University College. Apart from the captivating classes on biblical background, archaeology, and historical geography, my husband and I had the opportunity to look at the Holy Land with our own eyes. We roamed the streets of Jerusalem, ascended the Temple Mount, explored the City of David, waded through Hezekiah's Tunnel, climbed Mount Sinai before sunrise, marveled at the pyramids in Egypt,

and visited numerous places where key biblical events took place. It was truly marvelous to experience these places in person and, by doing so, to discover a whole other level of biblical studies!

My GCTS program complete, we returned to Benin refreshed, strengthened in our faith, and having a much deeper understanding of the Bible and the God who gave His word to humanity. I now felt better equipped for the tasks ahead of me as a translation consultant.

Bible translation is a long and complex process that requires a translator<sup>4</sup> to have a number of skills. He must have a deep awareness and knowledge of his own culture and understand as well that there are differences between his worldview and that of the Bible. Every serious Bible reader has had this experience: We think we know the meaning of a passage when, in fact, we don't. Why? - because we have interpreted it through the "lens" of our own culture. The better a translator understands his own and the biblical worldviews, the better his translation work will be. Another required skill is that he must be able to read and write his own language and understand its grammar. This may seem an unnecessary statement of the obvious. However, in situations where the orthography has only recently been developed, reading and writing skills are not always present. This has often been the case at the beginning of SIL projects. At the same time, the translator also needs to master a majority language like, in our case in Benin, French. This skill is needed in order to be able to read different versions of the Bible and to consult translation helps, dictionaries, and commentaries. These days, many of these translation helps exist in digital format. Translation teams no longer need access to libraries, but they do need computer skills and so training in that area is also a crucial part of our work. An important Scripture translation software program called *Paratext*<sup>5</sup> is indispensable for our work.

So, what is involved in the process of translating the Bible into a minority language in West Africa? Not surprisingly, one of my tasks is to guide translators through the process of exegesis. They must have a biblically correct understanding of the meaning of a passage in order to translate accurately. One challenge peculiar to our context of low literacy rates and comparatively recent exposure to Christianity is the host of things and concepts in the Bible that may be foreign to the translators - the unfamiliar concepts and biblical key terms for which their languages don't have corresponding words. Let me give you a few examples. In northern Benin, geographic realities like deserts and very high mountains are unknown, as are the differences between bodies of water like seas, rivers, and lakes. In West Africa, there are only two seasons - rainy and dry. The Bible speaks of numerous items that are unknown to people where we live - animals, plants, habitations, metals, weights and currencies to name just a few. Then there are biblical key terms — words and concepts associated with the Jewish and Christian faith — which present a particular challenge. To communicate these concepts accurately requires detailed word studies, as well as collaboration with the population to find the appropriate equivalents in the local language. Determining the right expression for words or concepts like temple, angel, prophet, blessing, grace, Lord, cross, forgiveness, salvation, purity can be challenging! A few examples will illustrate this point.

The term for "angel" that was being used in certain Natemba churches was literally "men with wings." It had been introduced through images people had seen in church. This, however, is not a helpful rendering for a spiritual being sent by God. It took us a full two years to decide on an appropriate term for "the law" (Greek ὁ νόμος) when referring to the Law of Moses. In the end, we

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<sup>4</sup> For the purpose of this article, I will use the masculine pronoun "he" when referring to the translator, as most translators in our context happen to be men. However, this is slowly changing and the Nateni project has now recruited a young woman to become a translator of the Old Testament.

<sup>5</sup> "Paratext is the world's leading software application for the development and checking of new Bible translation texts, or revisions to existing texts. Developed jointly by UBS and SIL International, it enables consistent and accurate translation, based on original texts, and modeled on versions in major languages. Due in part to its cutting edge collaboration features, Paratext greatly assists in producing higher quality translations in much less time than previous tools and methods have allowed." <https://paratext.org> 8.5.2020.

decided to use the Nateni term *kpejidinuka*. The literal translation is “mouths of the old.” *Kpejidinuka* refers to rules or commandments for the living that have been handed down from the past; they cannot be rejected or disobeyed. We used this word in the translation, but also added an entry to the glossary to explain its concrete meaning in the biblical context, in other words, that these are the rules that God gave to the people of Israel through Moses. Of course, the classic example of a thorny key term is the translation of “spirit.” The Greek term *πνεῦμα* has a wide range of meanings depending on the context. Given that spectrum of meaning, translators must consider each context to determine the appropriate translation. Beyond the textual considerations, local language translators must also take into account several other factors when choosing the term to be used. For example: Will the word communicate clearly to Christians and non-Christians alike? Does the term have a negative (i.e., non-biblical) connotation in the traditional religion? What are the opinions of church leaders and how is the word used in the congregations?

So far, I have described the translation steps of exegesis, deciding on key terms and writing the first draft. Typically, those steps represent weeks, indeed months of work. The translation team will then test it for naturalness with the local communities, and, if necessary, in different dialects. In the Nateni case it took a few weeks to visit the different regions, assembling groups of people from the different denominations—preferably men and women of all age groups—and then reading the translated text out loud to them in order to get their feedback. Questions are asked to determine if the text is clear, natural, and easy to understand. This stage of testing a text with speakers of the language is a crucial step to achieve a natural translation. The involvement of the community in the translation process also serves to create a sense of ownership and lends transparency to the project, both important factors that influence the acceptance of the final product.

Once the text has been checked for naturalness and comprehension it is being back translated into French by someone from the community who was not involved in the translation. The act of translating a text “back” into another language brings out errors and omissions and reveals where the translation is unclear.

After the draft has been corrected, it’s time for a translation consultant to check it for faithfulness to the original Greek or Hebrew. While the team has been preparing the text for me, I’ve been preparing myself for the text. It’s time for me to do an exegesis of the passage... My GCTS training is paying off!

As I go over the back translation, I identify problem areas in the translation, I prepare the questions I need to ask, and I assemble materials that will help me to explain the text to the translators (maps, images, charts). Among the many things I need to pay attention to are the discourse features, like transitions, introduction of participants, connectors, the rendering and use of key terms, idioms, and metaphors, and the use of direct discourse, to name just a few! Of course, my time spent preparing for consultant checking sessions provides me the opportunity to continue my learning and to keep alive my knowledge of the biblical languages. To do my work, I rely mostly on digital resources like *Accordance* and *Logos*. These are great tools that give instant access to detailed information about a text, background information, and illustrations. It can, of course, be challenging to keep up with changes and improvements to such tools. Life-long learning is a must!

The task of Bible translation is enormous and can be overwhelming. I am keenly aware of my limits of knowledge and understanding. The need for guidance from the Holy Spirit, for myself and for all involved, is indisputable. Our dependency on him and his teaching is imperative, for Bible translation is about forging the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, in another language. This is an awesome and sacred task. But it is work that results in “fruit that will last” (John 15:16).

The New Testament in Nateni was published in June 2018. The day of its dedication was filled with speeches, dances, traditional music, joy, and the reading of a passage from the Book. The Nateni translation of “let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts” (Col. 3:15) reads: *Kidisi wèèdi ni*

*ne n'üdi ne yàma meheká.* Back translated into English literally that means: “let the peace that Christ gives guide you in your liver.” Now that’s a clear and natural sentence for Nateni speakers which conveys accurately the Apostle Paul’s exhortation to the believers in Colossae. I assisted to make it so - not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit! (Zech. 4:6)

Ursula Williams works with SIL International as a translation consultant in West Africa. Her work involves training and facilitating mother-tongue translators in the countries of Togo and Benin. She has previously published an article in Le Sycomore, “*La traduction des mots ყ “ir, « ville », et ყ “èrèç, « pays », en langue waama, Revue de traduction biblique*, Vol.11, Nº 1, 2017.



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# Boulders, Bridges, and Destiny: *And the Often-Obscure Connections*

WILLIAM C. HILL

A few years ago, I came across a book title that captured my attention and imagination. It said: *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*. The book taught some simple but important lessons, like how to share, wash your hands, refrain from hitting people, and, my favorite, taking afternoon naps is good for you. It's a pretty simple read for anyone who might want to reflect on why they had to attend kindergarten or, more importantly, what the fundamental lessons were that we learned early in life. When I read the book, it reminded me of some of those early life lessons and how they have played out in my life; it also helped me to identify those that skipped and did not attend kindergarten or failed to grasp the basic lessons. Although the lessons in this book were very positive, it occurred to me that some lessons and some other messages that we received early in life were not always positive and in fact were negative and had destructive long-term effects on us.

The author of this book tells an interesting story of one night when he was traveling through a snow-storm in Santa Fe, New Mexico. In front of him was a blue Ford pickup truck that had a bumper sticker that said, "Don't believe everything you think." He relates that every time the truck put on its brake, he, being behind the pickup truck in slow-moving traffic, saw the bumper sticker illuminated, "Don't believe everything you think." He writes: "Those words left a permanent image in my mind. They provoked me to recall the dumb, useless, and naïve ideas I've held in a lifetime. Ideas that I thought were indelibly tattooed on my brain cells. Ideas that I have since discarded when new evidence and further experience force me to change my mind."<sup>1</sup> With kindergarten a very distant memory, it was an interesting exercise to overlay some of those early messages on the reality of my life today. I believe that I've encountered both the positive and the negative messages in my life and learned some lessons along the way.

Let me share some of my story with you. I am currently serving on staff at Eagle Heights Cathedral in Revere, Massachusetts as a Director for Education, Evangelism, and Outreach. These three areas of ministry, I believe, pull together and synergize my experience and passion for ministry. Included in my duties is Dean of our Bible College, where I have the opportunity to develop and utilize my skills in teaching, curriculum development, and college administration. Oh, incidentally, I failed to mention that I'm also retired. Well, you might say, "It doesn't sound like you're retired," so, for the sake of clarity, let me just say that I am basking in an uncommon retirement<sup>2</sup> (from the title of an excellent book for anyone in ministry who is getting along in years). Actually, I have retired three times and come out of retirement three times. I imagine this all sounds confusing, but retirement for somebody in ministry is generally complex. I remember the first time I retired from a senior pastorate position; I was often told that there is no retirement found in the Bible. I had to wrestle with that idea for quite some time because I could find no one in the Bible serving in a ministry who had retired. Generally, they had been killed, died of old age, or simply disappeared from Scripture, but I couldn't think of anybody who had retired. Then I read the book *A Guide to an Uncommon Retirement* by Jeff Haanen, and I was excited because now I had a response. I had read Numbers 8:23-26 several times over the years, but I had not fully grasped or applied the principle that I believe that Scripture illustrates. The model that God gave to Moses as it pertained to the service of a Levite priest was that there is a time when the more seasoned priests (or today's ministers) step aside and become the supporters for those that come behind them. So, I am retired, but there is no front porch and rocking chair for me at this point. I am living out the principle God gave to Moses for the priest. Let's get back to the blinking bumper sticker on the back of the blue Ford pickup truck, "Don't believe everything you think." I do think

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Fulgham, *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten: Uncommon Thoughts on Common Things* (New York: Ballantine, 1988), Introduction.

<sup>2</sup> Jeff Haanen, *An Uncommon Guide to Retirement: Finding God's Purpose for the Next Season of Life* (Chicago: Moody, 2019), 66.

that this is a good piece of wisdom, but experience has shown me that it's often easier said than done. Let me share with you my experience about boulders that obstruct the way, bridges that make the way, and destiny that leads the way.

### Boulders That Obstruct the Way

I have found that the path along life's journey is sometimes littered with debris: sometimes huge debris I call boulders. Here's one of mine. It's been over fifty years now, but I still remember a conversation I had with my high school English teacher, a wonderful woman with a mastery of language, a gentle nature, and a disarming smile. One day, as graduation was approaching, and we were discussing my lackluster grades and my plans, her words, which were given with seemingly genuine concern, were this: "You just are not college material." Reflecting on those words many years later, I see them as an unintentional, maybe even well-intended, obstruction to my journey on the path of life. Although I remember the words, I don't remember my conscious reaction to them, but, reflecting now, I heard them, thought about them, and believed them on a subconscious level. I must have accepted that as truth because I chose a path other than college.

Why do I remember this conversation when I would be hard-pressed to tell you what I had for breakfast the day before yesterday? I believe it's because, although it seemed insignificant, it became part of my developmental history. In his book *Healing Damaged Emotions*, David A. Seamands illustrated it this way. "If you visit the Western United States, you will see the beautiful giant sequoia and redwood trees. In most of the parks, the naturalist can show you a cross-section of a great tree they have cut, and they will point out that the rings of the tree that show the developmental history, year-by-year. Here's a ring that represents a year when there was a terrible drought. Here are a couple of rings from years when there was too much rain. Here's where the tree was struck by lightning. Here are some normal years of growth. This ring shows a forest fire that almost destroyed the tree. Here's another of savage blight and disease. All of this lies embedded in the heart of the tree, representing the autobiography of its growth."<sup>3</sup> In other words, the rings of the tree were a combination of the tree's significant life experiences. I believe our lives can be viewed the same way and that seemingly innocuous comments somehow get embedded in the developmental history of my life.

I say that because entering secular college and even seminary were both difficult decisions for me. With hindsight, I believe that my reluctance may have been based on the words that were embedded in me and working automatically like an old VCR tape available to play anytime going to college came up: pop in the tape, push the play button, you get your answer, "you just are not college material." However, as I entered the job market, the need for career advancement pushed me to do that which I was told I did not have the right stuff to do. So I began my secular college education at what is now Fisher College in the Associate's Degree Program in Business Administration because it would help me with secular career advancement. It helped me to advance in my career, but, more importantly, it gave me evidence which refuted the opinion of my gentle-natured high school English teacher. You might say, the old VCR tape got mangled in the machine and was never to be played again. Although I didn't know it at the time, this new evidence would help me when it was time to decide about preparing for ministry. As I reflect on it now, the boulder once moved allowed my life journey to continue to a bridge.

### Bridges That Make the Way

Just like boulders along the pathway can impede or prevent progress on the journey, bridges can often help the journey continue. I see my seminary experience as just such a bridge because there I received more than just theological knowledge, but the experience helped me to see the Bible and God's redemptive plan with the top-down view and how I can partner with God and play a role. In other words, it helped me to connect the dots between God's purposes, the purposes for the church, and even God's purposes in my personal life. Let me add that being credentialed in ministry has honestly opened some doors that may not have opened otherwise.

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<sup>3</sup> David A. Seamands, *Healing for Damaged Emotions* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2015), 13.

