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Goals of the *Africanus Journal*

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

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

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

Two issues normally are published per year.

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Life of Julius Africanus

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

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

The Greek text of Africanus’ writings may be found in Martinus Josephus Routh, *Reliquiae sacrae* II (New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1974 [1846]), 225–309, and Martin Wallraff, Umberto Roberto, Karl Pinggéra, eds., William Adler, trans., *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: Ruth Martin, J. Saemi Kim, Seong Park, Nicole Rim, John Runyon, Aída Besançon Spencer, William David Spencer

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Summary of Content:

This issue is concerned with issues of social justice, reconciliation, biblical exposition, communication, science, and application.

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.

Jesus's Vision of Holy Hospitality¹

AÍDA BESANÇON SPENCER

Normally Christian hospitality is not considered “holy” or “unholy.” Hospitality may be considered common, and possibly “unclean.” But, if hospitality is “dedicated to God’s service,”² then it is a “holy” activity. For instance, the giving and receiving of communion is an act of hospitality; the host is Christ, the guests are the Christian believers. The element of holiness (or lack of it) is clearly seen when Paul reprimands the wealthy Christian believers for eating the Lord’s Supper in an hierarchical manner, leaving out the poor believers (1 Cor 11:17-34). The wealthy are eating the cup of the Lord in an *unworthy* manner, he writes, when they do not discern the body of Christ.

Jesus’s view of hospitality has some similarities to the ancient Greek, Roman, and Jewish cultures. However, Jesus adds dimensions to the principles and practices of ancient hospitality that are distinct and then passes these ideas on to his disciples.

My topic (Jesus’s vision of holy hospitality as it affects the New Testament writers in contrast to the ancient Greco-Roman practices) will be developed by listing the different Greek words used in the New Testament to describe hospitality; summarizing the importance of hospitality in the Old Testament and for Jesus; observing the importance of hospitality of the ancient Greco-Romans and their ideals and practices related to hospitality; then comparing these ideals and practices with those of Jesus’s teachings and practices; and showing how Jesus’s distinctive principles and practices may be seen in the New Testament disciples. We will see that Jesus, unlike many in the Greco-Roman and Jewish society, teaches equality between guest and host.

Sanctification by Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit is a past, present, and future action. In the past, Jesus makes the people inwardly holy through his one-time blood sacrifice by which a new covenant of forgiveness is established. His motivation is love. In that covenant, believers by faith in Jesus are completely forgiven and made perfectly righteous before God by Jesus Christ. The believer is then “set aside” for³ or “dedicated to God’s service” and is no longer unclean.⁴ In the present, the process of dedication to God is ongoing, continued through the Holy Spirit. The opposite of “holy” is unclean. The results are good works.⁵ In the future, the goal is being blameless in actions (1 Thess 5:23; Eph 5:27).

Hospitality, when dedicated to God, is a result of Christ’s covenant of righteousness and reflects a believer’s own process of sanctification. The manner of hospitality itself may be done in a way pleasing to God. All strangers are “clean.” They are no longer unclean Gentiles. The stranger and the host are both clean. The act of hospitality is an opportunity to do God’s good works, but not as a moral obligation; moral obligation has already been perfected in Jesus.

1 This article is an adaptation of ch. 14 “Hospitality as a Means to Further God’s Reign in the New Testament and Dominican Context” in *Scripture, Cultures, and Criticism: Interpretive Steps and Critical Issues Raised by Robert Jewett*, Contrapuntal Readings of the Bible in World Christianity (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2022), 191-207. A shortened video may be found at <https://youtu.be/5bZBJgvG-uw>. A draft of this paper was presented at the Nov. 2022 national meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in Denver, CO.

2 E.g., see Paul S. Rees, “Holiness, Holy,” in *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology*, eds. Everett F. Harrison, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1960), 269. Holiness excludes willingness to continue in sin (270).”

3 Walter Bauer, Frederick William Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) (BDAG), 9-10, defines *hagiazo* as “set aside something,” “consecrate, dedicate, sanctify.”

4 1 Cor 6:11; Eph 5:26-27; Heb 2:11; 9:11-13; 10:10, 14-18; 13:12.

5 The present participle (passive and middle) is employed in Acts 20:32; 26:18; Rom 15:16; 1 Cor 1:2. The opposite of “holy” is unclean in 1 Cor 7:14; 1 Tim 4:5; Heb 10:29; 1 Pet 3:15. The results are good works in 2 Tim 2:21; Rev 22:11.

I. THE DIFFERENT GREEK WORDS FOR HOSPITALITY

The Greek New Testament uses numerous synonyms to discuss hospitality. I studied each immediate context of these synonyms. Several composite words and cognate families are founded on the root “stranger” (*xenos*): love of a stranger (*philoxenia, philoxenos*),⁶ which Robert Jewett aptly translates “stranger-love”⁷ and to welcome a stranger (*xenodocheō*, 1 Tim 5:10). These composite words do not occur in the Septuagint, although their concepts certainly do. The simple verbs *menō* (“to remain, stay,” “lodge”)⁸ and *epimenō*⁹ may also refer to hospitality, as well as *xenizō*, signifying “to show hospitality, receive as a guest, entertain,”¹⁰ to welcome (*dechomai*,¹¹ *anadechomai* [Acts 28:7], *hupodechomai*),¹² *sunagō* (to “gather, extend a welcome to, invite/receive as a guest”),¹³ *kataluō* (“find lodging”),¹⁴ and *epimeleomai* (“care for,” Luke 10:34-35).

Thus, the Greek words include the concepts of welcoming and caring for strangers. In summary, “hospitality” is the provision and reception of nourishment (food and drink), protection, housing, and honor to strangers and believers alike.¹⁵

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF HOSPITALITY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The stranger is the outsider, visitor, and non-citizen. For example, those not Athenians were called “strangers” and their gods termed “strange” (in Acts 17:18, 21). Gentiles were “strangers to the covenants of promise” (Eph. 2:12, 19). In the Old Testament, Ruth, a Moabite, daughter-in-law of Naomi, an Israelite, calls herself a “stranger” who expects to be ostracized. Instead, when Boaz fulfills not only the legal requirements of nourishment to strangers (Deut 24:19-22) but goes beyond them to allow her to glean from the pre-gleaned barley, gives her drink, and protects her, she exclaims: “How is it that I have found grace in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, and I myself am a stranger?” (Ruth 2:9-17). David feels a “stranger” to his own people, belittled for his zeal for God’s house (Ps 69:7-9, 12-21).¹⁶ Travelers waited at a village square until provided shelter by someone (Judg 19:15-21), a courtesy Job always extended (Job 31:32).

The epitome of hospitality in model, practice, and teachings is God. God is the host for strangers and other potentially oppressed people (orphans and widows): “The Lord your God is the one who is God of the gods and Lord of the lords, the Mighty, the Great, the Strong, and the Wonderful, who is not partial and does not take bribes, executing justice for orphan and widow and loving every stranger, giving each one food and clothing” (according to Deut 10:17-18). God hosts all humans. Since God created the world, all the world belongs to God and all humans are thus strangers and guests in it. “The land is mine” God explains in Leviticus 25:23.¹⁷ God’s

6 Rom 12:13; 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8; Heb 13:2; 1 Pet 4:9.

7 Robert Jewett, *Letter to Pilgrims: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York: Pilgrim, 1981), 229.

8 BDAG, 630-31; Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968) (LSJ), 1103. *Menō* as hospitality occurs in Matt 10:11; Mark 6:10; Luke 1:56; 8:27; 9:4; 10:7; 19:5; 24:29; John 1:38-39; 4:40; 11:6, 54; Acts 9:43; 16:15; 18:3, 20; 21:7-8.

9 “To remain at or in the same place for a period of time, stay.” BDAG, 375. *Epimenō* as hospitality may be found in Acts 10:48; 21:4, 10; 28:14; Gal 1:18.

10 BDAG, 683. *Xenizō* normally is more formal, elaborate, and preplanned than *menō*, e.g., Acts 28:7 vs. Luke 1:56. *Xenizō* as hospitality appears in Acts 10:6, 18, 23, 32; 21:16; 28:7; Heb 13:2. *Xenia* is guestroom, Phlm 22.

11 *Dechomai* signifying hospitality appears in Matt 10:14; Mark 6:11; Luke 9:5; 10:8, 10; 16:4, 9; Heb 11:31.

12 *Hupodechomai* refers to hospitality in Luke 10:38; 19:6; Acts 17:7; Jas 2:25.

13 BDAG, 962-63. *Sunagō* as hospitality may be found in Matt 25:35, 38, 43; Rev 19:17-18.

14 *Kataluō* signifies “rest, find lodging” or “to cease what one is doing, halt (lit. ‘unharness the pack animals’)” in Luke 9:12 and 19:7. *Kataluma* is the “lodging place” (Luke 2:7; 22:11; Mark 14:14). BDAG, 521-22.