My first seminary experience at Gordon-Conwell's Boston Campus for Urban Ministerial Education (CUME) was nothing short of life-changing. It was there that I opened my eyes to the vast diversity in the Body of Christ. Many of us might be surprised to know how we subconsciously see our church as the image of the Body of Christ. How often do we view the Body of Christ through the paradigm of our sometimes unintentionally homogeneous church experience? Sunday at 11 AM is still the most segregated time in America. I believe that division by race continues to be a major schism in the Body of Christ, and one that the Body of Christ must address. I say this because, as Bishop James Collins points out in his book, *Racism and the Church*, and I agree that “racism is ultimately a spiritual problem rooted in Satan’s desire to keep the church of Jesus Christ divided, dysfunctional and delayed from her destiny.”<sup>4</sup> My time at CUME was truly a multicultural church experience, which I often call an early glimpse of Heaven. This was critical in my spiritual and pastoral formation because, before coming to CUME, my church experience was primarily the Black Church experience. I could not see it but that experience was a very limited part of God’s church. Thank God for my next educational effort, which would help to further broaden my perspective on the Body of Christ.

At Gordon-Conwell's Hamilton campus, or what we affectionately call “the Hill,” the experience in the Doctor of Ministry in the Redemptive Leadership and Organizational Development Tract was just as valuable but distinctly different. There the diversity was less, and sometimes, I was the racial diversity. My cohorts in this track (with instructor/mentors Dr. Rodney Cooper and Dr. Harvey Powers) is where I got the help that I needed in the vocation of pastor in the areas of leadership, particularly as it pertains to the redemptive purposes of God, the character of the leader, and the power of the redemptive model of leadership. These issues have become the foundation of my ministry as it pertains to both my life calling and the work of ministering while partnering with God to advance his Kingdom.

It was the redemptive leadership model that helped me through some tougher times in ministry. In particular, I remember these words “the redemptive leadership model views crisis and failure through a different optic. Instead of viewing them as an ending, this model views them as a portal to go deeper. Leaders with the mileage, life experience, and scar tissue may reach the wisdom of the redemption stage of leadership.”<sup>5</sup> My having bypassed some boulders and crossed bridges positioned me to see more clearly God’s purposes for my life.

### Destiny That Leads the Way

As I look back, attending secular college might have shown that my high school English teacher had set too low an expectation of me, but I believe to a greater degree my time at seminary affirmed that God was right (as is *always* the case) when he had a vision of destiny for me beyond what I and some others could see. Attending secular college only would undoubtedly help me achieve my secular career aspirations, but I believe it was seminary that helped define my mission and put me on the bridge to divine destiny. Rick Warren in *The Purpose Driven Life* explains, “Fulfilling your life’s mission is an essential part of giving your life meaning and living for God’s glory.” He then quotes William James who said, “The best use of life is to spend it for something that outlasts it.”<sup>6</sup>

As the Apostle Peter reminded us, each of us should use whatever gift we have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.<sup>7</sup> The seasons of life change, circumstances change, and assignments change; that’s the nature of a life’s journey. Jeff Haanen summed it up well when he said: “We plant seeds knowing others will harvest. We set foundations for others to build on,”<sup>8</sup> so even in my uncommon retirement, I continue to plant, to water, and to trust God for the increase.

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4 James E. Collins, *Racism and the Church* (Keller: Palm Tree, 2014), 57.

5 Harv Powers, *Redemptive Leadership: Unleashing Your Greatest Influence* ([www.IllumifyMedia.com](http://www.IllumifyMedia.com), 2018), 145.

6 Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 284-85.

7 1 Pet 4:10 (NASB)

8 Haanen, *Guide*, 94.

## Some Lessons I Learned Along the Way

God has a plan and a path for all of our lives, and along life's pathway are both boulders that can impede progress and bridges that can make way for progress. It's important to distinguish between the two and respond appropriately. As Dr. Charles Stanley wrote, "Life is 10% what happens and 90% how you respond to it."<sup>9</sup> What we take to heart about what others think and say about us does matter and can affect our destiny positively or negatively. I believe that is why we are told in Proverbs "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."<sup>10</sup>

Your destiny is established in the heart of God and not the human mind, and it is rooted in his Kingdom Agenda. However, be aware that sometimes well-intended people will have opinions of you and your ability that neglect God's perspective and even his potential to develop you and use you for his kingdom purposes.

The further I get down the path of life, the more I believe that real satisfaction and sense of purpose in life are not grounded in position, title, achievements, or profit. For God's people, I believe that real satisfaction and peace comes when you find your life's mission, the purpose for which God created you, and how that mission drives you to continue toward your divine destiny. I'm grateful for God who allows me to live out an *uncommon retirement*, get past boulders and across bridges, all the while pursuing his divinely designed destiny, to the greatest degree I can, and for as long as I can, and all for his glory.

Rev. Dr. Hill served the United States Government in both military and civilian positions for thirty years before retiring and answering the call to full-time ministry. He was ordained to the ministry in 1992. He has over the past twenty-eight years served as both staff pastor and senior pastor. He has earned an Associate's Degree in Business Administration from Fisher College, a Bachelor's Degree in Business Management from Boston State College, a Master's Degree in Computer Education from Johnson Wales University, a M. Div. in Urban Ministry, and a D. Min. in Redemptive Leadership and Organizational Development, both from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He currently lives in Boston with his wife Audrey and they have a daughter Kimberly, a son-in-law Anthony, two grandsons, Anthony Jr. and Julian Johnson, who live outside of Atlanta, GA.

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<sup>9</sup> "Charles R. Swindoll Quotes." BrainyQuote.com. BrainyMedia Inc, 2021. 16 January 2021. [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/charlesrwindoll\\_388332](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/charlesrwindoll_388332).

<sup>10</sup> Prov 4:23 (NIV).

# God's Masterpiece

WILMA FAYE MATHIS

As I reminisce over my life, I can't help but remember the tragic death of my brother. I was pregnant with my first child when the call came that my youngest brother was lying outside in a pool of blood. As the family rushed to the scene, I knelt on the ground beside him and asked him to tell me what had happened. He tried to speak, but blood filled his mouth and he was unable to articulate the words. Afterward, he turned his head and was still. This was an awful street crime, for my brother to have been ambushed, hit in the head, and left to die. To this day, I can still see the place where my brother lay, trying to grasp for breath.

Within me, I sensed he had died, but my emotions kept telling me that it could not be. After days of being on a life-support system, it was decided by the family to disconnect the life-support machine to see if he would breathe on his own; he was pronounced dead as soon as the life-support was detached.

Needless to say, when I gave birth to a baby boy, and I named him in remembrance of my brother, I vowed that I would do everything possible from here on to live life at its best, not knowing when it would be over, as it suddenly was for my brother.

I had heard all my life that "life is short," "make the best of it while you can," and I found that to be a reality. So, I began to reevaluate my life and came up with a few things I would work at:

- Realizing God is truly in control and no matter what I say or do, it will be whatever God says it is.
- Determining that at the crossroad of decisions, I will stop, listen, and observe before acting, knowing that any decision could alter my entire life.
- Remembering that, when things will not come together, I may need to let them go, because some things were not meant to be coordinated. But, on the other hand, since God's time is not our time, I may need to wait and endure the process until God's will for convergence be revealed.
- Stopping stressing over not being able to get everything perfect all the time.
- Pursuing my dreams and passions, one of them being attending seminary.

So many times, although not intentionally, I realize I had taken life for granted. The experience of losing my brother helped me to be more cognizant of why I am here. Each of us has a purpose and life-changing situations tend to push us towards our destiny, the pre-ordained path set for us during this life. However, for the believer, the Bible states, "God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him" (Rom. 8:29 The Message).

One of the reasons I wanted to attend seminary was so I might learn intelligently (in a skilled and sensible manner) to understand and communicate God's word to others. In 2003, that dream became a reality when I enrolled at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. I must say, for the longest time I wanted to attend seminary but, due to various reasons, whether they had to do with church beliefs, finances, or time, I held off. Church beliefs, in some of our black Pentecostal churches, had a stigma around attending any colleges not related to the church. Believers were also not encouraged to attend secular colleges because it was believed they were not equipped to teach the Bible. Instead, all you needed to do was study the Bible for yourself, stand (while preaching), and let the Spirit of God speak through you. While I believe this can and does happen, it does

not take away from “rightly dividing the word of truth” (1 Tim. 2:15). Moses was educated (Acts 7:22); the sons of Issachar understood the times and were knowledgeable (1 Chron. 12:32); Paul “a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia... was educated under Gamaliel” (Acts 22:3); and other Scriptures promote education. Although the pulpits of the black church were filled predominantly by men, within my denomination women were not excluded. My grandmother was a preacher, pastor, teacher, and it was under her guidance and through her teaching that I learned to study the Bible, and that prompted me to want to learn more. Talking about waiting on God’s timing: just when I made the decision and applied to seminary, I was appointed by my pastor as the new Sunday school superintendent. This assured me it was time to pursue that seminary dream, and I was also sensing the call of God stronger and stronger in my life.

There have been preachers, teachers, and pastors with whom I have spoken who did not go to seminary. Although they are effective in ministry and grateful to the Spirit of God, who is the greatest teacher, they also affirmed they would have appreciated attending seminary or some type of systemized learning. However, these individuals encouraged me to go while I had the opportunity. Growing up in the church, I had been given opportunities to teach and exercise my gifts. When I announced to my fellow laborers in the gospel that I was attending seminary, their response was very receptive – “*Now you can teach us even more,*” or “*It’s about time,*” and “*What took you so long?*”

After graduating with a Certificate, Master of Arts, and Master of Divinity, I still wanted more and entered the Doctor of Ministry program. Knowledge is power and the Doctor of Ministry program would further develop my understanding of the Bible, theology, practical skills for ministry, preaching, teaching, and Christian education. It has always been my desire to deepen my knowledge of the truth in order to be equipped to defend the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Since we live in a generation where there is much adding and taking away from the Bible, especially taking Scripture out of context to fit individual situations, there needs to be those who will stand to preach and teach the word of God as He originally intended and then show proper application for our lives. For we [teachers] have been given to perfect the saints for the work of the ministry and to edify the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-16). I have come to understand I am not only called to preach (proclaim the gospel) but to also teach (explain the gospel) to help others obtain a better understanding of the word of God.

My passion is for teaching Christian education in churches and seminary, but this passion is also displayed in the areas of women’s ministry, mentoring, both spiritually and naturally. I would hear comments such as, “*Thank you for being strong and remaining faithful in what you do, your teaching style helps me better understand the Bible, you are a source of encouragement.*” One day, I was asked to write a letter to young ladies and women. While reflecting on some of those comments and engaging in conversations, I wrote a one-page letter that I presented during a conference. As time progressed, realizing the impact of my life into the lives of others, I wanted to give back more. That one-page letter expanded into a larger exhortation, as a way of encouraging women to go after their dreams, pursue their spiritual passions, and realize their God-given giftings. The exhortation developed into a teaching lesson entitled “Embracing Who I Am” that has been used in women’s workshops. During the workshops, we begin with journaling exercises that are used to define strengths and skills, and to bring clarity to whom and where one is called to serve. Watching the excitement of the workshop participants while connecting their skills against their strengths has been a joy! The workshop is rooted in Ephesians 2:10, reminding women of how they are viewed in God’s sight.

### **Women, You Are God’s Masterpiece!**

This is what God says about each of us, “*For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago*” (Eph 2:10 NLT).

Each of you was born with a purpose. I do not believe any of us wants only to exist, but, rather, to live our life to its full potential. You are the only one able to accomplish your purpose, but you must first embrace who you are and what you are called to do. We all have innate talents, natural abilities to be good at something, especially without being initially taught them<sup>1</sup> (talents are commonly known as “gifts”). Talents can be viewed as “who you are.” In the same way, we each have skills, which, for the most part, are acquired and developed. Skills can be viewed as “what you do.” Take, for example, the “Parable of the Talents” in Matthew 25:14-30. The master gave talents with the expectation for the talents being used:

- 5 talents became 5 more talents when used skillfully
- 2 talents became 2 more talents when used skillfully
- 1 talent when not used skillfully resulted in dissatisfaction with the one who gave the talent.

The lesson here is that, when talents were given, they were not meant to be hidden or kept to ourselves, but to be developed and invested, so they will be multiplied. God, who is the giver of talents/gifts, will watch to see what we will do with them. It is important to embrace “who we are” and do “what we do.” We have all been gifted in some form or fashion. Our talents/gifts are just waiting to be unleashed, and our skills are waiting to be discovered. As we develop our talents/gifts and skills and begin to live them out, we will make room for God to increase and enlarge our territory.

We are each a masterpiece and an essential part of a great masterpiece created by God. I believe we all want to understand fully who we are and what God has purposed us to do, but our minds are filled with questions. From the time we can speak, we start asking questions, which is part of our human nature. Once we reach a certain point in life, we begin to articulate more informed questions.

- In middle school, we may have asked: What if I joined the drama, debate, or year book club? What if I date the popular football player, or hang out with the right crowd? Will this define who I am?
- In our late teenage years, as we make the transition from adolescence to adulthood, we are now asking: Who do I want to be? Where is my place in the world? What do I see as myself, not as my parents see me, but as I am?
- Maybe in our 30s and 40s, we are faced with: Am I going to stay single, be in a relationship, or will I get married? Who am I as a new parent? Can I be a professional and a parent at the same time, or do I have to choose one? Do I go back to school and obtain that degree? Who am I now that I am not 20 something anymore?
- Then, in our 50s and beyond, there are even more life events that have happened, and we may question: Am I even on the right path? Who am I now that my children are adults? Where do I put my focus? Am I satisfied with my job? When do I retire, or can I retire? Am I doing what I always dreamed of? Who am I if I can no longer do what I have always wanted to do?

The questions change as we develop through life, but some remain consistent: “Who Am I? What is my purpose? What am I meant to do?” Do not get me wrong. As I stated, it is natural to ask questions. They are necessary as we embrace who we are and are becoming, but the answers are most essential. It may be obvious, but to know and understand our purpose, we have to ask the

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<sup>1</sup> Colin McIntosh, “Talent” in *Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013), <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/>.

One who created each of us. God is our Master Creator and knows why He created each of us as a part of His masterpiece.

Creating a masterpiece takes time, skill, careful attention, and precision. If you have ever gone to a painting activity, such as a “paint night” at church or other gatherings, the objective is for everyone who attends to create a masterpiece on a canvas board with paint. It doesn’t matter if you are skilled at painting, have done it before, or it is your very first time. The artist is there coaching you to follow his or her lead, and your task is simply to paint. Most likely, you will take your finished mini-masterpiece and display it somewhere: use it as decoration, an enhancement to a wall, or a keepsake to treasure within a proximity to remind yourself of the great masterpiece you have created together with those around you. In other words, you need to show it off!

Since a masterpiece deserves to be displayed, each of you is on display as an integral part of God’s great work of redeeming humanity. Not in an arrogant way, but as a display of God’s “good works.” God created and recreated you as an *outstanding piece of work; a supreme intellectual achievement*, that was *done with extraordinary skill*. That is who YOU are! God did not just throw you together but made you “fearfully” (with reverence) and “wonderfully” (extremely and unusually good) according to Psalm 139:14.<sup>2</sup> So take another look, you are a masterpiece!

I know there are times when you wonder: How can I be a masterpiece with all the flaws in my life? Or, I do not feel like a masterpiece with the hurt that I feel, the devastation I have encountered, and even some of the trouble for which I am the one responsible. How can I be a masterpiece when I feel so sad, lonely, misplaced, and – you know what? – even ashamed and do not want to be seen. But every flaw, hurt, and mishap that you survived has not altered the masterpiece you were created to be. God works through each of our situations to accomplish His purpose for our life. We need only trust that everything works together for good in the lives of those who love Him (Rom. 8:28). No matter what has transpired in your life, because you survived, you can touch others’ lives and awaken her to recognize the masterpiece she truly is! We are our sister’s keeper. It takes faith to believe you are a masterpiece despite what you may see. Faith is a belief, trust, confidence, in what you do not see. So, even if you are still uncovering your many talents/gifts, or discovering your many skills, keep moving forward to fulfill your God-given purpose in this life as part of God’s great Masterpiece.

However, since you are surrounded by skeptics, those who do not have your best interest, including the enemy Satan, I want to challenge you to be consistent by making declarations of “who you are” and “what you do” or will do, with declaring by **Faith** and doing it **Out Loud!** (#FOL):

- I am God’s masterpiece
- I am who God made me - fearfully (with reverence) and wonderfully (unusually good)
- I will do what God purposed me to do
- I am going to pursue my talents/gifts with new determination
- I will discover and develop my skills
- I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Phil. 4:13)

Let me tell you more about a masterpiece. When you look at a picture on a canvas, it is typically full of colors and many shapes. All the shapes are not straight, neither are they perfect. Some have curves, half-circles, squiggly lines, and wavy ones too. When you look at another’s portrait, which was probably created from the same template as the one you used, you will notice their colors may be different and their shapes and lines are not laid out the same way as yours

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2 Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the ESV.

are. But yet, in their eyes, it is still their masterpiece! At the paint show, although everyone started painting on the same blank canvas, when each is complete, no one masterpiece is the same.

You are absolutely who God says you are! And what does God want for you as His great Masterpiece? Just like the portrait that was used to enhance a room, in reality, you are to enhance the lives of others. You are admonished to “let our light shine before others” (Matt. 5:16). God wants others to know that you walk by faith and not by sight. He wants those with whom you come into contact to feel His peace and joy that is active within you. There is some woman, man, girl, or boy who needs to see that, despite all you have been through, you did not quit. We were created to encourage and build up one another (1 Thess. 5:11). When we take note of a finished portrait and how the artist wanted that portrait close by, we realize it is there to serve as a reminder of the masterful portrait that the artist created. You are like that portrait who is close to someone else. You are there being used by God for the people who may need a new vision of themselves, beginning with a listening ear, a shoulder to cry on, someone to confide in, a helping hand, or even a hug. You are the reason God *sent Christ to make you what you are* (Eph. 2:10 CEV), so you can remind someone else of the great masterpiece that they are as part of God’s great Masterpiece.

Whether or not you, or I, resemble a masterpiece in someone else’s eyes, knowing who you are, starts with you, first. The influential Spanish painter Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) said, “I do not read English; an English book is a blank book to me. This does not mean that the English language does not exist.”<sup>3</sup> Picasso realized that, just because something is misunderstood or appeared to be blank of any meaning, did not mean the thing did not exist. I can imagine there were times many were trying to figure out what Picasso himself was creating in his studio. Picasso may have thought, “I have a particular design in my mind. I am aiming for something unique, that will come to life as a masterpiece upon this blank canvas.” That is how each of us was made – in God’s eyes as a unique creation. Psalm 139:13 puts it like this, “You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother’s womb” (NIV). Before you and I were even born, God had us in mind and knew the purpose of our existence. Now it is up to you and me to do those “good works,” taking the paths which He prepared ahead of time, that we should walk in them. We are to do so by “living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us to live” (Eph 2:10 AMPC). The good works that we do are a result of what God has placed in us, which should be manifested as we live out our daily lives by faith.

When we know who we are, we can embrace what we do. So be intentional and shift in your thinking, a shift in your actions, because now is the time! It is time to be the Business Owner, Consultant, Gymnast, Chief Executive Officer, Fashion Designer, Hiring Manager, Writer, Publisher, Engineer, Musician, Psalmist, Lawyer, Pastor, Missionary, Teacher, Leader...

“*You are God’s masterpiece,*” and, together with all God’s people, we make up God’s great Masterpiece of redeemed humanity – So, live out your purpose and declare it by Faith Out Loud! (#FOL)

I have not reached the end of accomplishing all my dreams, pursuing my passions, or having reached my destiny. However, this brings me encouragement, that when I started seminary, my family went as far as to say that, one day “*you will teach in a Bible college.*” I have not reached professor status yet, but I am in pursuit. I have teaching assistant under my belt and I am well on my way.

Rev. Wilma Faye Mathis, ordained by her church organization, has served the church in many capacities as Christian education director, National women’s department vice president, and visionary for a Mom2Mom – “A Place Where Someone Cares.” Professionally, Wilma is a project manager, an entrepreneur of Personally Yours by Faye, specializing in desktop publishing and events coordination. She holds a M. A. in Urban Ministry and M. Div. from Gordon-Conwell Theological

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<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Knowles, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Twentieth-Century Quotations*, vol. 2 (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998), 248.

Seminary, Boston, MA. She serves as an Athanasius Teaching Scholar for systematic theology at GCTS and is currently pursuing her D. Min. at Knox Theological Seminary, Fort Lauderdale, FL. Wilma also finds time to volunteer at homeless shelters for women, providing a space of positive energy, encouragement, and transformation in the company of Christians. She is an avid Bible scholar and counts it a privilege to teach and preach the word of God. She is a proud mom, loves the Lord, and avails herself to be used for God's glory as she echoes the words of the psalmist, "Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart" (Ps. 119:33-34 KJV).

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## My Spiritual Journey of Maturing (or Growing) in God's Love and Faithfulness.

Leslie McKinney Attema

At an early age, I had a hunger to know God and experience God's love. I grew up in the Roman Catholic Church and attended mass regularly, but I never felt the personal closeness with God that I earnestly desired. I viewed God as cold and distant, a spiritual being who did not really care about his creation and I also imaged God as an angry taskmaster whom I could never please no matter how hard I tried. As I reflect back on my childhood, I am sure that the distorted images of God that I held had to do with my strict upbringing as well as the early deaths of my two best friends, Janice and Karen, within three years of one another. As a fourteen-year-old, I could not understand why God took them both so young; it was unsettling and disorienting for me and it changed my life forever. In the aftermath of their deaths, I feared that I might be next. But God had a different plan for my life. I just did not have an inkling what that might be.

So, many years later, after I came to Christ through a Billy Graham Crusade, a friend from a Bible study that I was attending, invited me to attend a short Ockenga class at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. As I was listening to the professor teach the New Testament and share about God's character, my heart leapt for joy! After spending only two days learning an iota of God's truth, my heart felt comfortably at home. This is it, I mused! This is what I had been longing for since I was a child, to know and understand God (and God's truth) through God's word and now this longing was about to be satisfied as I would soon dedicate myself to studying God's word through a theological education.

About two years later, I applied for a Master of Arts in Theological Studies with a concentration in family counseling. I was soon accepted into the program and I began my studies. I was not able to matriculate full-time for a myriad of reasons, so I began by enrolling in one class a semester to see how things worked out. I continued studying at this pace, knowing that it would take years to complete this degree. However, I was able to soak up the knowledge I was gaining because I could give my undivided attention to each course. But this slower pace would eventually come to an end.

After several years of studying within the MATS program, I received a letter advising that this specific program would soon end and that I needed to make a decision about which program I wanted to transfer into. This was a big decision for me, so I took the necessary time to reflect, pray and talk to some key people in my life. In my heart, I wanted to get a Master of Divinity degree because I wanted to learn Greek and Hebrew and take exegesis courses so I could study God's word in depth. But for the life of me, I could not fathom how I would use this degree since my husband was not even a believer (I had a born-again experience six months after I was married). But one of my mentors, Dr. Aída Besançon Spencer, encouraged me to transfer into the M.Div. program. She said I would receive a broader education and that this degree would be more marketable. She was right. And, after studying for many years more, I could clearly see that God was in this transition. God had been the one guiding and leading me all along. God knew all about me; he knew me by name (Isa 43:1). He called me for his purposes (Rom 8:28), and he knew exactly how he had gifted me (Eph 4:11). It was God who was preparing me for the pastorate, but, at the time, I simply could not imagine pastoring a church. I could see myself counseling and caring for others, but, at that time in my life, I did not have the courage, confidence, or the vision to see myself as a pastor.

However, God knew that the pastorate was precisely how I would end up serving. As I was nearing the completion of my degree, I was made aware that a position was opening up at Pilgrim Church in Beverly, Massachusetts. The church was looking for someone to work half-time to

preach, teach, counsel, mentor as well as encourage and equip the women of the church. I did not have to pray long and hard about this position. I knew this ministry was designed for me. And I knew God well enough by then that God would give me whatever I needed to accomplish his will, including the courage, the confidence, and the vision to do so. I did not understand it then but attending Gordon-Conwell definitely prepared me for my life work.

So, in the year 2000, I began as pastor of community at Pilgrim Church, which at the time was a merger of the Pilgrim Presbyterian New Church Development and the Beverly Christian Fellowship, an independent charismatic church. One thing that drew me to Pilgrim Church was that it was a church that was founded on prayer and community. In fact, the Beverly Christian Fellowship's original vision was to be a church that modeled genuine Christian prayer and intentional community. And Pilgrim Church has always retained part of that original vision.

And the funny thing is that, when I was studying at Gordon-Conwell, I had the privilege of taking a course on Missions from Dr. J. Christy Wilson, professor of World Evangelization at Gordon-Conwell. And back in 1982 when Pilgrim church first began, it was Dr. Wilson who told Drs. Bill and Aída Spencer (founders of the Pilgrim Presbyterian New Church Development) that he had been praying for a Presbyterian church in the area. So, Pilgrim Church is an answer to Dr. Wilson's earnest prayers, and it was he who taught me the importance and the power of prayer.

Dr. Wilson was a brilliant yet humble and prayerful man. When I needed to talk to him, I could often find him hidden away in his office praying. I knew, if I needed prayer for anything, he would not hesitate to pray. And I felt blessed knowing that he faithfully prayed for my husband's salvation and, eventually, he was one of the people that God used to share the gospel with my husband. I do not believe that anything is a coincidence with the Lord. So, all that to say, God used Dr. Wilson's life not only to pray Pilgrim Church into existence but to help guide me as one of the pastors of Pilgrim into a deeper prayer life. Prayer became a mainstay in my life. God knew what my life journey would entail and that I would need to learn to depend upon him in prayer. So, it goes without saying that, when I started pastoring at Pilgrim, without hesitation, I began praying for the congregation. I would pray specific scriptures for each of them. One Scripture that I prayed daily was Ephesians 3:14-19: "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."<sup>1</sup>

Initially, I prayed this Scripture for myself because I wanted genuinely to love God's people and I felt that I fell far short of this. I know that I needed to know love in order to give love so I thought it would be best to pray that I would "be rooted and grounded in love." And that I would have the power to comprehend "the breadth and length and height and depth" of God's love (Eph 3:17-18).

I wanted to grow in the experiential knowledge of God's love so that I could love those under my care. And I also prayed this Scripture for Pilgrim Church as a whole, that we would be a church who would love the lost, the sick, the broken, the poor, the mentally challenged, the dying, and all those who God brought to the church. After many years of praying this prayer, I realized one day that God had answered this prayer in a way that I had never anticipated. As I thought of the mix of our congregation, I realized that God at the time had drawn people to Pilgrim from at least seventeen different nations. In order for our church to have seventeen different nations represented in a small congregation of about fifty-seventy attenders meant that we were at least trying to

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1 All Bible quotations are from the NRSV.

love well and that these “pilgrims” must have felt a sense of belonging and oneness despite our differences.

I really enjoyed the pastorate; I loved working with the people, helping them to grow in the Lord, and I especially loved building community within a small congregation of extremely diverse members from different cultural backgrounds.

As a new pastor, I had much to learn. But I was blessed over the years to have several godly and seasoned copastors with whom I was able to glean insights. I always remained open to the Spirit teaching me whatever I was meant to learn so that I could be the best pastor I could be and a faithful steward of God’s gifts. One of my gifts within the five-fold ministry gifts (Eph 4:11) is pastor. But I realized years into the ministry that one may have one or two dominant gifts but will not have some of the other gifts that pastors are called to do. Had I realized that earlier, I would have saved myself a lot of stress and worry. I never felt that I was gifted at preaching, for instance, but I still wanted to give my all to this task to help the congregation grow. I worried too much about drafting an excellent sermon when God just wanted me to be myself, relax, and share God’s word through my own life and experiences. Later, as a missionary in Central America, I truly enjoyed preaching because I felt freer simply being myself in the pulpit and just letting the Spirit use me to teach and encourage God’s people to be faithful.

After two years of working as a pastor, and having graduated with my M.Div., I felt that God was calling me to return to school once again but this time to work on a Doctor of Ministry in the Effective Ministries to Women track. I did not know how I would find the time to study with all the other responsibilities that I was carrying, but I decided to go forward with the program.

I stayed at Pilgrim as a pastor for more than thirteen years.

One thing I did not know then that I now know is that God was using my experience in working with people from various cultural backgrounds to prepare me for the mission field. Actually, I always had a desire to serve overseas, but I knew that my husband was not interested. But every opportunity I had to travel overseas to do short term missions, I never hesitated to go. Over the years, I have had the privilege of going to India, East Africa, and Haiti to serve God’s people.

I believe that God knows everything about us. God knows what he’s designed us for and I believe that it is God that put the desire in my heart to serve him in another land. Eventually, this is exactly how God led me. And, as part of the preparation, I traveled a path through suffering.

One year after I began pastoring Pilgrim Church, my husband was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease. I had no idea what this journey would be like, but I am very thankful that I kept a journal through it all. I can see how much God was with us, caring for us, loving us, and ministering to us through the body of Christ. It is a powerful testimony of how God sustains his people through the earthly struggles he allows us to endure. My husband passed away in 2008 and I took a short leave of absence and then returned to the ministry, desiring to fulfill God’s destiny in my life by caring for God’s people.