15 This essay focuses on “private hospitality,” not public, temple, commercial, or theoxenic. J. T. Fitzgerald, “Hospitality,” in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, edited by Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000) (DNTB), 522.

16 A “stranger” could be an enemy (Eccl 6:2; Lam 5:2). Bible translations are by the author unless otherwise indicated.

17 Also Job 41:11; See further, Aída Besançon Spencer, “God the Stranger: An Intercultural Hispanic American Perspective” in *The Global God: Multicultural Evangelical Views of God*, edited by Aída Besançon Spencer and William

hospitality is shown by the provision of rain and sun and the resulting harvests and the promise of food and clothing.¹⁸

Among the Jews, Abraham was a model of hospitality (Gen 18:1-8), as was Job, Rahab, Lot (Gen 19:1-3), Melchizedek (Gen 14:17-24), Rebekah (Gen 24:16-25), the Shunamite woman (2 Kings 4:8-17), Boaz, and Manoah (Judg 13).¹⁹ Jose ben Johanan of Jerusalem is remembered for saying: “Let thy house be opened wide and let the needy be members of thy household” (Aboth 1:5). Even Herod’s palace had bedchambers for one hundred guests.²⁰

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF HOSPITALITY TO JESUS

Jesus, as God in the flesh, is both the host and the stranger. As the host, he feeds thousands of his listeners (e.g., Luke 9:10-17),²¹ hosts the Last Supper (Luke 13:29; 22:7-38),²² the Great Supper (Luke 22:30), the heavenly house (John 14:2-3), feeds his disciples after the resurrection (John 21:6-12) and is himself “bread from heaven” who grants eternal life (John 6:27-59). As the stranger, he accepts dinner invitations, where he teaches.²³ When he is not welcomed by his own people (John 1:10-11), he becomes the estranged “stranger,” the one who is not welcomed: “A stranger I was and you welcomed me” or “a stranger I was and you did *not* welcome (*sunagō*) me” (Matt 25:35-43). The humble believer who is welcomed then becomes an image of welcoming Jesus himself (according to Matt 25:40, 45).²⁴ Moreover, believers, as well, are “strangers to this earth” because their citizenship is in heaven (according to Heb 11:13-16).

Jesus initiates the importance of hospitality to the Twelve and the Seventy-two as a crucial means in the process to further God’s reign. The disciples are to find someone “worthy” and stay (*menō*) or remain in that one place and not move about from house to house for the “laborer deserves to be paid” (Matt 10:9-13; Mark 6:8-11; Luke 10:7-9). Good news is given as a gift, yet nourishment and housing or “wages” are received thankfully as gifts in return. Hospitality is thus given to the ministering Christians as thanks for receiving the good news. That hospitality is an occasion for the Christian apostle to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the leper, and cast out demons (Matt 10:8).²⁵ When the Samaritan woman tells the village of Sychar about the Messiah’s presence, the inhabitants urge him to stay (*menō*) and Jesus does stay there several days (John 4:5, 28-30, 39-42). Thereby, evangelism is combined with discipleship through receiving hospitality. John Koenig describes New Testament hospitality as “the establishment of committed relationships between guests and hosts in which unexpected levels of mutual welcoming occur...[It stimulates] a mutual giving and receiving that will bear fruit for all sides within the plan of God.”²⁶

David Spencer (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 97-100.

18 E.g., Matt 5:45; 6:11, 25-33; Acts 14:15-17.

19 James D.G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 38, *Romans 9-16* (Dallas: Word, 1988), 744; Ceslas Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, vol 3, translated and edited by James D. Ernest (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994) (TLNT), 456; John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 184-87; 1 Clem. 10:7-11:1; 12:1-3.

20 Fitzgerald, *DNTB*, 524.

21 Jesus, assisted by his disciples, feeds crowds of more than 5000 and 4000 (Mark 6:35-44; 8:1-9, 19-21). See also John 6:1-15, 23, 26.

22 See also Matt 26:17-35; Mark 14:12-26. Two disciples prepare the Passover meal, but Jesus arranges the guest room and blesses the meal.

23 E.g., Luke 7:36-50; 10:38-42; 11:37-53; 14:1-24; Rev 3:20; Mark 14:3-9.

24 See also Matt 10:14, 40-41; Luke 9:48.

25 See also Mark 6:10; Luke 9:4. Consequently, Donald Wayne Riddle concludes that Christian hospitality “was important as a factor in the gospel transmission...[It was] an ultimate medium of Christianity’s growth.” “Early Christian Hospitality: A Factor in the Gospel Transmission.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 52:2 (June 1938) (*JBL*): 153-54.

26 John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001) [reprint Augsburg Fortress, 1985], 8-9.

IV. THE IMPORTANCE OF HOSPITALITY AMONG THE ANCIENT GRECO-ROMANS

Hospitality was an honorable trait among all ancients. *Zeus Xenios* was considered the defender of strangers (2 Macc 6:2),²⁷ even as the God of Israel “loved every stranger” (Deut 10:18). Many ancient Greeks and Romans were renowned for their hospitality. For example, Gallias of Agrigentum (fourth century BC) posted slaves at the city gates to welcome strangers to his house.²⁸ Junia Theodora, a Roman living in Corinth in AD 43, was honored for being “kind to all travelers, private individuals as well as ambassadors, sent by the nation or the various cities.”²⁹ Plutarch considered Cimon’s hospitality surpassed all other ancient Athenians, since he had a meal prepared at his home every day for visitors, including the poor.³⁰ Diodorus of Sicily noted Spaniards entreated strangers to visit their homes, vying for the honor of hospitality and regarding “with approval” as “beloved of the gods” whomever travelers chose as host.³¹

However, in common practice, Roman, Greek, and Jewish hospitality was built on hierarchy, moral obligation, and seeking honor. The Romans considered the city of Rome the social center of the universe, and, thus, foreigners, beyond the frontiers, were objects of scorn. For example, Ammianus Marcellinus (AD 4 century) described the top Roman senatorial society as snobs who, “with empty bombast, treat anything born outside the city as simple dirt.”³² Ladislaus Bolchazy explains that, in order for a stranger to survive at Rome, he must demonstrate the “right of hospitality” (*ius hospitii*) as a *peregrinus* (or foreigner) having come from a community with which Rome had a treaty, thus, becoming a guest-friend (*hospes*), or place himself under the protection of a Roman citizen as a client (*cliens*), or go voluntarily into slavery.³³

Roman historian J.P.V.D. Balsdon summarizes: “Roman society was built on the idea of deference (*obsequium*) in the family as in the State...In a class-ridden society all owed deference to those above them.”³⁴ Jérôme Carcopino explains, when the Romans ate reclining, three couches would range around a square table, one side empty for the service. Each couch had space for two, often a man and woman side by side. The dining room might be planned for twenty-seven guests around three tables or thirty-six guests around four tables. On each of these couches the most privileged position was that to the left nearest the fulcrum or head of the couch. Seating had a hierarchical precedence. The couch of honor was opposite the empty side of the table (*lectus medius*), and on its right, the “consular” (*locus consularis*), the most honorable position. Next in honor came the couch to the left of the central one (*lectus summus*), and last that on its right (*lectus imus*).³⁵

Often the master of the house would treat his guests as inferiors to himself. Pliny the Younger describes a host who served himself and a few others very elegant dishes, while the rest had cheap and paltry food. The wines served were graduated according to the social status of the friends.³⁶ For example, one poor client had to settle with the coarsest wine, bits of hard moldy bread, toadstools of doubtful quality, a rotten apple, and other undesirable food. Carcopino adds, “Evidence from many sources places it beyond doubt that these practices were widespread.”³⁷ John

27 See also Dunn, *Romans*, 743.

28 Spicq, *TLNT*, vol. 3, 455.

29 Spicq, *TLNT*, vol. 3, 455-56.

30 *Plutarch's Lives*, Cimon 10; Spicq, *TLNT*, vol. 3, 456.

31 5.34; Spicq, *TLNT*, vol. 3, 456.

32 J.P.V.D. Balsdon, *Romans and Aliens* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 25, 29.

33 Ladislaus J. Bolchazy, *Hospitality in Antiquity: Livy's Concept of Its Humanizing Force* (Chicago: Ares, 1995), 22, 26, 34-35, 91.

34 Balsdon, *Romans*, 18.

35 Jérôme Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome: The People and the City at the Height of the Empire*, edited by Henry T. Rowell, translated by E.O. Lorimer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940), 265-66.

36 *Pliny, Natural History* 14.91; Carcopino, *Daily Life*, 270; Ramsay MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations: 50 B.C. to A.D. 284* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), 111-12.