As time passed, I was experiencing more inner healing from my loss and was perfectly content serving God as a single woman. In my mind, I had future plans to serve God overseas but was thinking about Haiti at the time because Pilgrim Church started a church and school there and I loved traveling there to teach, encourage, and equip the women.

But later I would learn that God had a different path for my life. Yes, I would sell everything and move overseas but it would not be to Haiti and it would not be alone. Who would have ever imagined what God had planned (1 Cor 2:9)? Somehow, I knew that God would bring redemption in my life with a new marriage, but I also did not care if I served God the rest of my life alone.

In 2013, as divine providence would have it, I met a man as if out of nowhere when I was least expecting to do so. This man was a Christian and a pastor (as well as a nurse practitioner) from Texas, but he grew up only about thirty minutes away from my hometown in Massachusetts. And he attended Gordon-Conwell before my time there. I met him at Pilgrim Church. He was attending a denominational meeting that Pilgrim Church was hosting and I actually did not think anything about him at the time. Then, about a month later, I needed to go to a meeting in Tennessee, and I, serendipitously, bumped into him again. God always had a way of bringing opportunities or people directly to me as a result of prayer, such as a job or a relationship and this is what happened this time.

So, in March of 2014, Lee Attema and I were married and, eventually, we both felt God calling us to Belize in Central America to use our skills to serve God. In January 2017, we arrived in Belize and slowly began to acclimate and seek God's direction as to what he wanted each of us to do. Lee and I ended up serving in Belize for more than three years. I ministered to women, especially those who needed healing, encouragement, and hope. I taught the Bible twice a week, served on a prison ministry board as secretary, preached monthly in a local church that we helped plant, was part of a spiritual direction group, and met one-on-one weekly, mentoring a young woman. And, occasionally I assisted a woman Anglican rector in leading Lectio Divina, a Bible meditation practice, Taizé prayer meetings, and teaching the youth in a local Christian school. Lee and I loved serving in Belize. But, sadly, I became ill and my condition did not seem to improve, so eventually God called us back to the USA so I could receive treatment. We never intended to leave Belize; our hope was to remain there for the rest of our lives serving God overseas, but we were forced to return.

I learned a great deal from the ministry in Belize. One excellent book that prepared my husband and me for overseas work was *Western Christians in Global Missions: What's the Role of the North American Church?* by Paul Borthwick. We gleaned a lot from this book and, as a result, we were able to put our own personal agendas for the ministry aside in order to come alongside our brothers and sisters in Christ to partner together in the Great Commission. It seems that we were able to accomplish more than we had anticipated, with the Spirit's help, as we sought to build healthy relationships, to walk in humility, and to leave behind our American sense of entitlement to help further God's kingdom in Belize.

I also learned that, because I was a North American with a higher education, I needed to be careful that the women did not put me on a pedestal, so I was intentional about building community among the women I taught and encouraging them to think for themselves and to value and use their own God-given gifts.

We now find ourselves in Florida in the midst of the Covid 19 outbreak. Lee is working directly with Covid patients and I am working on trying to get well through treatment. I am learning many new life lessons through a chronic illness which is totally new to me. It has definitely not been easy navigating this new territory, but I can see that God is continuing to change me through this unanticipated suffering. I have much more compassion and understanding for the chronically ill. And I am hoping and praying that God will redeem this trying time and continue to use me to minister and especially now to those who are sick. One never knows what is around life's corner, so it is important to remember to keep our focus on the Lord and let him guide our way.

Through over twenty years of ministry, I have learned so many things about serving God, but if someone were to ask me for advice, if he or she was starting out in ministry, I would narrow it down to three important lessons that I have learned. They are: 1) Be yourself and try hard not to compare yourself to others, because it is not productive. For God has gifted each of us uniquely and God desires that we use our own gifts to minister to those under our care. God will give you what you need to do the work that God has called you to do. If you do not know something, then

simply ask someone who does and you will learn and grow from others' knowledge and experience. 2) Be prayerful. I believe that all ministry should be undergirded in prayer. If you want to serve God wholeheartedly, it is important to seek God through daily prayer. If you do, God will give you wisdom, guidance, direction, courage, inspiration, and the power to carry out the work as God sees fit. And 3) Be faithful. There is no greater privilege than serving God. God is faithful and desires that you remain faithful. For certain, the evil one will try to come in and distract and tempt you, but stay close to God through his word and remain faithful because God tells us in his word, "His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him, who has called us by his own glory and goodness" (2 Pet 1:3).

So, in reflecting on my years in ministry, I notice how much God's love and faithfulness has impacted my life. If it weren't for God's love and faithfulness, it would be easy to slump into a deep, dark depression due to my health, unexpected life transitions, and with all that's going on in our nation and throughout the world, the Corona Virus, culture wars, political division and chaos, and a myriad of other things. But, instead, I trust God and God's promises and, therefore, I walk in hope as the Spirit brings to mind Paul's encouraging and life-giving words in Romans 5:3-5: "We also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts, through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us."

Leslie McKinney Attema, who received her M. Div. and D. Min. from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, has served as pastor of community at Pilgrim Church in Beverly, MA, associate pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Freeport, TX, and as a missionary with the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Belize, Central America. She preaches, teaches, and specializes in women's ministry. She is also a trained spiritual director. She is co-founder of Life Together International and serves as LTI's secretary. She authored *Accepted in the Beloved: A Devotional Bible Study for Women on Finding Healing and Wholeness in God's Love*. She and her husband, Lee, currently reside in Melbourne, FL.

# Accepted in the Beloved

A Devotional Bible Study for Women  
on Finding Healing and Wholeness  
in God's Love

Leslie Ann McKinney

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If you or someone you know has suffered abuse, you are not alone. Abuse of women is a global problem. One out of every four Christian women suffers from physical, emotional, spiritual, economic, or sexual abuse. Women who have suffered abuse often find it difficult to experience God's love.

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LESLIE ANN  
MCKINNEY

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# **Navigating between *Contexts and Texts* for Ministry as *Theological-Missional* Calling while Appreciating the Wisdom of *Retrievals for Renewal* and Lessons Learned from My Early Seminary Days**

DAVID A. ESCOBAR ARCAV

Studying at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary Campus for Urban Ministerial Education (CUME) was a privilege, a gift, and an honor. It was a privilege and an opportunity to be a student at an academic institution that seriously attends to contextualization and diversity. It was a gift and joy to be a student at an academic institution that proudly adheres to biblical fidelity and historical orthodoxy. It was an honor and a blessing to be a student at an academic institution that consciously exposes its students and faculty to ministry and ecclesial practices.

## **The Privilege of Navigating between Contexts and Texts for Ministry**

Allow me to unpack these three (privilege, gift, and honor) as a way to describe my educational journey and explain my reasons for entering seminary, the roles that a seminary education has played in my life, and the callings and intellectual journey that a seminary education has afforded me. Attending CUME was a privilege for it provided a space to ask the kind of questions that the typical four walls of the church may not have been able to answer. I am a former New England resident (currently residing in Florida) and a Puerto Rican young man reached and saved in a Hispanic-Latino church by the love of the Father, the grace of the Lord, and the power of the Holy Spirit. CUME genuinely embodied the opportunity to re-think, re-formulate, and renew my own theological commitments in light of the commands of the Scripture, the claims of the Gospel, and the unique pressing realities and challenges of urban church dynamics. I came to seminary as a professional (having been a public-school principal and teacher). I entered seminary not only to have answers to particular issues that went beyond the traditional walls of the church and its merely fideistic responses at times but also as an intellectual journey, affective adventure, and spiritual pursuit. On the one hand, I hoped to engage cultural contexts, learn about ecclesial communities, and explore the internal and external structures that promote and/or inhibit kingdom work. On the other hand, I believed and valued the life of the mind, the renewal of the heart, and the nurture of the soul. I followed Matthew 22:37 and Luke 10:27. In sum, at GCTS I experienced the opportunity of navigating between *contexts and texts*. And the most important thing to affirm is that all was by grace. I did not choose to attend seminary. I had never thought of becoming part of that particular academic community and ecclesial-connected space devoted to Christ's church and His appointed officers. It had never occurred to me. I had never planned it. I sincerely believed that seminary (grace) chose me. And for that I am thankful.

I fell in love with the ways theological education helped me understand, articulate, and appreciate complex realities. I am a triple graduate of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. At GCTS-CUME, I earned a Master of Arts in Urban Ministry (*summa cum laude*) and then a Master of Divinity (*summa cum laude*), receiving the Faculty's Christian Thought Division Award and The Seminary's at-large Presidential Award respectively. Here I have fond memories of learning under professors such as Dr. Eldin Villafañe, Dr. William Spencer, Dr. Alvin Padilla and Dr. Seong Hyun Park to name a few. At GCTS-South Hamilton, I earned a Master of Theology (*summa cum laude*) in Theology and Culture (particularly Christianity and the Postmodern World). Here I had the privilege of learning from Dr. David Wells, Dr. Richard Lints, Dr. Gwenfair Adams, and Dr. Donald Fairbarn to name a few.

## The Gift and Honor of a Theological Missional Calling

Theological education was a gift. It was a space that reminded me of the centrality of the Gospel. It was a space that helped me be more faithful to the biblical witness. It was a space that highlighted the importance of reflection (theology, doctrine) and the lessons of the past (church history). It was a space that helped me integrate knowledge and action (ethics, spiritual formation, leadership). It was a space that centered my story within the larger redemptive story or metanarrative of the Christian worldview (creation, fall, redemption, restoration). All of this, I considered pure joy.

It was such an honor to attend GCTS. A seminary education afforded me the blessing to meet and cultivate relationships with so many of Christ's followers (faculty, staff, and students) from a variety of denominations and ministries and from all walks of life. These interactions made me aware of not only the beauty, the breadth, and the depth of Christ's body but also its needs, issues, struggles, and concerns. The blessing of attending GCTS led me to adopt an educational and pedagogical vision and mission. In conversations with seminary faculty, but then, especially, with pastors and church members, I realized that potential and promising leaders and church parishioners in diverse church settings desire to learn and be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks them for a reason for the hope that is in them (1 Pet 3:15). Therefore, the blessing of attending GCTS propelled me to teach and learn even more. Teaching and learning are a calling. I have had the honor of teaching and preaching at churches. I have had the blessing to teach ministerial candidates and experienced clergy leaders in various seminaries and various states in the United States and in multiple countries throughout the world. The Lord has called me to shepherd his church as a pastor-theologian. Seminary education has helped me to consider and practice ministry as a *theological-missional* calling.

## Appreciating the Wisdom of Retrievals for Renewal

The blessing of attending GCTS has ignited in me a fire for deeper and wider learning. I have furthered my education by immersing myself in the classical Western tradition and by navigating the rich waters of church history, particularly the writings of the Reformers and the meditations of the seventeenth century theologians, the so-called Puritans, the physicians of the soul. This kind of learning made me realize three things. First, faith is not to be divorced from reason. Theology (the study of God) needs to engage philosophy (the wisdom of humanity). That is, Jerusalem and Athens need to interact. Second, the contemporary church needs to retrieve critically the riches of the ancient church. I always remind my students, "The church was not born last Saturday." Our present needs the past. Third, theology is not only intellectual but also experiential. To quote the writing of the English Puritan William Ames in his *Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, "Theology is the doctrine of living unto God." The honor and blessing of attending GCTS moved me to appreciate and embrace the wisdom of *retirevals for renewal*. Part of these convictions explain my present pursuit for a second Ph.D. in Divinity (Systematic Theology) at the School of Divinity, History and Philosophy, University of Aberdeen (Scotland, UK).

## Lessons Learned from Seminary

Having touched upon these themes that presently describe and shape my ministerial and academic calling, I will briefly state three lessons I have learned from what God has called me to do, followed by six books that have helped me in my ministry.

The first lesson that I have learned from what God has called me to do is never to neglect the first things. The Scriptures are first. As sinners saved by God's grace alone and now Christ's followers listening to and reading the whole counsel of God, preaching the Gospel to ourselves and to others and living as disciples, pilgrims, and exiles is vital to our Christian lives. These truths are central to our embracing of the Gospel and out promoting the Glory of God. The second lesson is related to people and contexts. We are called by the Lord to minister and serve others where they

are. When preaching the Gospel, we need not dismiss the fact that people face painful and complex realities. As we are called to serve in many capacities and places, we would do well to stand on the shoulders of giants, to embrace a question-asking mindset, to have a listening posture, to pursue life-long learning for the sake of Christ, the Church and others. We need to be and to remain humble and faithful, in order to lead by example and to cultivate the heart of a servant leader. The third lesson is that we are part of something greater than we are. It is never about me, or about us. It is about Christ. Everything we do must point to Christ. We are part of the communion of saints. This communion is past, present, and future. God has showered His infinite wisdom and gifts to His church throughout the centuries and the world. We need not remain in our little corners but learn from and love the global church. We can learn from Christ's church at all times, in all places, and with all peoples. We need to visit, retrieve, learn from, and celebrate the global nature of the church. Our triune God of grace, who has chosen us (Father God), redeemed us (God Son), and sanctified us (God Spirit), has called us at this specific time in history with a specific purpose and calling only for and by the grace of one that in the incarnation was God in us (Emmanuel) and God for us, Jesus Christ.

Following on Paul's writing to the young pastor Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:13 and heeding the advice of C.S. Lewis on the value of reading old books, I will offer six books that have helped me in my ministry: three historical (devotional and doctrinal) and three contemporary/modern.

**Devotional:**

*The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers*, Arthur Bennett

**Doctrinal/Historical:**

*The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, Saint Augustine

*The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John Calvin

**Contemporary/Modern:**

*The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer

*The Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis

*The Pursuit of God*, A.W. Tozer

Dr. David A. Escobar Arcay, a native of Puerto Rico, has served as a teacher, principal, United States Citizenship instructor, and community college English as a second language and bilingual educator. He currently serves as associate professor of educational leadership at Nova Southeastern University, working and traveling between Miami, Orlando, San Juan, PR, and Central/South America. Dr. Escobar Arcay earned a Ph.D. at Boston College, an Ed.M. at Harvard, a M.A.T. at Rhode Island College, his M.A., M.Div., and Th.M. are from Gordon-Conwell, and he holds degrees in theology, the classics, and historical theology from various seminaries. Dr. Escobar Arcay is presently pursuing a second Ph.D. in Divinity at the University of Aberdeen (Scotland, UK). He has collaborated with clergy leaders and served students from all walks of life in diverse educational and ecclesial settings. Dr. Escobar Arcay is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church in America. Currently, he serves as an Assistant Pastor of Education and Theologian-in-Residence at Hope Chapel, Miami, FL and as an instructor for various theological seminaries, denominations, and church groups. At Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Dr. Escobar Arcay teaches as an adjunct professor of theology and Christian thought. His GCTS profile is found at: <https://www.gordonconwell.edu/faculty/adjunct/dr-david-a-escobar-arcay/>.

# Serve the People

## Charlie Lehman

Berkeley, 1977. After the riots, after the Vietnam War, after the SLA, Berkeley is still a tough little town. Martin Luther Klein, a disillusioned ex-Jesus freak, finds his niche as a process server. Then he meets a newer member of his former fellowship and gets a chance at love and renewal.

"*Serve the People* is political satirist Charlie Lehman at his best. His main character, Martin Luther Klein, is a 1970s Berkeley, California 'Everyman.' Through the gritty lenses of Klein's kaleidoscope-colored glasses, the reader captures a glimpse of a remarkable era of political and spiritual revolution. Power to the People!"

—JEANNE DEFAZIO, author, editor, and educator

"Charlie Lehman was a chief playwright and director for the legendary Berkeley Street Theatre ministry of the Christian World Liberation Front during the Jesus Movement. He brings those skills and the same vibrancy and fresh picture language to this exciting, hard-hitting story."

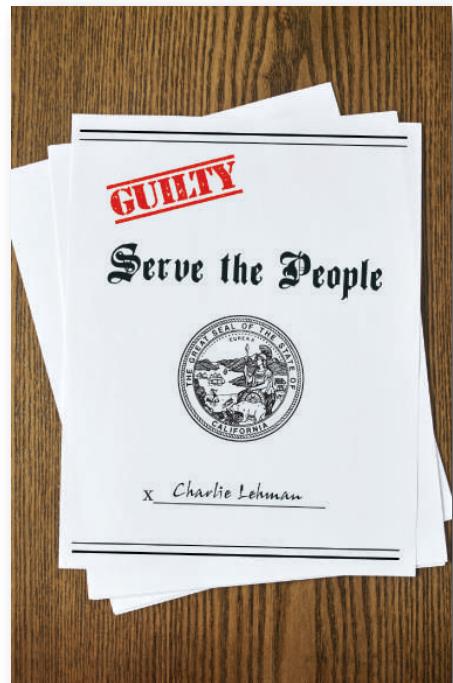
—WILLIAM DAVID SPENCER, author of *Name in the Papers*

"Lehman's accounts in print now provide insights into the colorful, bazaar-like atmosphere of Berkeley and Oakland during the seventies' Jesus, counter-culture, and anti-war movements."

—A. JAMES BERNSTEIN, Orthodox Christian priest

"The story evolves well, as we join Marty on his everyday adventures as a process server. Having been a criminal defense attorney for so many years, I was jazzed to see the realism in his encounters. . . . I heartily endorse this heartfelt and delightful story!"

—BERNICE HERNANDEZ, retired criminal defense attorney



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**Charlie Lehman** acted with the Berkeley Street Theatre from 1972 to 1976. Then he drank the Kool-Aid and became a toxic Christian soldier. He was the Berkeley process server for a major Oakland attorney service. Lehman is an Eastern Orthodox Christian and a retired criminal defense paralegal.

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## Review of *Why Church? A Basic Introduction* by Scott W. Sunquist (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2019)

JINSOOK KIM

Dr. Scott W. Sunquist is a professor, historian, missionary, and the president of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. In his many decades of ministry, he has experienced a diversity of churches globally and has pondered over God's Church. *Why Church?* is intended primarily for those people who are confused and frustrated about the church and who want to know why the church exists and for what purpose. The book is clear, down to earth, and yet deeply profound. The author has been deeply involved with church through his entire life and includes memorable testimonies of people who show how one can be involved in church and live out one's life as a Christian. *Why Church?* asks the simple question, "What is the church?" (4) and then answers that "the church is really one of God's best ideas" (7). He points out how Jesus initiates worship and witness in the church, how church connects us with the mysterious past, and how this living corporate body is culturally diverse: "connected and contextual" (8). As a church historian, the author shares his rich personal experience, a wealth of history about the church, including early Christian church development and information about great martyrs of the church, locally and globally.

This book is organized around five body movements: come, stand, kneel, sit, and go. We come to worship God, we stand to praise and find God's choice and calling, we kneel to turn from the world to the cross and to God, we sit to receive God's word for nourishment, readying us to be a witness, and we go to the world to be witnesses of the gospel.

In chapter one, Dr. Sunquist explains how God guided him to know the meaning and purpose of church. He explains how church history and present-day culture are both important parts of the church. In chapter two, he observes how the church got here and how our history connects with the present diversity of churches. Then, in chapters three through seven, he gives details about the five body movements that symbolize our worship and witness, as we recognize our need and inadequacy before God. Rev. Sunquist believes that engaging church with our full humanity is the only proper stance for entering into God's presence. Humility makes fellowship in the church possible.

The first dimension is "come" (33). This involves inviting people to come to Jesus, encounter him as Savior, come to the new community, and come to a real lifestyle of worship. It starts with conversion: becoming a new person, turning away from self-plans and desires, and entering into God's new plan, family, and purpose for life. We find our true identity by dying to self, being baptized and raised up with a new self in Christ. Conversion is a one-time event but is also a holistic process of living. Our worship shows diversity of culture as well as a lifestyle of praise; mission starts with worship and witness overflows from that worship.

We come to Jesus with praise to "stand" (55) and engage in worship. What we worship gives us identity and value, because, in one way, "we become what we worship...We are God's creation, made in his image—an image that has become tarnished and damaged, but which worship helps to restore" (58). We are who we are because of who God is. "Praise has a subject" (60). We praise God for who he is, what he has done, what he will do, looking toward the future. We praise God poetically, imagining a future glory of intimate joy. Praise is giving our entire lives, emotions, minds, and wills and experiencing God's transformational power. In the great revivals of history, people experienced exceeding joy and were filled with the Holy Spirit. Praise is personal as well as corporate; "praise unites us" (78), and we find our identity and are informed by God's presence. In praise, we are confessing our dependence on God and his forgiveness.

When we kneel in our worship (ch. five), we demonstrate that we realize who God is. He is a holy God who paid the price of our sin. Seeing ourselves with sins and guilt, we kneel to confess; true confession brings reorientation of our hearts and a change of our behavior. Kneeling is a personal as well as “a communal act” (94). “Confession hamstrings the power our culture has over us” (95) and releases God’s mercy and grace.

Chapter six illustrates how we sit. Coming to church to receive God’s word, listening to Scripture, we find that God’s word has power to confront, change, and transform. The preaching event is God’s divine moment, for the Holy Spirit is active in people’s lives and helps them to live out what they hear. The Scriptures interpret each Scripture: self-interpreting, truth-telling, recounting ongoing stories. By continually coming, sitting, and memorizing Scripture, we are asking, “What is God saying to me/us?” (116). Receiving the Lord’s Supper is the pinnacle of God’s story, as resurrection is the core of God’s restorative power. Thus, we give our lives to God, giving thanks for what Jesus has done, participating in baptism, communion, confession, and preaching and teaching of the Scripture together as we sit in church.

Chapter seven describes how we go: church is like an outpost pointing to the kingdom of God as “worship becomes mission” (136). The church is different from any other organization; it is Jesus’ dwelling place in us. “Mission is the meaning of our worship, and worship is the power and purpose of our mission” (137). Church is interwoven with these two purposes: an overflow of worship sharing testimonies to all nations, religions, and cultures, for our God is a missionary God, and we have been sent by Jesus on a mission to the world. Thus we “enter to celebrate, depart to proclaim” (158).

Chapter eight describes how the healthy church emphasizes the five body movements. Dr. Sunquist additionally explores issues the Church seldom talks about—relationships and emotions. When we receive Jesus, we enter into Jesus’ community. Here, many people do not fit anywhere else, but we are still to love each other unconditionally. Rev. Sunquist encourages every church to nurture small groups, which are little churches inside the local churches caring for each other and for neighbors. Jesus is the missionary and “the Church is the missionary Church!” (134).

I highly recommend that seminary students read this book. It contains extraordinary stories of how the author comes to understand the meaning and purpose of the Church. I also recommend this book to seminary professors to use in classes on evangelism, pastoral care, and spiritual formation, as well as in introductory mission classes. It affirms in many ways how God’s Church is moving forward despite difficulties.

In this book, Jesus works powerfully through the author’s early life experiences of confusion about church and his personal struggles to search out the meaning and purpose of the church. The author goes back to the deep foundations of church history, presents practical applications, and helps us to ponder important issues and look forward to the future of the Church. My one criticism is that generally, people spend 90,000 hours working and worshiping and witnessing at work. What does it look like to be salt and light in the workplace? How does the church bless others as worship becomes mission? In other words, we could have used a little more in the “go” and “tell” stage. But, all in all, it is a very helpful book. Scholars will ponder its many insights, but a child can understand it, as President Sunquist deftly uses the five body movements to describe the meaning and purpose of the healthy church. I am encouraged and empowered by this book to greater appreciation for the Church.

Jinsook Kim is a doctoral student at Trinity Evangelical Divinity school and is researching a theology of work and workplace discipleship. She holds an M. Div. from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (Hamilton campus). She worked as a missionary with YWAM for 23 Years. She spent her majority of time studying, obeying and teaching the Bible (Ezra 7:10), how to connect God’s word to our world. She loves to equip and mobilize God’s people into everyday workplace missionaries.

## Review of *1 Timothy* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2013) and *2 Timothy and Titus* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014) by Aída Besançon Spencer

JENNIFER CREAMER

Aída Besançon Spencer is Senior Professor of New Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. She also brings to her scholarship forty-eight years' experience as an ordained Presbyterian minister. Aída Spencer served for many years as a pastor at Pilgrim Church in Beverly, Massachusetts, which she and her husband, William David Spencer, planted in the late 1980s. Aída Spencer has authored numerous books, including *Beyond the Curse: Women called to Ministry*, *Paul's Literary Style*, and *A Commentary on James*. She and her husband are founders and editors of the House of Prisca and Aquila series with Wipf & Stock, as well as founders and editors of the *Africanus Journal*.

The two commentaries, *1 Timothy* and *2 Timothy and Titus*, are part of Cascade's New Covenant Commentary Series. Spencer's commentaries are thoroughly researched. These volumes are based on the author's own translation of the Greek text. Dr. Spencer conducted extensive word and grammatical studies in her preparation. The commentaries are rooted in primary sources. Biblical, Jewish, early Christian, and Greco-Roman texts are considered when explaining the meaning of words, the historical setting, and cultural backgrounds. In addition, the author traveled to Ephesus, Crete, Rome, and Greece to visit key sites as part of her research (*1 Timothy*, 1).

Each volume begins with a general introduction to the Pastoral Epistles. The introduction to the first volume, *1 Timothy*, includes a twelve-page discussion of authorship and chronology of historical events. Paul is the author of the Pastoral Epistles (*1 Timothy*, 10). Prof. Spencer's numbered list of events that occurred between Paul's release from house arrest in Rome and his second Roman imprisonment, where he writes his second letter to Timothy, proposes an order in which they probably occurred (*1 Timothy*, 11–12). The chronology of events between Paul's first and second Roman imprisonment can be a confusing matter for students of the New Testament. Aida Spencer's list provides a helpful aid.

The general introduction in each volume is followed by another introduction, specific to each book. The introduction to the setting of Ephesus—the setting for both letters to Timothy—describes the city of Ephesus, gives background from the book of Acts, and explains the nature of Artemis worship in the region. An analytical outline of the text follows. Comments on the text flow from the outline, with each section bearing a title that summarizes the primary theme for each. For instance, the section encompassing the first chapter of *1 Timothy* is entitled “Warn False Teachers” (*1 Timothy*, 21). These titles help the reader to track with the flow of the argument in each letter.

The exposition of the text in *1 Timothy* and *2 Timothy and Titus* includes contextual word studies that go deeper than what one might find in a Greek lexicon. Spencer considers both the immediate and broader context, often including information relevant to the cultural context. In other words, the author explains the details of the biblical text in light of the bigger picture. She includes several comparison charts that show similarities and differences on a particular subject between different letters. One such chart compares the nature of the heresies addressed in *1 Timothy* and those addressed in *Titus*. This visual layout makes plain the many similarities of the heterodox teaching found in both Ephesus and Crete (*2 Timothy and Titus*, 22).

One feature unique to this commentary series is the specific application of the biblical text to today's world. These applications, titled “Fusing the Horizons,” seek to bridge the material from the first-century context to today. Specific ways in which the passage is relevant to contemporary issues are discussed. As an example, “Fusing the Horizons: The Importance of Holiness” (*2 Timothy and Titus*, 54–55) builds a bridge between Paul's exhortation for *Titus* to teach godly living to those

in first-century Crete and the need for godly living in today's context. Much damage is done when those who preach the gospel do not live according to the gospel. Walking in holiness is essential for effective witness today, just as it was in the first century.

Readers often consult commentaries for assistance with difficult passages. Prof. Spencer handles such passages with clarity and grace. The text in 1 Timothy 2:11–15 concerning women in the church has long been a passage difficult to understand, garnering no shortage of controversy. Spencer offers an irenic and carefully researched explanation that considers views of both complementarians and egalitarians. Her detailed handling of the meaning of the text, context, and historical background leads to an egalitarian conclusion: women were teaching false doctrine in Ephesus. Women were part of a broader problem of heterodox teaching in the church. Instead, those women should learn sound doctrine and not espouse teachings inconsistent with the gospel (*1 Timothy*, 57–77).

Dr. Spencer highlights key themes and historical background that illuminate Timothy's challenge in Ephesus and Titus's mission in Crete. Both ministers were dealing with problems in their respective churches that involved heterodox teachings and ungodly behaviors. The themes of sound doctrine and walking in holiness remain important for our churches today, as do the other themes in the Pastorals. The commentaries provide detailed information about Paul's co-workers, exploring the individuals as well as the dynamics of Paul's team. These character studies make the context of Paul's team come alive for today's reader. Spencer shares insights about individuals in Scripture who are often overlooked. One example is the comment that Zenas the lawyer and Apollos (Titus 3:13) could have helped bring clarity and truth to those in Crete "since the heterodox teachers were raising many questions about the use of the law" (*2 Timothy and Titus*, 71). Regarding the nature of Paul's ministry, Spencer points out that "Paul rarely is alone. He may be single, but he is not solitary" (*2 Timothy and Titus*, 72). Detailed information on members of Paul's team mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:9–20 is presented in a way that recreates the life setting. Readers of the New Testament often skim over personal greetings at the end of New Testament epistles, but Prof. Spencer examines the individuals and reveals the dynamic world of relationships that characterize Paul's mode of team ministry.