37 Carcopino, *Daily Life*, 270-71.

Dominic Crossan explains: “Distinctions and discriminations among foods or guests stand or fall with distinctions and discriminations among seats and salutations.” Thus, three cultural levels are interlinked: food, table, and society. “To subvert either of the former is a calculated attack on the latter.”³⁸

Lynn Cohick elaborates:

Though repeatedly couched in the language of friendship, the patron/client relationship was almost always asymmetrical. A patron might give a client money, food, an introduction to an important person, or advice. The client might reside in the patron’s home. The patron might offer a low-interest loan to start a business or help the client find a spouse. The client was indebted to praise the patron publicly, for example, in the public greeting (*salutatio*) of the patron offered each morning at the patron’s home. Often the client would praise the patron at the baths or as the patron traveled through the city. Patrons were expected to continue to support their clients, and clients were to remain loyal and provide whatever services the patron might require.³⁹

She summarizes, “The institution of patronage structured society.”⁴⁰ Crossan adds, the relationship between patron and client might be “horizontal or vertical depending on whether it is between social equals or unequals.”⁴¹ Such ethics of “friendship” (*amicitia*) entailed mutual indebtedness. Neither party could ever really be “paid up.” The “bill” would be paid in installments, such as favors done to friends.⁴² For instance, Marcus Cornelius Fronto tells Lucius Verus (AD 166): “All the favours I have had to ask from my Lord your brother I have preferred to ask and obtain from you.”⁴³ Patron-client networks in the Roman empire permeated the society from top to bottom with “accounts that could never be exactly balanced because they could never be precisely computed.”⁴⁴ Bolchazy describes moral obligation as “contractual hospitality,” which was binding not only for the duration of one’s life but indefinitely, binding the children and their offspring as well.⁴⁵

V. HOW THE GRECO-ROMAN IDEALS AND PRACTICES COMPARE WITH JESUS’S TEACHINGS AND PRACTICES

Hospitality as an ancient ideal was an excellent means for Christians to appeal to their pagan society, even in times of persecution. Bolchazy concludes that because of the right of hospitality, “Graeco-Roman society was capable of understanding, and predisposed to accepting, the social teachings of Christianity. The *ius hospitii* became a stem upon which Christianity could be grafted.”⁴⁶

Jesus, like his contemporaries, saw generous hospitality as an ideal. Banquets were an opportunity to bestow honor and attendance was part of one’s duty. The guest should be loyal to the host.

In addition to the word studies, I read the gospel narratives to see what I learned about hospitality. (See appendix). While reading the Gospels, I made three lists for the topic of how hospitality in the gospels relate to Jesus: 1) Jesus as guest, 2) Jesus as host, and 3) hospitality or dinners used as illustrations by Jesus. In these examples the host or guest shows gratitude,

38 John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 263.

39 Lynn H. Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians: Illuminating Ancient Ways of Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 289. See also Bolchazy, *Hospitality*, 40-46.

40 Cohick, *Women*, 323.

41 Crossan, *Jesus*, 60.

42 Crossan, *Jesus*, 61.

43 Crossan, *Jesus*, 60.

44 Crossan, *Jesus*, 65.

45 Bolchazy, *Hospitality*, 16-17, 38-40.

46 Bolchazy, *Hospitality*, 66.

repentance, love, devotion, care, welcome, honor, and duty. For instance, Jesus was honored when invited to dinner by Martha, Mary, and Lazarus (John 12:1-11). Also, those invited to the Great Supper are being honored (Luke 13:29-30; Matt 8:11-12). Providing for the midnight visitor is an expression of duty (Luke 11:5-8). Parents giving good gifts to their children is an expression of duty and love (Luke 11:11-13). Christian disciples should be loyal to their host Christ. When Jesus invites his disciples not to work for food that spoils, but rather for food that endures to eternal life given by the Son of Humanity, some followers responded with grumbling and complained but others declared “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:27-69).

I found several key differences between Jesus’s practices and teachings and those of his contemporaries. A) The Greco-Roman host or patron would normally instruct the guest or client. Jesus, in contrast, many times as guest would instruct the *host*, delivering such messages as: affirmation of the repentant, as opposed to the self-righteous person (Luke 5:29-32; 7:36-50; 11:37-53; 19:1-10); affirmation of the learner, not the working host (Luke 10:38-42); affirmation of humility and love (Luke 6:1-5; 14:1-11; John 13:1-20; 34-35; 15:12-17); affirmation of the importance of welcoming good news (Luke 14:15-24); affirmation of those who seek and ask (Luke 11:11-13). Also, at many of these dinners Jesus reveals more about himself: he tells the Samaritan woman and her village that he is the Messiah and they learn that he is the Savior of the world (John 4:7-29, 40-43); Jesus reveals he is God (John 14:8-14; 15:1-11); he reveals prophecies about himself and his disciples (Luke 24:36-52; John 16:1-4, 12), and introduces the Advocate or Holy Spirit to his disciples (John 15:26; 16:13-15).

Jesus raises many theological issues at the dinners, especially concerning genuine cleanliness (5 times), the priorities of justice and love of God, forgiveness and affirms transformation, and the importance of welcoming Jesus and the good news.

B)The most dramatic difference between Jesus and his culture are Jesus’s teachings on equality, shown by the reversal of social positions and the danger of hierarchy.

Hospitality has a dual component: love extended out to the stranger and love received by the stranger. Both are essential components because love has to be both received as well as given, otherwise, there is no equality between the persons. For example, Jesus countermands the practice of guests seeking the places of honor at wedding banquets: “Everyone exalting himself will be humbled, and the one humbling himself will be exalted” (Luke 14:7-11).⁴⁷ Moreover, the poor should be invited because they *cannot* repay (Luke 14:12-14). Jesus was renowned for being impartial (Matt 22:16; Mark 12:14; Luke 20:21) and denounced as a friend of “tax collectors and sinners” (Luke 7:34). The reversal of hierarchy may be seen when the person healed serves the healer (Luke 4:38-39), the unclean serves the guest (Luke 5:29-32), the sinner serves the guest (Luke 7:36-50; John 4:7-29), the humble have priority over the higher in status (Luke 14:7-11), the poor have priority over the wealthy (Luke 14:15-24), the repentant unclean has priority over the unrepentant clean (Luke 19:1-10), the servant has priority over the master (Luke 22:24-27), the master serves the servant (Luke 12:37-38; John 13:1-20), the servant becomes the friend of the master (John 15:13-17, 20), the unclean loving Samaritan has priority over the clean but unloving Jewish religious leaders (Luke 10:27-37), the repentant sinner has priority over the self-righteous (Luke 15:22-24), the righteous beggar has priority over the selfish rich (Luke 16:19-21), the repentant poor has priority over the self-centered rich (Matt 22:2-14), and the loving righteous over the self-centered (Matt 25:34-36).

An example of Jesus’s radical reversal of positions comes when Jesus stays (*menō*, Luke 19:5) at the house of Zacchaeus, a “sinner,” a tax collector, and a chief one at that. Zacchaeus “welcomed” him (*hupodechomai*, Luke 19:6). In contrast, Jewish onlookers “grumble” when Jesus “finds lodging” (*kataluō*) at the home of a “sinner” because tax collectors were “unclean” in rabbinic

47 See also Mark 12:39.

thought, thereby causing Jesus to be unclean ritually as well.⁴⁸ However, Jesus's main goal was transformation of the lost (Luke 19:9-10), not ritualistic cleanliness. Similarly, when Jesus accepts the dinner invitation of Levi, along with other tax collectors and sinners, the teachers are outraged, but Jesus responds that his goal is healing the sin-sick (Mark 2:15-17).⁴⁹

What undergirds hospitality is it expresses “the charismatic love ethic,” according to Robert Jewett.⁵⁰ For instance, as an example of good neighborliness, the outsider Samaritan took care of the half-dead traveler by first observing him, then being filled with compassion, healing him, bringing him to an inn, and paying the innkeeper to take care of him (*epimeleomai*, Luke 10:29-37).

John's gospel may have the *longest* dinner conversation (John 13:1-17:26), but Luke's gospel has the *most* dinner incidents (23 as opposed to 17 in Matthew, 11 in Mark and 8 in John). I summarized Luke's overall purpose for his gospel as “Luke challenges Theophilus to become a disciple who forsakes all for Jesus, the genuine Messiah, who had to suffer to liberate all oppressed people before entering his glory.” The dinner conversations show what it means to forsake all, who Jesus is, and how Jesus liberates oppressed people. Dinners that are recorded only in Matthew's gospel highlight the point that God's reign, of which Jesus is the predicted Messiah, is for those who obey everything God commanded. Those who show hospitality to the hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick, and imprisoned are the genuine believers (Matt 25:34-46).

VI JESUS'S DISTINCTIVE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES MAY BE SEEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT DISCIPLES

Jesus exhorted his followers to be hospitable without obligating the person invited. Both the giving and responding to generosity are gifts. Instead of a hierarchy of wealth, power, nationality, purity, and righteousness, New Testament disciples follow Jesus's examples and teachings to regard and treat similarly the poor and wealthy, the powerless and powerful, the Gentile and Jew, the ritually unclean and clean, the transformed and the self-righteous.