What makes these commentaries so excellent? Aida Spencer's commentaries are not only meticulously researched, they are also interesting to read. The discussions engage the reader in a way that not all commentaries do. Dr. Spencer presents her material with clarity. She affirms both the reliability and the authority of Scripture. Knowledge of Greek is not necessary to understand these commentaries. Greek words are transliterated, making the text accessible to the layperson. Prof. Spencer's commentaries sparkle with insight.

If you read only one set of commentaries on the Pastoral Epistles, read these two volumes. Scholars will appreciate the thorough research. Pastors and teachers will appreciate the depth of insight and clarity of presentation. All those seeking a deeper understanding of the Pastoral Epistles will appreciate the nuanced discussions of the text and be challenged by the applications for today.

Jennifer Creamer has several decades of experience teaching in multicultural classrooms. She has taught in global settings on four continents, including Australia, Africa, Asia, and North America. She taught as an adjunct professor with Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (Boston campus) for several years and also served as Pastor of Organization at Pilgrim Church in Beverly, Massachusetts. She is currently a faculty member of the University of the Nations. She holds master's degrees in Old and New Testament from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and a Ph.D. in New Testament from North-West University in South Africa. She is ordained through the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Rev. Dr. Creamer is author of *God as Creator in Acts 17:24, an Historical-Exegetical Study* (Wipf & Stock, 2017).

# God as Creator in Acts 17:24

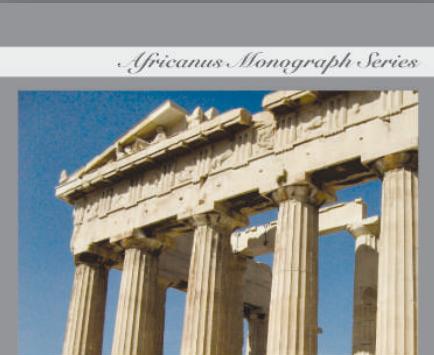
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## Review of *The Story of Creeds and Confessions: Tracing the Development of the Christian Faith* by Donald Fairbairn and Ryan M. Reeves (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019)

WILLIAM DAVID SPENCER

Introducing himself to the saints at Colosse (2:1), a church he did not found,<sup>1</sup> the Apostle Paul sets out a statement about Christ so memorable and effective that he will repeat some of its tenets (e.g., 1:19 again in 2:9; 1:16 in 2:10) in this brief letter to ensure that the Colossians understand “the great mystery of God, Christ, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden.” By this means he also explains why, though only a friend of their church’s founder but otherwise practically a stranger to them, he is working so hard on their behalf. Understanding Christ’s unique majesty and true nature has set a calling on Paul he wants the Colossians to recognize and emulate.

These days in scholarly circles, much speculation has been exhausted on whether Paul is quoting a Christian hymn or not, but what makes this statement significant to this present review is that it models what creeds and confessions are: declarations about God that call for obedience and action. Like the great “Shema” recorded in Deuteronomy 6:4, “Hear, Israel, the Lord (singular), your God (plural), the Lord (singular) is one (or united),” delivered to the Israelites just before they cross the Jordan to wage the conquest of Canaan, such momentous statements are recorded throughout the Bible history to set down the correct belief that motivates the action God wants believers to take.

I start my review with this explanation, because every reader comes to a book with a different history. For some of us, born and reared as I was in a North American fundamentalist Baptist church of the late 1940s and early 1950s, the great creeds and confessions of the Christian church were, as Paul describes the mystery of Christ himself, hidden from our knowledge, apparently being considered irrelevant to our pursuit of a life of faith. The problem was not that we did not make a church doctrinal statement ourselves, guided by similar General Association of Regular Baptist statements, or that our pastors were ignorant of the wider history of the Church universal. What motivated our lack of emphasis on the historic creeds and confessions was a fear of “creeping credalism,” the degenerating of our faith into dead repetitions of obscure words that we imagined had marked the more liberal churches around us who, as a result, mouthed liturgies purporting to support the Christian faith but allowed dancing, going to the movies, drinking alcohol, and, in some southern states, smoking, in short, engaging in all sorts of harmful and forbidden behavior. Instead, we relied solely on what has come to be called the “plain reading” of Scripture, using the words of the King James version of the Bible alone on which to build our view of Christian faith and practice. Of course, our biblical basis was hardly “plain,” as our complex amalgamate of verses gathered from all over the Bible to follow the subtle nuances of dispensational eschatology revealed. But the point was: if it’s not in the Bible, then it’s not for us. Although how we imagined the mnemonic worship style of Judaism and the descriptions of early Christian worship and its chanted hymns and confessions of Christ were not liturgical is quite mystifying.

Such a background, however, gave me an orientation that was actually quite helpful. As I slowly transferred from a fundamentalistic to an evangelical perspective on the faith, I began to discover the creeds and confessions as a great treasure trove of historic orthodoxy (right thinking) that I have come to love, revere, and teach, but, at the same time, I am aware that the creeds are not canonical in themselves and this caution has helped me survive and thrive in a Presbyterian mainline denomination that progressively liberalized around me, defining itself more and more on increasingly liberal creeds and confessions. The gift I brought from my background is to base

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<sup>1</sup> Epaphras, an evangelist ministering in the nearby cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis did (Col 1:7; 4:13).

myself on the Bible and its statements and to regard tenets in any creed new or historic that are not supported in the Bible as not binding on me, no matter how much some of my most respected and treasured higher church scholarly friends assure me these are universal declarations that bind all Christians and with which all Christians must agree. No, thanks. If you can't clearly show its basis in the Bible, but you assure me it's in the "spirit of Scripture," well, that's your opinion and a privilege of your Christian freedom, but no reason for you to restrict mine on your speculation.

So, each of these factors color my view and account for the enthusiasm I feel when I read a book like this fine study by Donald Fairbairn and Ryan Reeves.

It begins right where it should, centering on Jesus Christ and "not an ethical system" (1) in chapter 1, which then provides a much-needed defense, called "Why Should We Care about Creeds and Confessions from the Past?" Linking the chapters, this dual-authored book argues that creeds and confessions help us understand who Jesus is by reviewing what Jesus has meant to the Christians who preceded us and, therefore, already knew the One whom we are meeting. This they unpack with great skill in succinctness, introducing the "major creeds" and exploring such intriguing mysteries as, for example, why the popular Apostles Creed and Athanasian Creed have never been "formally approved by the whole church" (9). They are also suitably cautious when claiming, because of its almost universal acceptance by the fourth century church, "it is thus fair to say that the Nicene Creed is *the* creed of the Christian church," by hastening to add in the very next sentence, "Of course, this does not put the Nicene Creed on a par with Scripture, but it is a statement that Christians of all stripes and in all time periods have agreed on, and thus it deserves to be taken very seriously as a faithful summary of scriptural teaching" (11). This is a statement that any of us can accept, even those of us who may carp with the AD 381 revision of Nicaea's initial creed to include an orthodox adjustment of Justin Martyr's post-scriptural theory of the "eternal generation of the Son."<sup>2</sup>

After this sound orientation, the authors take us into the heart of the book, again beginning just as they should with detailing for us "The Creedal Impulse in Scripture and the Early Church" in part 1, chapter 2. Here we review the Old Testament "Shema" (Deut. 6:4) and focus on many instances of "Creedal language in the New Testament" (23) and among the disciples of the disciples with such famous predecessors to Nicaea's Creed as "The Old Roman Creed." Included is a helpful chart showing us the "prototypical" elements of early creeds that lay the groundwork for the ecumenical creeds to come (34). Chapter 3 discusses the rise of Constantine, the first Christian emperor, and his genuine concern for agreement in the church, when the Arian controversy begins, culminating in the first great, foundational statement to codify the faith for every believer, the Creed of Nicaea (AD 325) (compared on p. 59 with the "prototypical" elements we saw characterizing the creedal statements that preceded it).

Since the Arian objections did not stop with the church's declaration of faith as other heterodoxical (other than orthodox) viewpoints continued to arise, the need for another statement was essential, so another declaration had to be made by the ecumenical council who forged the Chalcedonian Definition of the Faith (AD 451) (ch. 5, pp. 80-108), and so a pattern of handling non-orthodox views by reaffirming the accepted orthodox Christian faith was set.

The following chapters detail these key creeds in chapter 6 (The Apostles' Creed) and chapter 7 (The Athanasian Creed) and then the great split between the eastern and western churches becomes the book's focus, all presented in an interesting and engaging manner, respectful to both sides as the authors plunge into the disagreements, making them intelligible to readers of all levels of preparation. One does not have to be a professor of church history to enjoy this book and learn from its accessible explanations; one just has to love the Lord and the Christian faith and wonder

<sup>2</sup> See my sole reservation on this addition to an otherwise soundly excellent creed in "The Need for Caution in the Use of Eternal Birth Language for Jesus Christ in the Early Church and Today," in *Africanus Journal* vol 10, no. 1 (April 2018), 5-22.

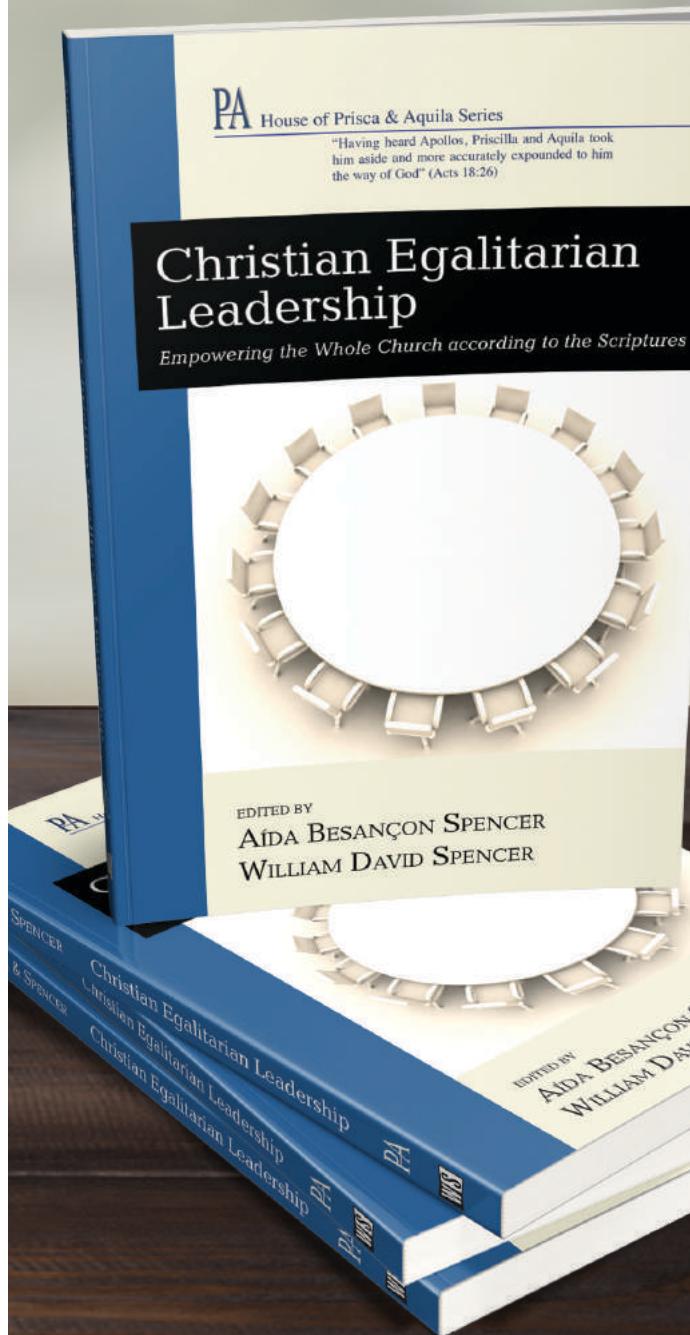
why there are so many denominations and diverse worship practices and whether we really are one church with all that separates us. At that point, we begin to understand that the historically orthodox creeds are working with the Scriptures to unite us.

After a balanced section on the Reformation and the great confessions in its aftermath (part 4, chs. 13-17), the authors tackle “Confession in the Modern World (1650-Present)” in a single, concise chapter of great relevance to contemporary readers: “The New Grammar of Modern Confessions” (ch. 18, pp. 361-383). Noting the impact of such modern movements as the Enlightenment (361), the Great Awakenings, and the loss of European religious separationism in the survival mode mixing of all Christian expressions of faith in the migrations to the rugged wilderness of North America (362) that encouraged founding new denominations with new statements, the chapter explains that in Europe as well new conditions were evoking new statements. A culmination occurred in the rise of Hitler with his attempt to coopt the authority of the church and make himself its head, resulting in the classic Barmen Confession, defining Christianity against any such social, political, and religious takeover. What was present in the Arian controversy as violence ensued from those opposed to orthodoxy, became pronounced in Hitler’s oppression and suppression of the church and, in the aftermath in which we still live, social as well as religious concerns now motivate new statements, confessions, and creeds. The book ends with a conclusion and index.

To sum up: rather than obsolete or anti-scriptural, the whole idea of creating creeds to restate (rather than redefine) the Christian faith in the conditions facing the church in each age is essential to a faith which serves a God who is actively reconciling the world to Godself. This book is an important and helpful survey of this healthy propensity in our living faith. Other worthwhile books are available on this topic (such as by J. N. D. Kelly and Philip Schaff) but Drs. Fairbairn and Reeves’s accessible survey of the creeds is contemporary to today’s concerns and available in one volume.

William David Spencer is distinguished adjunct professor of theology and the arts at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary’s Boston Campus for Urban Ministerial Education. He earned his Th.D. in theology and ancient literature at Boston University School of Theology and has taught theology for Gordon-Conwell since 1983, from 1992 on at CUME. He has also served as founding pastor of encouragement for more than thirty years at Pilgrim Church of Beverly, MA. He edited Christians for Biblical Equality’s journal *Priscilla Papers* for ten years and for twelve has coedited *Africanus Journal*. He also coedits the Wipf and Stock book series *House of Prisca and Aquila*. He has authored about three hundred articles, chapters, editorials, poems, stories, and features, including authoring or editing eighteen books, including *Christian Egalitarian Leadership*, *The Prayer Life of Jesus*, *Dread Jesus, God through the Looking Glass*; two novels, *Cave of Little Faces* and the award-winning *Name in the Papers*; as well as a related CD of his original music: *Songs from the Cave, Ballads from the Papers* (2019). Two of his books, *Mysterium and Mystery* and *Chanting Down Babylon* have been declared by critics the definitive works in their fields and he has won twenty editing and writing awards. He and Aída’s blog is *Applying Biblical Truths Today* at <https://aandwspencer.blogspot.com>.

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## Review of *Serve the People* by Charlie Lehman (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2020)

JEANNE DEFazio

*Serve the People* is the fictionalized experience of author Charlie Lehman. Marty Klein, its main character, is a disillusioned summons server and a true believer in Jesus. His Berkeley Christian Community of the mid 1970s was outsmarted by street-smart addicts. *Serve the People* is Charlie's painful lament. It describes his jaundiced attitude. "Freddy asked Marty, 'Why'd you leave the community, dude?' Marty was ready: 'People didn't really want the Good News. Now I bring them the bad news'" (12).

This novelette begins with an event that opens the main character's eyes and exposes his disillusionment with his Christian community. Its ending is sealed to secrecy but well worth the cost of admission. Charlie sums it up in his back-cover summary:

"Berkeley, 1977. After the riots, after the Vietnam War, after the SLA, Berkeley is still a tough little town. Martin Luther Klein, a disillusioned ex-Jesus freak, finds his niche as a process server. Then he meets a newer member of his former fellowship and gets a chance at love and renewal."

I asked to review *Serve the People* because it is a brave and honest look at the downside of the 1970s Berkeley, California Jesus Movement. I had the privilege of acting in a Berkeley Street Theatre Production directed and scripted by Charlie Lehman. At that time, I encountered many of the people fictionalized in this story. Berkeley in the 1970s was a center for drugs and rebellion. Telegraph Avenue "was the boulevard of the broken California Dream for so many runaways and lost souls."<sup>1</sup> There was a spiritual battle that took place as the 1970s Jesus people outreached to the street-savvy Berkeley addicts. Charlie Lehman uses sardonic humor to describe the warfare. He got wounded in the battle and describes his battle scars in "Jesus freak noir." As a 1969 "streetwise" introduction to the Gospel of John explains: "This is no plastic rap."<sup>2</sup>

*Serve the People* allows Charlie to entertain and inform the reader and to overcome his own woundedness by the word of his testimony (Rev 12:11). He survived outreach to the Berkeley street scene with some scars and has the promise of victory in the final battle:

Now have come the salvation and the power  
and the kingdom of our God,  
and the authority of his Messiah.  
For the accuser of our brothers and sisters,  
who accuses them before our God day and night,  
has been hurled down (Rev. 12:10 NIV)

*Serve the People* is a valuable resource for Church History and Urban Ministry. I recommend this book for all those who want to read something "retro" that is real.

Jeanne DeFazio is a SAG/AFTRA actress of Spanish/ Italian descent, who played supporting parts in theater, movies, and television series and then transferred to a life of service to the marginalized in the drama of real life. Jeanne became a teacher of second language-learner children in the barrios of San Diego. She completed a Bachelor of Arts in History at the University of California, Davis, pursued seminary education at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (M.A.R. Theology), and completed a Cal State Teach English Language Learners Program. Since 2009 to the present, Jeanne has been an Athanasian Teaching Scholar at Gordon-Conwell's multicultural Boston Campus for Urban Ministerial Education (CUME), which serves the ethnic churches.<sup>3</sup>

1 Jeanne C. DeFazio, ed., *Berkeley Street Theatre: How Improvisation and Street Theater Emerged as a Christian Outreach to the Culture of the Time*, House of Prisca & Aquila Series (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017), 5.

2 DeFazio, ed., *Berkeley Street Theatre*, 113.

3 Teresa Flowers and Jeanne DeFazio, *How to Have an Attitude of Gratitude on the Night Shift* (Oakland, CA: Solstice, 2010), viii-ix.

She is the co-editor of the following Wipf & Stock publications: *Creative Ways to Build Christian Community*, *Redeeming the Screens*, *Berkeley Street Theatre*, *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 *Keeping the Dream Alive: A Reflection on the Art of Harriet Lorence Nesbitt*, Specialist Fourth Class John Joseph DeFazio: *Advocating for Disabled American Veterans*, and *The Commission: The God Who Calls Us to Be a Voice during a Pandemic, Wildfires, and Racial Violence*.

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# 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*

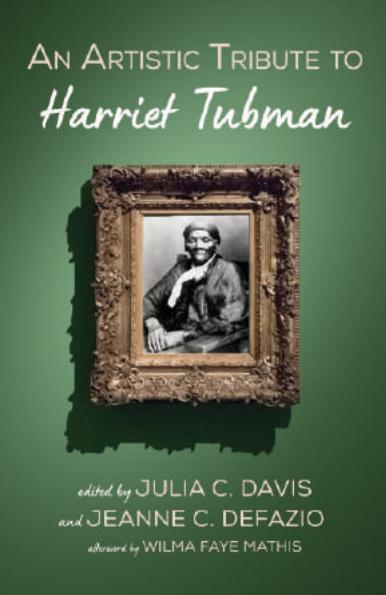
"*An Artistic Tribute to Harriet Tubman* puts history in divine perspective as we see a woman guided by her God emboldened to change the course of history. The abolitionist movement is seen through God's plan and Harriet a chosen vessel divinely sent to destroy the evils of slavery by the power of the 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 POULLARD, 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 *Three Pieces of Glass: Why We Feel Lonely in a World Mediated by Screens* by Eric O. Jacobson (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2020)

DEAN BORGMAN

Human beings are among those mammals who avoid solitary existence to live in groups. God's "It is not good for man to live alone," after creating humankind with a divine image, adds a spiritual imperative for communal living. We were made to belong.

Pastor and writer Eric Jacobson here examines our human need to belong—as an existential necessity for all and as a Christian reality for those who believe this basic need comes from our being in the image of the Triune God. Beyond our origin, followers of Jesus Christ are called to make a difference in the world through beloved communities.

Prophetic vision and challenging books such as this come out of an author's personal experience. Reading his three books, we learn that Jacobsen was a Presbyterian minister in Missoula, Montana and Tacoma, Washington with a transformative experience of living, with his wife and three children, in a community called Koinonia (in Pasadena, CA, I take it, while studying at Fuller Theological Seminary's graduate school [33-35, 43]).

Without denying the importance of our natural environment, Jacobson is hoping to encourage Christian thought and action regarding our *built environment*. He is calling our attention to secular studies of *new urbanism*, countering some of the stifling effects of modernism's designed cities or automobile drivers.

Thoughtful critique and appreciation of *Three Pieces of Glass* will send us deeper into many other studies of life and church in the modern city. Notably, we can prepare ourselves to evaluate Jacobsen's *Three Pieces of Glass* by reviewing the critiques of modernistic cities from Jane Jacobs (1992), *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, and James Howard Kunstler (1994), *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-Made Landscape*. As to our current cultural un-neighborliness and loneliness, we should also recall David Riesman and Nathan Glaser (1950), *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character*, and Robert Putnam (2000), *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. (Putnam is briefly mentioned by Jacobsen on p.106.)

As background for this book's challenge, there are other Christian critiques of our current urban and suburban life. Ray Bakke (1997), *A Theology as Big as the City* and (2006) *Street Signs: A New Direction in Urban Ministry*, both calling prophetic attention to the challenge of today's life in the city. Of more current and prominent attention are Tim Keller's noted pastoral ministry and writings from New York City, especially his *Center Church: Doing Balanced Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (2020). (None of these receives mention in Jacobsen's work.)

Further important background for our present review comes from Eric Jacobsen's own previous and fine works: *Sidewalks in the Kingdom: The Christian Practice of Everyday Life* (2003) and *The Space Between: A Christian Engagement with the Built Environment* (2012).

The opening sentences of *Three Pieces of Glass: Why We Feel Lonely in a World Mediated by Screens* are too rich and pregnant to pass up:

The door opens, flooding the bar with natural light. An ordinary looking heavy-set man appears and is greeted by a chorus of voices: "Norm!"

Thus, begins the first episode of *Cheers*, the TV sitcom that dominated the airwaves during the 1980s (ix).

The sweetest word in our language, it's often been said, is our own name. To have those we most

want to be with, our greatest supporters, suddenly in unison, cry out our name—becomes one of life's treasured moments.

*Cheers*, then, symbolizes satisfaction of a basic human need. Eric Jacobson describes it as having been a real place in Boston, “where people have to be bodily present for the proper greeting to take place.”

The term that best captures the object of that longing we have for a place where everybody knows our name is “belonging.” This book focuses on the kind of belonging that involves real people gathering in real places in the civic realm. This is the kind of belonging that seems to have diminished in the past few decades. And it is this kind that many desire to experience today (x).

Significant cultural changes have weakened the development of personal identities and increased mental health crises among our young... and we older ones as well. Jacobson is concerned about recent cultural changes disrupting previous communities and relationships. And he is describing these societal changes as “three pieces of glass.”

The first was the car windshield, a metaphor for an automobile revolution shaping the kind of suburban neighborhoods especially in which many of us don’t know our neighbors three doors down.

The second culturally intruding piece of glass is the television screen. Early television brought families together, but, then, new channels and broadened programming—meeting the niche interests of father and mother, sons and daughters of different ages—interrupted the sense of family belonging. As one father lamented: “We are together at home all right but disconnected in our separate rooms, TVs and programs.” (In PBS’ *Frontline*, “The Lost Children of Rockdale County.”)

The third piece of glass has proven to be the most troublesome; it is that of the smartphone with its seductive and pernicious apps—using algorithms enticing us into addiction. Still, it is the first cultural intrusion, the car, that drives Jacobsen’s critique of highway and communal planning that has destroyed healthy communal neighborliness and hindered *shalom*, God’s intended peace in the world.

Jacobson describes “Three distinct but interconnected forces (that) are largely responsible for the demise of this kind of belonging” symbolized by *Cheers*’s togetherness.

The first is “a kind of centrifugal force that pulls us inward toward isolated or private environments and away from public engagement.... The car, the television, and the smartphone have made our lives easier and more entertaining, but together they have vastly reduced the frequency, duration, and quality of our public interactions” (x-xi):

The second has to do with the public realm itself... You leave your private realm, and after a walk... you can’t find any place to stop, enjoy some leisure, and interact with neighbors....

The third force pushing against our desire to belong is the frenetic pace that has taken over our lives. We are too hurried to invest in or maintain deep relational connections.... With the option of binge-watching our favorite show and ordering groceries online, we have fewer compelling reasons to leave our homes (xi).

I imagine, when writing this 2020 book in 2018 and 2019, the author had no idea how Covid-19 would make his work so much more compelling and important.

Eric Jacobson makes clear that this book is for Christians—but not for Christians to find sanctuary in church while neglecting our responsibility to be *salt and light in our world*. Beyond this mandate of Christ, Scripture urges us to live and pray for the *shalom* of our “Babylonian” exile in contemporary culture (Jer. 29:7):

Therefore, the solution to the problem of belonging involves first being aware enough that we begin to recognize the cost we incur when we choose to invest our limited time and energy in some of the common practices that alienate and isolate us from people and places proximate to us.

Whatever solutions we ultimately find will most likely involve switching off the TV, putting down the smartphone, and getting out of the car and venturing into the local setting of whatever place God has called us to live, where we face the risk of being greeted or ignored (xv).

Our nation's fear, motivating this book, is a crisis of loneliness. Using sociological and biblical/theological methodologies, the author moves toward a theology of belonging, a theology of hospitality.

The book's theme of belonging is broken down into both private and civic relationships. Private relationships describe both personal friendships and even closer intimate relationships with family. Outside the family circle, we have many public (business, etc.) relationships along with closer friendship ties: "For the purpose of this book, we focus on the kind of public belonging that we experience with people who live in our area" (11).

Theologically, Jacobsen sees the origin of belonging rooted in the image of the Triune God in human beings. This explains the universal human longing to belong, to feel at home. His sociological analysis reveals how much of this sensitivity has been lost. The writer strongly encourages Christians to contribute to the common good of closer neighborhoods: it is the church which has the impetus to resist cultural temptations and bring about social change:

[In Acts 2:46-47] Luke is primarily telling us about activities that the emerging disciples of Jesus did as a Christian community (meeting together, breaking bread, praising God). But he also tells us that they were "*enjoying the favor of all the people.*" That "all" here suggests... people... who were not part of the Christian community (xiii).

The author further describes how biblical churches can affect today's world:

Jesus' final instructions to his disciples can be understood as mandate for the church to serve as an instrument of belonging. The church is called to be a catalyst of belonging through evangelism, baptism, and discipleship. These three basic tasks are fundamentally about helping people fully experience the belonging for which they were created... The church, then, has a key role to play in helping alleviate the crisis of belonging in our culture (21).

At a time when secular mental health experts are decrying our crisis of loneliness, God's story of belonging throughout Scripture and church history calls us to a theology of belonging through identification in that story. Jacobsen's theme is that our place and story need the place and stories of our neighborhood, business districts, and public places. The Christian Gospel is God's invitation into the story of a hospitable God and Christian fellowship—and the flourishing of our "Babylonian" secular societies:

Belonging involves a sense of fitting in with a particular place, a particular group of people, and/or with the ethos of narrative of a place.... We need institutions to build and activate successful public places for people to gather. We need to gather to *generate* and *share* those stories with one another (emphases mine). When these three aspects (generating, shaping, passing on) come together in the right way, we usually experience a satisfying sense of belonging (247).

For those to whom all this sounds impossibly utopian, the author reminds us:

Fortunately, solving the problem of belonging isn't just up to us. As disciples of Jesus, we believe in a God who gets the last word and has invited us into his story.

As we experience triumphs and failures in our attempts to offer signs and instruments of belonging, the fact of the reality of God's belonging is breaking through and drawing us in gives us hope... we can take comfort in the fact that all our stories are being gathered together into his story (248).

As one who began teaching what we called urbanology to urban youth leaders in inner city New York, back in the 1960s, and has continued thinking about God's mission in the city today, I have found Jacobsen's book challenging and deepening my thinking. It has also raised more than one issue and question about his theological works. Here are three:

1. What might be missing in the prophetic work of a Presbyterian pastoring in Missoula, Montana and Tacoma, Washington? With all the rich stories Jacobsen provides there are realities in Detroit, Atlanta, New York, and Los Angeles missing. And perhaps in rural life as described by Wendell Berry—whose rural vision Jacobsen has borrowed for urban application.
2. Does Jacobsen's urgent critique of modern cities and challenge to urban Christians miss some of the complexities and paradoxes of our lives in secular Babylon? Does he miss, for instance, some of Tim Keller's admission of insoluble paradoxes and need for balance in applying the Gospel of our Lord?
3. How can the important vision of Jacobsen, in his three books, miss our national economic injustice affecting the poor—and particularly our racial injustice against people of color?

The great gift and challenge of Jacobsen's work, I think, is that we must take his prophetic books, along with other writings mentioned above and factor these insights in with the broader Christian cultural critique of British Mark Meynell (2015) *A Wilderness of Mirrors: Trusting Again in a Cynical World* in order to discuss our current cultural situation and understanding of our Gospel mandates. Such studies must include Jemar Tisby (2020) *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism* and its excellent (2020) Study Guide.