Christian ethics supported welcoming *all* strangers and in a manner of equality and generosity without obligation. Food and seating were open to all. These factors created the special kind of hospitality that characterized Jesus and subsequent Christianity. The New Testament documents tensions created between Roman, Jewish, and Christian values. James criticizes the favorable seating of the wealthy and the dishonoring of the poor (2:1-9). Paul criticizes the honoring of rich Corinthians while neglecting poor believers. Gerd Theissen aptly explains how “the one eating and drinking without recognizing the body eats and drinks judgment to himself” (1 Cor 11:29) refers to the need to discern and include fairly all poor believers because the Lord's Supper is a symbol of unity not division (1 Cor 11:21-22, 33-34). When the wealthier ate by themselves, receiving larger portions and better quality of food, Theissen notes “the core of the problem was that the wealthier Christians made it plain to all just how much the rest were dependent on them...Differences in menu are a relatively timeless symbol of status and wealth, and those not so well off came face to face with their own social inferiority at a most basic level.”⁵¹ The wealthier humbled those who had nothing. What was appropriate in a socially stratified society was *not* appropriate among the body of Christ (cf. Acts 2:44-45).⁵²

48 E.g., *Mishnah* Tohoroth 7:2, 5-6; John 18:28-29.

49 See also Jas 2:25; Heb 11:31, where Rahab “welcomed” the Jewish spies. See also Matt 11:19; Luke 15:22-24.

50 Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible, edited by Roy D. Kotansky and Eldon Jay Epp (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 765. For the importance of the “relief of strangers” as an expression of love by the early church, see also Adolf Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, translated and edited by James Moffatt, Theological Translation Library, vol. 19, 2d ed. (London: Williams and Norgate, 1908):177-98.

51 Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth*, edited and translated by John H. Schütz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 151, 154-58, 160. See also Koenig, *Hospitality*, 66-70.

52 Theissen, *Social Setting*, 160.

In addition, the New Testament provides many examples where hospitality becomes an opportunity for ministry, while a host is providing provisions.⁵³ For instance, after the Emmaus travelers urge Jesus to “remain” (*menō*) with them, Jesus reveals his identity (Luke 24:13-32). Prisca and Aquila extended hospitality, work, ministry to Paul (Acts 18:2-3). Publius in Malta “received” (*anadechomai*) Paul, Luke, and Aristarchus for three days and entertained them (*xenizō*), which gave Paul opportunity to heal Publius’s father (Acts 28:7-8). Sometimes travelers are invited, sometimes they seek invitations (e.g., Acts 21:4; 28:14, *epimenō*; Phlm 22, *xenia*), and Christ’s kingdom is advanced. While their ship is unloading in Tyre, Paul and his coworkers seek disciples, who in turn warn Paul of future troubles in Jerusalem and pray for them (Acts 21:4-6, *menō*). In Caesarea, while Paul visits the evangelist Philip and his prophet daughters (*menō*), Agabus warns Paul of future imprisonment in Jerusalem (Acts 21:8-14). Staying at Mnason’s home in Jerusalem allows Paul to communicate with James and the elders and dispute over Gentiles (Acts 21:16-25). Hospitality functions as a practical opportunity for ministry or dispensing the good news.⁵⁴

The acceptance of Gentiles by Jews as shown by joint meals also represents the traversing of the Jewish-Gentile divide of ritual cleanliness and uncleanness (Acts 10:9-14, 23; 11:1-3; Deut 14:3-21). When Peter received as guests Cornelius’s three Gentile messengers, he begins his monumental change of attitude and action (vs. Gal 2:11-14), and ends by staying with Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:48, *epimenō*). Lydia appears to understand the significance of Paul’s message of unity between Gentile and Jew and women and men when she strongly encourages Paul, Silas, Luke, and Timothy: “After you come into my house, remain” and they, in turn, encourage Lydia, her household, and colleagues (Acts 16:15, 40).

In Romans 12, in the context of love, hospitality is enjoined of all (Rom 12:4-5, 9, 13-14). After listing the gifts that serve the body, Paul summarizes, “Let love be genuine, hating the evil, holding on to the good” (12:9). Two manifestations of genuine love are financially contributing to ease other believers’ needs and loving strangers through hospitality. While others might persecute believers, love’s response is to bless, so that hospitality provides a way to live peaceably with all people. As love repays persecutors with hospitality: feeding and giving drink, “you will heap burning coals upon their heads” and in that way “conquer evil with good” (Rom 12:14-21; Prov 25:21-22). The need for hospitality is the connecting idea between love of believers and love as a response to persecution by non-believers. Love contrasts with evil (12:9-21).

Hebrews 13 follows the thoughts of Romans 12. Each context refers to love as the basis; in Hebrews “brotherly and sisterly love” (*philadelphia*) (“Do not neglect the love of strangers (*philoxenia*), for on account of doing this some having entertained as guests (*xenizō*) angels” [13:1-2]). This admonition is followed by an exhortation to “remember the ones in prison” (13:3). The context here is when some Christians are in prison, probably near the end of Nero’s persecution when Timothy himself has been imprisoned and is now released (13:23). Also, in 1 Peter, hospitality occurs in the context of love, but Peter now adds to be hospitable “without grumbling” (4:8-9). Afterwards, he summarizes the two broad gifts of speaking and serving (4:10-11). He does *not* subsume hospitality under the gift of service.

While hospitality is enjoined in Romans under the larger context of admonitions to all the “brothers and sisters” (“all of you,” “one body,” 12:1-5), in the Pastoral Letters, Paul requires the

53 Melanie A. Howard notes that, when the Ethiopian eunuch invites Philip to join him in the chariot (Acts 8:21), he brings the teacher Philip into the student’s “space,” thereby allowing the student’s questions and concerns to guide the learning. “Philip, the Ethiopian Eunuch, and Student Hospitality,” *Didaktikos* 4:3 (Feb. 2021): 13-14.

54 In addition, hospitality may in itself provide an opportunity for reconciliation between Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome. After the dispersion of the Jews by the Edict of Claudius (Acts 18:2), the Gentile Christians came in control of the church(es) in Rome. While Jewish Christians expected the church to remain as it was before their departure, Robert Jewett points out that Gaius welcoming all Christian travelers (Jewish and Gentile) in Romans 16:23 adds “an ecumenical scope” to his hospitality that was “consonant with the theology and ethic of [Romans], so that his greeting provides an endorsement.” Jewett, *Romans*, 765, 980-81.

practice especially of church leaders, the overseer (*episkopos*, 1 Tim 3:2; *presbuteros* and *episkopos*, Titus 1:5-8).⁵⁵ Part of the goal is to be well regarded by outsiders (1 Tim 3:7). Hospitality shows in action what an overseer teaches (1 Tim 3:2). It models goodness, wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and self-control (Titus 1:8; 2:12). Though deacons, male or female, are *not* required to be hospitable (according to 1 Tim 3:8-13), elder widows are included as leaders, bearing witness with good works demonstrated in actions, one of which is hospitality, while dedicating their last years to continual prayer, following the example of the prophet Anna in the temple (1 Tim 5:5, 10; Luke 2:36-37).

A special “kind of hospitality” did mark the “Jesus movement and subsequent Christianity.”⁵⁶ Such emphasis on hospitality did open it to misuse. Some traveling ministers took advantage, spreading false doctrine (2 John 10; 3 John 6-8, 10). Eventually, the Didache (ca. end of first century-150) amassed elongated rules for hospitality toward itinerant apostles and prophets including a three-day maximum stay (11:3-13:7).

However, Christians can learn from Jesus to treat all people without favoritism and not expect a return for their own generosity, since, “Love is not self-seeking...It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres” (1 Cor 13:4, 7 NIV). If holiness includes dedication to God’s service, genuinely loving nonhierarchical hospitality according to Jesus’s vision should be part of our normal activity.

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⁵⁵ The Shepherd of Hermas refers as well to the hospitality of overseers. *Sim.* 9.27.

⁵⁶ Jewett, *Romans*, 765.

Appendix: Hospitality in the Gospels Related to Jesus⁵⁷

JESUS AS GUEST

Luke	Host	Theme(s)	Mark	Matthew	John
4:38-39	Simon's mother	gratitude	1:31	8:14-15	
5:29-32	Levi	Repentance, cleanliness	2:15-17	9:10-13	
7:36-50	Simon the Pharisee	Forgiveness and love			
10:38-48	Martha	Priorities, devotion to Jesus more important than extent of hospitality			
11:37-53	Pharisee	Cleanliness less important than justice & love of God			
14:1-24	Pharisee	Sabbath, healing, honor, no repay, heart of OT law is love, humility, non-hierarchical, reception important			
19:1-27	Zacchaeus	Save lost, cleanliness, affirmation of transformation			
23:50-54	Joseph of Arimathea (+ Nicodemus)	Offered tomb (+ spices), hospitality as sign of care (not a meal)	15:42-46	27:57-60	19:38-42
24:29-35	Emmaus travelers	Resurrected Jesus, hospitality as care, self-revelation			
24:36-52	Disciples	Prophecy fulfillment, self-revelation			
John 2:1-11; 4:46	Wedding bridegroom	Jesus revealed glory (sign 1), self-revelation			
4:7-29, 39	Samaritan woman	Cleanliness, living water, worship, Messiah, reveals inner nature, self-revelation			
4:40-43	Samaritans	Savior of world, expression of welcome			
12:1-11	Martha, Lazarus, Mary	Jesus's burial—to see resurrected Lazarus, honor Jesus, express love			
19:28-30	Soldier?	Final act, duty	15:36	27:48	
Mark 14:3-9	Simon the leper	Preparation for Jesus's burial, expression of love		26:6-13	
15:23	Soldier?	Crucifixion, rejection of anesthesia		27:34	

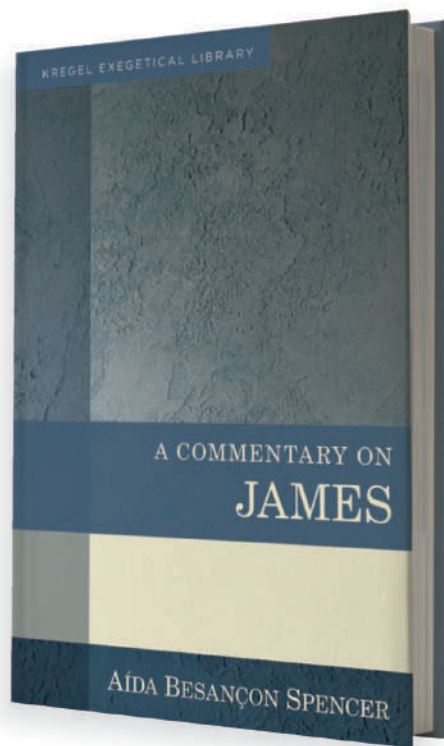
⁵⁷ Charts created by Aída Besançon Spencer 6/2021. Focus of charts is Gospel of Luke because that gospel has more and many unique references to the theme of hospitality. Similar events are then listed parallel to Luke. The sequence of the gospels listed are unrelated to source or chronology. The parallels were verified in *The NIV Harmony of the Gospels with Explanations and Essays*, eds. Robert L. Thomas and Stanley N. Gundry (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1987).

JESUS AS HOST

Luke	Theme(s)	Mark	Matthew	John
9:12-17	5000+ are fed with 5 loaves + 2 fish, expression of love	6:35-44; 8:19	14:15-21; 16:9	6:1-15, 23, 26
13:29-30	Great Supper, global, expression of honor		8:11-12	
22:8-38	Passover, new covenant for forgiveness of sins, expression of love, self-revelation	14:12-26	26:17-30	13:1-17:26 meaning of love, humility, reversal of positions
John 6:27-59	Jesus as bread from heaven, eternal life, self-revelation			
7:37-39	Spirit gives drink, self-revelation			
21:6-14	Jesus as provider, self-revelation			
Mark 8:1-9, 19-20	4000+ are fed with 7 loaves + few fish, expression of care, self-revelation		15:32-38; 16:10	

HOSPITALITY/DINNER(S) USED AS ILLUSTRATIONS BY JESUS

Luke	Theme(s)	Mark	Matthew
6:1-5	Eat grain, Jesus is Lord of Sabbath, heart of OT law	2:23-28	12:1-8
7:34	Jesus's ministry, cleanliness		11:19
10:7-8	72/12, stay in house, receive hospitality as payment	6:10 (Twelve)	10:11 (Twelve)
10:27-37	Good Samaritan, neighbor, expression of love		
11:5-8	Friend, provide for visitor, expression of duty		
11:11-13	Parent-child, good gifts, expression of duty and love		7:10-11 generosity
12:37-38	Master serves servant, expression of duty		
15:22-24	Father of prodigal son, forgiveness, restoration, love		
16:19-21	Rich, lack of hospitality		
Matthew			
22:2-14	Wedding feast, punishment, reception, welcoming of invitation		
25:1-13	Wedding banquet, be prepared, welcoming includes readiness		
25:34-46	King separates sheep from goats, whatever done to least of these done for Son of Man, hospitality as sign of being genuine believers		



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Systemic Racism and Critical Race Theory: Thoughts and Suggestions for Evangelicals in Predominantly White Institutions

JOHN JEFFERSON DAVIS

Since the killing of George Floyd in May of 2020 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and in the wake of the massive protests that followed, the topics of critical race theory and systemic racism have been near the center of the national conversation. These controversial ideas continue to be hotly debated in schools, colleges, the media, state legislatures, churches, and denominations such as the Southern Baptist Convention, the nation's largest Protestant denomination. These discussions, taking place in the context of an America already polarized along partisan and racial lines, is made all the more difficult by the lack of consensus about the meaning of the terms that are being used. The purpose of this article is to propose some definitional clarifications about "critical race theory" and "systemic racism" that will enable evangelicals in predominantly white institutions to engage in these conversations in ways that could build bridges of understanding rather than walls of further alienation. I am writing as an evangelical theologian and faculty member of a predominantly white evangelical seminary – Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, based in Hamilton, Massachusetts, with other campuses¹ in Boston, Charlotte, and Jacksonville.

WHAT ABOUT "SYSTEMIC RACISM"?

When would it be justified to conclude that a particular church or school or denomination or business is guilty of the sin of *systemic racism*? Obviously, it is important for the conversation partners to share a common understanding of this volatile term. For the purposes of this discussion, I would like to suggest the use of the term *institutionalized racism* as a synonym for *systemic racism*. "Institutionalized" is more concrete than "systemic," and specific institutions readily come to mind: schools, colleges, businesses, churches, police forces. Racist beliefs, attitudes, and actions can reside in an individual, but, in institutionalized racism, these beliefs, attitudes, and actions become more public, being codified in policies and practices, and actively enforced by those in authority.

Examples of institutionalized racism in its strongest form would include slavery in antebellum America, Jim Crow laws in the American South, anti-Jewish laws in Nazi Germany, and Apartheid in South Africa prior to 1994. In its weaker forms, institutionalized racism – or to be more precise – racist influences acting through or upon an institution – could be manifested in a business's hiring practices that inadvertently used biased software to screen job applications. The software might contain subtle biases against names that sound stereotypically "black." Even though the hiring practices were not designed or intended to be discriminatory, they could nevertheless operate this way in practice.

Additionally, I propose the following further set of distinctions to facilitate more nuanced and fruitful discussions: *de jure* racism vs. *de facto* racism²; *overt* vs. *covert* racism; *conscious* vs. *unconscious* racism; and *past (de jure) causes* of racism vs. *present (de facto) lingering effects* of past racist policies. These definitions and distinctions provide the conceptual tools to identify institutionalized racism – in either its stronger or weaker forms – and to take steps to mitigate or abolish it.

Before illustrating these distinctions, the following definition of *racism* – itself an emotive and controverted term – will be offered: "Racism involves *beliefs* that certain racial groups are inherently

1 All four campuses, but especially the Boston campus, are multicultural to various extents.

2 For the purposes of this paper, *de jure* (Latin, "from the law") is taken to refer to (racist) policies that are enshrined in law and legally enforced, e.g., the Jim Crow laws of the pre-civil rights period in the American South. *De facto* (Latin, "from the fact") is taken to refer to (racist) practices or attitudes which, though not formally encoded in law, nonetheless reflect widespread social practices and attitudes, e.g., *de facto* segregation of church worship services in earlier periods of American history; or depictions of Blacks in popular literature or entertainment, as in the 1915 movie *Birth of a Nation*.

intellectually or morally superior to others; *attitudes* of contempt or disdain for certain racial groups, manifested by unwillingness to engage in close personal contacts in housing, schools, churches, places of work, or social venues; and *actions* that manifest disrespect, violence, abuse, or legal discrimination against another racial group.”³ Racism so defined might involve only one of these elements, or all in combination. A *racist* would be a person who holds beliefs, or manifests attitudes, or acts in accordance with the ways that *racism* is defined above. The beliefs, attitudes, and actions that Adolf Hitler manifested toward the Jews would qualify him as one of history’s most notorious racists.

American history provides many examples of *de jure* racism: racist attitudes and policies enacted by Congress or state legislatures and enforced by the courts. In 1790, only a few months after the Constitution’s adoption, Congress adopted a naturalization law that stated that only those aliens who were “free white persons” could become citizens of the United States.⁴ The Asian Exclusion Act of 1882 barred Chinese from citizenship and from emigrating to America. In the infamous *Dred Scott* (1857) decision, Chief Justice Roger Taney declared that negro slaves could never become citizens of the United States, and that the negro “... had no rights which the white man was bound to respect.”⁵ In 1896, the Supreme Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson* enunciated the doctrine of “separate but equal,” upholding the Jim Crow practices of segregation in railroad cars, schools, and public accommodations.⁶ In actual practice, of course, public schools were separated by race, but were not equally funded.