Finally, all Christians who are awake to Scripture's prophetic critique of our current political and civil unrest should demand our seminaries training pastors mention not only the above books in their curriculum, but to offer entire courses on the Bible's emphasis on the poor and marginalized, thereby promoting God's promise of *Shalom* for all nations and peoples who will repent and ask God's gracious help.

Dean Borgman is the Charles E. Professor of Youth Ministries (Emeritus) at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and director of the Center for Youth Studies. He has spent his life in youth work, training, and as professor of youth ministries in seminaries around the world. Dean is the founder and principal writer for the CYS, Culture and Youth Studies (<http://cultureandyouth.org>). His *When Kumbaya Is Not Enough: A Practical Theology for Youth Ministry* (1997) and *Hear My Story: Understanding the Cries of Troubled Youth* (2003) and *Foundations for Youth Ministry: Theological Engagement with Teen Life and Culture* (2013) are being used as texts in colleges and seminaries around the world. Dean received a Youth Ministry Lifetime Achievement Award from the Association of Youth Ministry Educators in 2006 and from Youth Specialties in 2013. He is an honorary founder/member of the International Association for the Study of Youth Ministry. Dean and Gail (LICSW) live in Rockport, MA and have four grown children and twelve grandchildren.

## **Review of *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Abuse: Reading the Bible with Survivors* by Elaine A. Heath (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2019)**

JEAN A. DIMOCK

*Healing the Wounds of Sexual Abuse* by Elaine A. Heath is written for those who have experienced the ruthlessness of sexual abuse. She uses the Bible, her ministerial experiences, and responsible sources in her writing, with the goal of providing a biblical tool for survivors so they can experience healing. She also provides needed and accurate scriptural understanding of biblical truths that bring the church closer to where God wants us in our response to those who need healing. *Healing* is also for those who are in a position to speak into the lives of survivors, as they also find a deeper understanding of help found in biblical truths (e.g., therapists, church leadership, families of survivors, etc.). The end of each chapter has thoughtful questions for survivors and for those who touch the lives of survivors, as well as other recommended activities that relate to the completed chapter.

The author begins the reader's healing through the Bible with Adam and Eve. Before they sinned, they were sinned against by the lying serpent. Survivors of sexual abuse have been sinned against, as well. The resulting wounds can lead to the burden of sin. Adam and Eve's sin moved them from being unashamed of their nakedness to shame. Thrust into a world outside innocence, the abused are often awakened through lies and manipulations, grooming, and even force. Nonetheless, survivors with those experiences can be assured of God's love as the deceiver is judged.

Children are placed in a more vulnerable position with further abuse when boundaries are broken through abuse. Their future relationships are compromised at home, church, and work. Wounds are irritated and deepened with rejections by the church, which deepen their thoughts of being rejected by Jesus, thus robbing them of healing. A survivor's wilderness experience requires the church to provide necessary guidance so they can move to the other side of that wilderness.

Christian men who exert control on their partners regularly use sexual abuse as one of their tactics to maintain control. The church often stresses the need for women to submit to their husbands, so victims who have been abused as children view their partner's bad behavior as their God-ordained way of life, and are often told by church leaders to remain in God's will and stay in their situations. Heath uses the Judges 19 story of the Levite's concubine to bring understanding and healing to survivors and exhorts the church to uncover and deal with abuses.

Racism and the subjugation of women are viewed through the book of Esther as the author refers to both Queen Vashti and Esther's bravery in a Persia that, in their time, exemplified a strongly patriarchal and racist culture. Both racism and sexual abuse lead to dehumanization. Esther's experiences and her bravery show that God has a plan for those who have been abused.

Heath gives us the example of imprecatory prayer in the Psalms as a normal, understandable process that leads to forgiveness. To show an expression of emotions in prayer is a catharsis that moves survivors through the process of healing. When survivors pray through the Psalms, and even write their own, a better identification of thoughts and feelings results.

Jabez (1 Chron 4:9-10) was named after his mother's pain. The prayer of Jabez shows us that he had faith in God's power to erase the curse. God shows us the spiritual qualities of both a mother and father (Isa 66:13; John 4:24). Where a survivor has been abused by a parent, they are often more able clearly to see God's work as they move through their healing, as God is the perfect parent.

Eunuchs in the Old Testament, who were so-called because of altered genitals, either from birth or imposition, experienced an irreversible sexual wound and were not allowed to worship with or lead others. Survivors of sexual abuse also feel much the same as those who have suffered a physi-

cal sexual wound. Survivors often experience exclusion from the church as well. Alienation often prevents them from understanding that God can show them their value.

Judas scorned Mary of Bethany when she anointed Jesus' feet with a very expensive embalming oil, saying the sale of the oil could have fed the poor. Mary committed herself in pure worship; Judas criticized. We can find Judas's criticism in the church today in the form of judgments against those who want to serve and worship through God's leading. Jesus accepts that which Judas does not. God's word produces healing; the spirit of Judas produces shame.

Jesus understood what it feels like to have the private part of a person exposed through the imposition of others. To compound the violation, some played games with his garments. Jesus' experience at the cross can be viewed as a parallel to sexual violation for the pleasure of others. Our treacherous experiences and difficult emotions can be replaced by God's love and healing. Survivors were once poor, as was Jesus; they are now rich in the experience of healing through God's love and grace.

Although in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female (Gal 3:28), patriarchal language in the church excludes women, presenting a skewed representation for survivors, even during communion. Communion is a celebration where participants can experience Christ's love and healing, provided there is language that includes healing and hope, and not just death and sacrifice.

Heath closes her message of healing for the survivor by assuring the reader that an offender's redemption is available as well. She describes her experience of ministering to a congregant who was arrested for being a perpetrator of sexual violence and the importance of being able to forgive those who have harmed us. God's grace and redemption extends to both the survivor and the perpetrator.

Elaine A. Heath received her Ph.D. from Duquesne University, speaks at retreats, and has professorial duties at Duke Divinity School. She is an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church with speaking and pastoral experiences.

*Healing the Wounds of Sexual Abuse* offers far more than what can be described in a book review. The full effect can only be experienced by reading the book in entirety and meditating on the healing principles provided. While Heath's book is written mainly for those who have experienced or are experiencing sexual abuse, the healing words and concepts provided can also minister to those who have not had such experiences, but have had other types of encounters that have produced deep wounds. Heath's volume cuts across all cultures within humanity, as does abuse, as she describes the healing power available to every person so affected. The one thing that prevented a one-sitting reading of this book was the desire to meditate on the contents of each chapter and not miss the healing value each one delivers as a gift from the Holy Spirit.

The desire to have an egalitarian viewpoint of Scripture is not a matter of simply supporting a feminist viewpoint, but a scripturally sound one. A brief example of how using patriarchal language in the Bible often does not present the fullness of inclusiveness within Scripture, or even correct interpretation, would have been helpful, and perhaps more reassuring for those who might be skeptical. *Healing the Wounds* does not entertain a feminist viewpoint in altering the true meaning of Scripture to change the often patriarchal slant of its interpretations. The author's interpretations are simply more accurate, not feminist.

Dr. Heath refers to St. Augustine and St. Thomas of Aquinas in relationship to their expectation of healing during the Eucharist (141), and are excellent examples to help show the history of this theological viewpoint and encouragement. At the same time, when considering the patriarchal viewpoints of these two saints as they relate to the interpretation or understanding of Scripture (since they were influenced by Plato and Aristotle respectively), we need to use caution. Their patriarchal views, which many consider misogynistic, have passed through time to our present day, and have

influenced the church's view of women in leadership, their subjugation, and, have resulted in abuse in many homes because of that errant thinking, and particularly in domestic violence homes. At the same time, Heath's important point remains: there is healing in the Eucharist.

*Healing the Wounds of Sexual Abuse* is a must for seminary students to read and should be included in pastoral and general counseling courses as well as in the lives of those who have experienced abuse of any kind and for those who help them.

Jean Dimock received her M.A. and D.Min. degrees from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary at its Boston Campus for Urban Ministerial Education (CUME). Her doctoral research and thesis concerned domestic violence. She has worked as a domestic violence specialist since 2005 and served as a New Hampshire guardian ad litem. She works with women across the nation who find themselves in domestic violence homes, and also helps the children involved by giving the adults understanding regarding what their children are experiencing and why certain behaviors exist. Jean has also served as adjunct professor of both philosophy and psychology courses at Great Bay Community College in Portsmouth, NH. Her professorial duties provided information that led to contributing two different chapters for two different edited works: *Empowering English Language Learners: Successful Strategies for Christian Educators*, an edited work by Jeanne D. DeFazio and William David Spencer, and *Christian Egalitarian Leadership: Empowering the Whole Church according to the Scriptures*, an edited work by Aída Besançon Spencer and William David Spencer. Jean is currently writing a book concerning domestic violence. She lives on the New Hampshire Seacoast with her husband and has two children, two grandchildren, and two felines.

## Empowering English Language Learners

### *Successful Strategies of Christian Educators*

EDITED BY  
JEANNE C. DEFazio  
WILLIAM DAVID SPENCER

*Empowering English Language Learners* showcases strategies of those who teach English as a second language in pre-schools, graduate schools, secular public schools, and private Christian schools. What makes this book unique is the way each teacher evaluates teaching strategy through personal experience. This book explains what works and what doesn't.

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Dean of Boston Campus and Assistant Professor of Old Testament, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

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—AÍDA BESANÇON SPENCER  
Senior Professor of New Testament, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

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**Review of *A Defense for the Chronological Order of Luke's Gospel:*  
The Meaning of “Orderly” (*kathexēs*) Account in Luke 1:3**  
by Benjamin Wing Wo Fung (Africanus Monograph Series 3; Eugene,  
OR: Wipe & Stock, 2019)

HOJOON J. AHN

*A Defense for the Chronological Order of Luke's Gospel* was written by Benjamin Wing Wo Fung (an adjunct professor of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary from 2008 to 2009, currently teaching at various Bible colleges and churches in Hong Kong) as a Ph.D. dissertation at the North-West University in South Africa in 2017. In this monograph, Professor Fung argues that καθεξῆς in Luke 1:3b “most likely refers to chronological order” (3) on the basis of four methods—1. an analysis of Luke’s two prefaces; 2. a word study of καθεξῆς; 3. an analysis of the narrative sequence of Luke; and 4. a comparison between the writing approaches of Greco-Roman/Jewish histories and Luke.

After presenting a basic description of the issue, purpose, thesis, premise, methodology, and procedures involved in his work in chapter 1, Dr. Fung uses textual criticism, grammatical analysis, and literary techniques to study the prefaces of Luke and Acts and offer a foundation analysis for καθεξῆς in chapter 2. Many interpretations have been offered on καθεξῆς (often translated as “orderly”) in Luke 1:3b. Fung recognizes: 1. literary-chronological order; 2. broadly chronological order; 3. salvation-historical order; 4. logical order; and 5. meaning “as follows” (12). Fung agrees with the scholars who have argued that καθεξῆς refers to literary-chronological—time-based—order (H. J. Cadbury, C. H. Talbert, N. Geldenhuys, F. Bovon, E. E. Ellis, D. P. Moessner, J. B. Green, G. H. P. Thompson, J. Nolland). Fung adds several layers of arguments for this position. In particular, Fung weighs the historical character of Luke’s Gospel. He therefore compares and analyzes the features of Luke’s Gospel with the characteristics of contemporary Greco-Roman histories—those by Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Polybius, Pausanias, Philostratus, Josephus, and Eusebius. According to Fung, the prefaces of the Greco-Roman histories have four elements (content, reason, methodology, and expected result[s]) (21). Because Luke employs these elements, its “orderliness” may share a chronological orderliness akin to Greco-Roman histories.

In chapter 3, by analyzing the narratival expressions regarding the temporal expressions found in Luke and the other Synoptics, Fung attempts to clarify the nature of the chronological order of the Gospel of Luke. Following Robert L. Thomas and Stanley N. Gundry’s *The NIV Harmony of the Gospel* (New York: HarperCollins, 1988), Fung divides Luke’s Gospel into 110 units and draws out the temporal information in each to determine its chronological structure. Here, he compares the units in Matthew and Mark with Luke and divides each unit into three categories of time and/or writing order (69). Fung uses this to determine the chronological characteristics of Luke. Even though it is difficult to judge the chronological arrangement due to the absence of temporal information in some units (e.g., 107–8; 111–16; 139–142; 145–47; 151), Fung concludes that the majority of Luke is constructed in chronological order (191).

In chapter 4, Fung analyzes whether Luke’s “overlapping summary statements” (195) can be found in contemporary Greco-Roman historical works. Fung concludes that “the overlapping summary statement technique employed by Luke in his Gospel is a commonly used writing technique adopted by the Greco-Roman historians in their writings which are written in chronological order” (217). This further bolsters his position by inference along generic qualities. In chapter 5, the conclusion, Fung summarizes the previous analyses and outlines their theological implications. Fung concludes that “Luke has carefully adopted the writing methodologies of the most renowned Greco-Roman and Jewish historians in his time when he writes his gospel” as a historian (224).

This monograph selects a controversial subject and contributes to its discussion by providing a reasonable argument for a chronological, albeit traditional, interpretation of καθεξῆς using a synthetic methodology—a textual, grammatical, semantic, and comparative approach. Even though there remains a debate over the genre of Luke (e.g., history, biography, historiography, or ancient document) and the chronological issue between Luke 4:16–30, Matthew 13:54–58, and Mark 6:1–6a (86), Fung’s work offers a valuable argument for the chronological construction of Luke. By doing so, Fung revitalizes this perspective for the study of Luke’s Gospel. Any scholars, pastors, or students who are interested in Luke’s Gospel—especially, of course, the issue of its chronological/literary order—will find this book very instructive.

Hojoon J. Ahn is a Ph.D. candidate at McMaster Divinity College. His major interest is Synoptic Gospel studies based on an Orality and Memory Hypothesis in the field of Linguistics, along with certain threads of Eco-theology. He lives in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, with his wife (Kyungjin Yang) and three children (Yerang, Yejoon, and Yebon).


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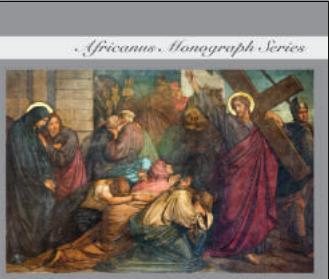
## A Defense for the Chronological Order of Luke's Gospel

THE MEANING OF "ORDERLY" (ΚΑΤΗΞΕΣ) ACCOUNT IN LUKE 1:3

BENJAMIN WING WO FUNG



Volume 3



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