In the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision, the Court struck down existing *de jure* laws in public schools. But in practice (*de facto*), segregation in the schools persisted for decades – in fact, down to the present, despite the subsequent enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. *De jure* harms created by law can persist long after the original laws have been struck down by the courts.

In Savannah, Georgia, on March 21, 1861, Alexander Stephens, the vice president of the Confederacy, gave his “Cornerstone Speech” in which he set forth the fundamental beliefs upon which the newly founded slavocracy was founded: “Our new government is founded upon ... the great truth, that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery – subordination to the superior race – is his natural and normal condition.”⁷ This was a very blatant example of *overt* racism: the public expression of racist attitudes in words or deeds noticed by others.

Sadly, American history provides many other examples: the almost five thousand black men and women that were lynched between 1880 and 1940, often while being jeered, spat upon, or even burned or dismembered by watching white mobs; the Tulsa race riot of 1921, when white mobs burned 35 square blocks of black neighborhoods, leaving some ten thousand blacks homeless and 26 dead; the murder of 14-year old Emmett Till in Mississippi in 1955, catalyzing the civil rights movement; James Earl Ray’s murder of Martin Luther King, Jr. in Memphis, Tennessee at the Lorraine Motel on April 4, 1968.

Even more recently, Black police officers suffered both physical attacks and racial slurs during the January 6th attack on the U.S. Capitol. Before that day, said Pfc. Harry Dunn, “No one had ever, ever, called me a ‘n---’ while wearing the uniform of a Capitol Police officer. It’s so disheartening and disappointing that we live in a country with people like that, that attack you because of the color of your skin,” he said.⁸

3 Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 3d ed. (New York: New York University Press, 2017).

4 Ian Haney Lopez, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 31.

5 *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857), <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/dred-scott-v-sandford>.

6 *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/plessy-v-ferguson>.

7 <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/USHistory/Building/docs/Cornerstone.htm>.

8 <https://www.npr.org/2021/07/27/1021197474/capitol-police-officer-testifies-to-the-racism-he-faced-during-the-jan-6-riot>.

In recent decades such overt expressions of racism have been delegitimized in the general culture, but *covert* expressions of racism are still very much present in public life and politics. Michelle Alexander, in her influential and important book, *The New Jim Crow*, cites as an example the so-called “Southern Strategy” developed by then President Richard Nixon and his advisors for the 1968 election. Code words and “dog whistles” were used to attract disaffected working-class whites, particularly in the South, who were resentful of racial reforms and civil rights protests. The rhetoric of “law and order” and being “tough on crime” while being on the surface color blind, was in fact intended to connect with these racial resentments. John Ehrlichman, Nixon’s special counsel, characterized the strategy this way: “We’ll go after the racists ... that subliminal appeal to the anti-black voter was always present in Nixon’s statements and speeches.”⁹ This “Southern Strategy” and “dog whistles” did not disappear from American politics when Nixon left office.

Racism is *conscious* when a person has self-awareness of his or her racist attitudes, beliefs, or actions. In addition to the examples of *overt* racism already mentioned above, other examples of individuals consciously acting on their racist beliefs could include Dylann Roof and Elijah Muhammad. On June 17, 2015, Dylann Roof, a 22-year-old white male, shot and killed nine African Americans who were gathered for a Bible study at the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina. Roof said that he wanted to kill blacks because he believed that blacks raped white women daily.

Unconscious racist beliefs or attitudes can be rooted in various forms of *implicit bias*. The Stanford social psychologist Jennifer Eberhardt has provided several examples in her book *Biased: Uncovering the Hidden Prejudice That Shapes What We See, Think, and Do*. Her peer-reviewed research has shown that racially prejudiced attitudes do not have to be consciously held in order to influence behavior. For example, an experiment conducted by researchers at the Harvard Business School found that in Airbnb rentals, inquirers with stereotypically black-sounding names were 16 percent less likely to be accepted than those with white-sounding names, even when potentially confounding variables were taken into account.¹⁰

Collective racial stereotypes can influence housing choices, even when the actors think their actions are race neutral. In her 2016 study Eberhardt found that the same three-bedroom suburban home listed on Craigslist was perceived as worth less when pictured as owned by a black family as when pictured as owned by a white family. Simply imagining other black families in the neighborhood caused inquirers to set the value at nearly \$22,000 less.¹¹

Much social science research over decades has shown that murderers of white victims are significantly more likely to receive the death penalty than murderers of black people. And, furthermore, research has shown that in cases involving white victims, the more stereotypically black the accused is perceived to be, the more likely it will be for him to receive the death penalty. These studies have attempted to correct for nonracial factors that could have influenced the sentencing. Even in a post-Civil Rights era, with affirmative action initiatives, and after the two-term election of an African American president, the lingering effects of racial stereotypes, though only implicit and not consciously held, continue to cause harms in the criminal justice system.

Finally, consider a distinction between *past (de jure) causes* of harm vs. *present (de facto) effects* continuing from those past causes. An important illustration of this distinction that relates directly to America’s continuing racial problems is provided by the policies of the federal government, banks, and the real estate agents after the Second World War that discriminated against Blacks who sought mortgage loans for housing in the newly developing white suburbs. The evidence for this *de jure*, government sponsored racial discrimination is documented in great detail by Richard Rothstein

9 Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2012), 44.

10 Jennifer L. Eberhardt, *Biased: Uncovering the Hidden Prejudice That Shapes What We See, Think, and Do* (New York: Penguin, 2020), 190.

11 Eberhardt, *Biased*, 161.

in *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*. These discriminatory policies and practices prevented Blacks from buying homes in desirable neighborhoods and riding the property value escalator that enabled many whites to build family wealth.

The Fair Housing Act of 1968 outlawed such *de jure* discrimination, but the damage had already been done, and the aftereffects lingered. Many Blacks were trapped in urban ghettos with inferior schools – reflecting a property-based system of financing public education – and neighborhoods with higher levels of crime, drug abuse, fewer jobs, and poorer health care.

The median net worth of households with Black college graduates in their 30s has declined over the last 30 years to less than one-tenth of white counterparts.¹² The impact of home mortgage discrimination in the postwar period has been compounded by inflated college costs, college loan burdens, and the 2008 financial crisis.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and subsequent legislation outlawed *de jure* segregation, but American neighborhoods and public schools were, for the most part, *de facto* segregated, with whites and Blacks separated by income, net worth, education, and social class. The playing field was not really level, and “equality of opportunity” remains more a formal ideal than a material reality.

Toxic waste dumping provides another illustration of this distinction between past causes of harm and the continuing effects of those past causes of harm. Before the passage of the National Environmental Protection Act in 1970, dry cleaning businesses may have dumped Perchloroethylene (dry cleaning solvent) in landfills or disposed of this carcinogenic chemical in ways and places that contaminated the groundwater and town wells. EPA regulations now prohibit (*de jure*) such practices, but the *de facto* harms can still persist. Toxic wastes can remain in the ground long after they have been dumped and can continue to harm people and the environment long afterward, until specific steps are taken to remove them. Time alone does not heal all wounds, nor does time alone heal all past social harms.

In light of these distinctions that we have discussed, is it then fair to say that American society and its institutions are characterized by “systemic” (or institutionalized) racism? Before considering some additional specific examples, and to give some wider perspective on this question, it might be helpful to cite statements by President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris – both liberal Democrats – on the question of whether America as a whole is a racist society. Both were interviewed on network news shows in 2021.

Harris, during her ABC interview, said “I don’t think America is a racist country. But we also do have to speak truth about the history of racism in our country and its existence today.”¹³ On NBC’s “Today” show Biden stated that “I don’t think America is racist, but I think the overhang from Jim Crow and slavery have had a cost and we have to deal with it.”¹⁴ Both seemed to be saying that, in spite of the progress made against *de jure* racism, the lingering effects of previous racist policies still need to be recognized and addressed.

To answer the question about systemic (or institutionalized) racism, it is helpful to distinguish, as suggested earlier, a *stronger sense* and a *weaker sense* of the term. Institutionalized racism in the stronger sense would mean *de jure* racism in systems and institutions – intentionally planned, systematically organized, and legally enforced by those with governmental or economic power. Clear historical examples, noted previously, included American slavery before the Civil War, Jim Crow laws in the South after Reconstruction, anti-Jewish laws in Nazi Germany, and Apartheid in South Africa. These racist regimes systematically and intentionally, with the coercive power of legislatures, courts,

12 Rachel Ensigh and Shane Shifflett, “For Black Americans, College Hasn’t Closed the Wealth Gap,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 6, 2021, A5.

13 <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/vice-president-kamala-harris-speak-truth-history-racism/story?id=77391730>.

14 <https://www.nbcboston.com/news/politics/biden-administration/biden-in-today-exclusive-i-dont-think-the-american-people-are-racist/2368303/>.

and police, restricted the rights and liberties of specific racial groups – Blacks and Jews.

On the other hand, in a weaker sense “systemic (institutionalized) racism” is taken to refer to the impact of racist attitudes or policies within and through systems and institutions from one or more of the following sources: 1) the lingering effects of previous de jure racism; 2) the presence of unconscious, implicit racial biases held by persons within a system; or 3) egregious and conscious racist acts by one or more persons within a system or institution. The lingering patterns of residential housing segregation and disparities in Black and white family wealth, as detailed by Richard Rothstein, are examples of the first.¹⁵

Implicit racial biases that have been documented in job hiring are examples of the second. For example, economists at the University of California Berkeley sent 83,000 fake job applications to 108 American companies. On average, candidates with a “Black” name got fewer callbacks than ones with “white” names.¹⁶ In an earlier study, respondents to help wanted ads in Boston and Chicago got better responses if their name was Emily or Greg rather than Lakota or Jamal.¹⁷ Despite the ostensibly color-blind hiring policies of these companies, it is hard to avoid the inference that unconsciously held biases and racial stereotypes were at work.

The notorious killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota by the white ex-police officer Derek Chauvin, sentenced to over twenty-two years in prison, would be judged by almost all to be an example of an egregious racist action by an individual policeman within the system. Many if not most middle-class suburban whites would be inclined to see this as the exception rather than the rule in white police interactions with Blacks, while many if not most Blacks would see the killing of George Floyd as yet another instance of systemic racism in policing. Both points of view reflect real life experiences and the particular residential and social locations of the speakers.

That being said, it also should be recognized that unequal representation of minorities in a school or business is not *per se* evidence of institutionalized racism. African Americans represent thirteen percent of the U.S. population, while most schools and colleges do not have thirteen percent of their tenured faculty positions filled by African Americans or minorities. Covert racist attitudes or implicit biases might be at work, but other factors must be considered: the applicant pool of PhDs in a given discipline; area of the country and cost of living; individual personalities and interests, and so forth. Hiring institutions need to be self-critical and self-aware, and critics of these institutions need to have a nuanced and informed knowledge of the factors in play.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY: THE KEY IDEAS

The purpose of this next section is to give a concise and accurate summary of the key ideas of critical race theory, based on a careful reading of the primary sources. The term “critical race theory” and related concepts such as “systemic racism” have become caught up in the post- George Floyd culture wars, used with a variety of meanings often characterized by misunderstanding, partisanship, exaggeration, and ignorance of the primary sources. Like the smoke from Western wildfires that drift to the Eastern seaboard, damaging air quality and human health, these sloppy definitions of controversial ideas can pollute the semantic atmosphere, making it difficult for people to understand the issues and learn from one another.

Reliable sources for CRT are Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, and Derrick Bell, *Race, Racism, and American Law*.¹⁸ Bell is considered one of the founding fathers of CRT, having practiced as a civil rights attorney and litigator before becoming a

¹⁵ “Suppressed Incomes,” Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright, 2017), 153–175.

¹⁶ Eberhardt, *Biased*, 264.

¹⁷ Eberhardt, *Biased*, 264.

¹⁸ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory* and Derrick Bell, *Race, Racism, and American Law* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1984).

law professor at Harvard Law School. Bell was a key leader at a workshop held at the St. Benedict Center in Madison, Wisconsin in the summer of 1989, considered to be the movement's founding. Bell's work has documented the numerous instances in which American law, at both federal and state levels, rather than being objective and color-blind, has been used to exclude Blacks, Native Americans, Asians, and other minorities from the rights of citizenship, voting, due process in the courts, fair housing, employment, and quality education enjoyed by whites.

Delgado and Stefancic are also law professors, and their introduction is considered a standard text in the field of CRT. The following discussion of CRT's key points are based on their book, especially the sections "Basic Tenets of Critical Race Theory" (8-11) and "How Much Racism Is There in the World?" (11-13).

1. FIRST TENET: THE ORDINARINESS OF RACISM

The first tenet is the claim that "racism is ordinary, not aberrational ... the common, everyday experience of most people of color in this country." For example, many or most whites in affluent suburbs might view George Floyd's abuse by Derek Chauvin in Minneapolis as an aberration. Most Blacks would tend to view it as yet another tragic example of a pattern of systemic racism in policing. Most Black parents would feel the need to give their children "the Talk," coaching them how to respond when being pulled to the side of the road by a white policeman: "Don't make any sudden moves; keep your hands visible; don't resist or be hostile, etc." White parents might give such a talk, but not with the same background of experiences. Many Blacks have had the experience of being watched or followed in a store, being suspected of shoplifting; whites, less so. This "ordinariness" of racism as experienced by people of color makes it more difficult for whites to be aware of the problem, when it is manifested in less obvious forms, in a presumably "color-blind" society and legal system.

2. SECOND TENET: THE BENEFITS OF RACISM

The second tenet is that racism serves the interests of the predominant social groups and provides these groups with both material and psychological benefits. For example, under the systems of slavery, white slave owners benefitted from the cheap labor of enslaved Blacks. During Reconstruction and Jim Crow, white landowners and employers continued to profit from the lower wages paid to Blacks. Slavery and Jim Crow also provided psychological benefits to whites, in the form of greater social status and a sense of cultural and moral superiority. These psychological benefits were a significant factor in the frequent identification of working-class whites with the interests of their socially superior and wealthier employers, rather than with the interests of the lower status Blacks – even when such coalitions might have led to higher wages for both Blacks and working class whites.

White individuals and groups are strongly motivated to preserve their financial and social interests, have little incentive to give up the benefits of racist policies, and do not readily yield those benefits to others. White suburban homeowners may in theory advocate for diversity and multiculturalism but in practice not support lower income housing in their towns – especially "not in my back yard" – out of concern to protect their own property values. These white homeowners continue to benefit, in their property values, from *de jure* policies in the past that excluded Blacks from home ownership in the suburbs.

An important aspect of this second tenet is *interest convergence*, a concept developed by Derrick Bell. Bell argued that privileged whites generally did not support legal and economic changes that would benefit Blacks unless whites perceived that it was *in their own interests* to do so and – usually – only as a result of strong external pressure. When the interests of Blacks were in line with the self-interest of whites, change could occur.

For example, according to Bell, during the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s it was the strong criticism of the Soviet Union about racism in the United States that motivated the Johnson

administration to push for the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Soviet charges of American racism and hypocrisy damaged the image of the United States during the Cold War, with its competition between the U.S. and Russia for the allegiance of the emerging African nations in the postcolonial period.¹⁹ Bell's analysis of interest convergence may seem too cynical to some, but it sheds important light on how social change actually occurs.

3. THIRD TENET: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF RACE

The third tenet listed by Delgado and Stefancic is the “social construction” thesis, the idea that race and races are the products of social thought and relations – and are not merely or primarily based on biological differences. It is true, of course, that such features as skin pigmentation, hair texture, and facial characteristics are based in human biology, but the *value* and *privileges* that societies assign to these differences are socially constructed by the predominant groups and have varied greatly over time and across cultures.

For example, the category of “white,” insofar as it has been used to define rights of citizenship and voting, has varied over the course of American history. As already noted, the right of aliens to become citizens was restricted by Congress in 1790 to “free white persons.” At the time, “free white persons” essentially meant free white English-speaking males from England and Scotland. Only in the nineteenth century were Germans, Irish, Italians, Greeks, and Jews recognized as “white,” with the attendant social and political privileges. Only in the twentieth century were Chinese, Japanese, and Asian Indians recognized as “white” for the purposes of citizenship. Native Americans had to wait until 1924 to be accorded the citizenship rights of white Americans.

This sobering history of the social construction of the category “white” is ably told by Ian Haney Lopez in *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (NY University Press, 2006) and by Nell Irvin Painter in *The History of White People* (W.W. Norton, 2010). The historical record demonstrates that “race,” like our tax and property laws, is not just a “natural” category, but one that has been constructed by human beings, often for the benefit of the wealthier and more powerful social groups.

FOURTH TENET: INTERSECTIONALITY

The fourth tenet of critical race theory is *intersectionality*, a concept first developed by the African American legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in an influential 1989 article in the *Stanford Law Review*. The basic idea here is that no person – Black or white – has only a single unitary and fixed identity. A Black woman's life experience, for example, is affected not only by her *race* as Black, or only by her *gender* as a woman, but by both simultaneously. Her life experience as a *Black woman* differs from that of most white women, and her experience as a *Black woman* differs from that of most Black men. Like a person trapped in the middle of a busy intersection, the Black woman can be “hit” by the oncoming traffic of both racism and sexism.

The concept of intersectionality provides a more “granular” lens for understanding the lived experiences of all social groups, not just minorities. A white male in America, for example, is affected by his racial (“white”), gender (“male”), occupational (“sanitary engineer”), social (“working class”), educational (“high school graduate”), and political (e.g., “Trump supporter”) identifiers. While intersectionality does classify people by categories, it reminds us that no one's identity should be reduced to only a single category. We should have a “granular” social lens and see each person in her and his own unique individuality.

FIFTH TENET: “VOICE OF COLOR” THESIS

In Roman Catholic social ethics there is a *principle of subsidiarity*, which states that decisions are best made by those who are closest to the concrete situation. A potato farmer in northern Maine will be in a better position than a bureaucrat in the Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C.

¹⁹ Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 23.

to have direct knowledge of local conditions and decide how many acres of potatoes to plant in a given year.

Similarly, in Critical Race Theory the *voice-of-color thesis* holds that Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asians, because of their particular life experiences and social locations, may have insights about race and racism that are not obvious to whites, with their different life experiences and social locations. A group of blind men feeling different parts of an elephant need to listen to one another and share their experiences in order to form a picture of the elephant that is more accurate than any single individual's perspective.

My interactions with police in my predominantly white suburban town of Hamilton, Massachusetts have generally been positive and courteous. However, my Hispanic and African American colleagues at the seminary have had less positive experiences; as a result, they believe, in racial stereotypes held by police toward them: "You don't look like you live in this neighborhood (or town)."

Proponents of Critical Race Theory have adopted a "legal storytelling" tool that not only discusses laws, cases, and precedents in the traditional manner, but also presents personal stories of racial discrimination experienced by people of color. My experiences in a predominantly white community may be different, but I need to hear these stories, take them seriously, and learn from them.

SOME FINAL TAKEAWAYS AND SUGGESTIONS

The first takeaway: *Read the primary sources on Critical Race Theory.* Don't settle for politicized secondary sources on this controversial topic. A good place to start is Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*. Reading primary sources will show you that assertions such as "Critical Race Theory teaches that all white people are racists" or "All predominantly white institutions are inherently and always guilty of systemic racism" are inaccurate and overstated. Repeating such faulty generalizations is not intellectually honest, and only exacerbates division rather than healing it.

A second takeaway: *Broaden your knowledge of American history and race relations.* Read sources that may not fit your current political biases. Neither the "1776" nor "1619" versions of American history and race relations gets everything right. H. Shelton Smith's *In His Image, But ...* and Jemar Tisby's *The Color of Compromise* show how conservative Protestant theologians and scholars were too often part of the problem rather than the solution to America's race problems – justifying or compromising with slavery and segregation. Leon Litwack's *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* and Isabel Wilkerson's *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* show that racial discrimination was not just a Southern problem but was endemic in the North as well. Edward Baptist's heavily documented *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* shows that slavery benefitted not only Southern slave owners in the South, but the merchants, ship owners, bankers, insurance firms, and textile factory owners in the North – in fact the entire nineteenth century American economy. Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow* is essential reading, documenting how the "War on Drugs" became a "War on the Black Underclass," characterized by disparate sentencing for drug crimes and massive incarceration. The racial wounds in America will not be healed unless Blacks and whites come to share more common memories of America's racial history.

A third takeaway: *Recognize the continuing effects of racist policies in the past.* The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the two-term election of Barack Obama did not erase the past and solve all America's racial problems. Postwar Blacks were denied mortgages for homes in the suburbs. Many of their descendants today have grown up in urban ghettos with inferior schools, fewer jobs, more crime, poorer health care, and diminished family wealth. Systemic or institutionalized racism as in the old days of Jim Crow has been outlawed, but its effects remain. American schools, neighborhoods, and businesses are still impacted by implicit racial biases and the "knock-on" consequences of past policies.

A fourth and final takeaway: *Be willing to discuss the topic of reparations.* Reparation is a very controversial idea – favored by many Blacks and opposed by many white evangelicals. Nevertheless, as those who read their Bibles know, restitution for stolen property is a biblical concept. Zacchaeus’ repentance was demonstrated by his willingness to restore the wealth that he had unrighteously gained, and Jesus commended him for it (Luke 19:8-10). There is already a precedent in American history – the compensation made to the descendants of Japanese American citizens who were unjustly sent to detention camps, having committed no crimes or acts of disloyalty. *Reparations: A Christian Call for Repentance and Repair*, by Gordon-Conwell graduate Duke Kwon and Gregory Thompson, presents a strong biblical, moral, and historical case for reparations. There are, of course, complicated questions of practical application here, given the intergenerational nature of the harms. Nevertheless, a serious discussion is needed to “bind up the nation’s wounds.” Now is the time to begin. Bible-believing Evangelicals need to be part of that discussion.

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The Beatitudes in the Midst of Global Violence

PAUL BRICKER

I believe that we are in a current version of a “civil war” in the United States in the present division and disagreements between political conservatives and political liberals. Political liberals think that political conservatives are not simply wrong but evil and vice versa. There are major disagreements between environmentalists and those-that-would-want-work-in-coal-mines or in-factories, as well as between environmentalists and those who want to heat their homes with wood-burning stoves. News factions also split. There is a continuing pro-life and pro-abortionist split; and even a traditional marriage or whatever-goes split. All over the United States there are protests, and then there are the mass shooters, mainly Caucasian males who run amuck, killing strangers they never met. Our former president (Donald Trump) said in January of 2016 in Iowa: “I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot someone and I wouldn’t lose voters.”¹ When are these current factions going to escalate to more violence? Senator Chuck Schumer threatened some members of the Supreme Court: “I want to tell you Gorsuch, I want to tell you, Kavanaugh, you have released the whirlwind and you will pay the price. You won’t know what hit you if you go forward with these awful decisions {striking down ‘Roe vs. Wade}.”² Nicolas John Roske, 26, was arrested when “he had planned to murder a Supreme Court Justice and was armed with a pistol and a tactical knife.”³

In this article, I want to take a fresh look at the beatitudes and apply them to the current global violence, since I think the beatitudes are a key to how Christians should act. Remember the Jews themselves were under the rule of an oppressive overlord governor and government. Here are the Beatitudes⁴:

When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. He opened His mouth and *began* to teach them, saying,

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

“Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matt. 5:1-12).

One of Matthew’s central concerns is making disciples. The Lord Jesus’s last commandment in the book of Matthew is “make disciples of all the nations.” All of Matthew’s gospel tells us what a disciple is. So, we will now explore Matthew’s definition in the Sermon on the Mount in general and the Beatitudes in particular in this sequence: introduction to the Beatitudes (vv. 1-2); the meaning of “blessed”; the Lord Jesus’s spiritual development. The Beatitudes proper also has

1 Colin Dwyer, National Public Radio, Jan. 23, 2016.

2 Ian Schwartz, *Real Clear Politics* June 8, 2022.

3 court documents, Holly Honderich, BBC, June 9, 2022.

4 I am using the New American Standard Bible, unless otherwise noted.

three parts: the first three Beatitudes: inward humility of a blessed disciple (vv. 3-5); the second four Beatitudes: outward characteristics of a blessed disciple (vv. 6-9); and, the last two Beatitudes: consequences of being a blessed disciple (vv. 10-11).

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE BEATITUDES (vv. 1-2)

“When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. He opened His mouth and began to teach them” (Matt. 5:1-2).

Much in these verses is self-explicable: The Lord Jesus saw the disciples and taught them. One of the astounding aspects of these two verses is that the passage states that the Lord Jesus “sat down.” I have probably preached 500 sermons in the outdoors and have never sat down to teach. I have known many street preachers and I have never met one who would sit down and teach. Why does the Lord Jesus do this?

When a rabbi enters a synagogue to teach, he stands up to read the scrolls. Then the rabbi sits down and teaches. One can see an example of such in Luke 4:16-21. Our Lord enters a synagogue in Nazareth. After He read from the book of Isaiah, “He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and SAT DOWN [*my emphasis*]... And He began to say to them: ‘Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’” That was the Lord Jesus’s sermon that day.

II. MEANING OF BLESSING

Many people think that the word “blessing” means “happy.” For instance, the Good News Bible translates, “Blessed are the peacemakers...” as “Happy are the peacemakers...” Nothing could be further from the truth. The key to understanding what blessing means is found in Numbers 6:22-27:

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying: ‘Thus, you shall bless the Israelites, You shall say to them,
‘The Lord bless you, and keep you;
The Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.
So they shall put my name on the Israelites, and I then will bless them’” (NRSV).

In this passage we find an example of Hebrew parallelism. The three stanzas are parallel and explain each other. In fact the first half of each stanza contains parallels that explain each other; the second half of each stanza are also parallel and explain each other. This means the phrases “The Lord bless you,” “The Lord make his face shine upon you,” and “The Lord lift up his countenance upon you” mean the same thing. The effect of blessing (the latter half of each stanza) is also parallel, meaning exactly the same thing and each part explaining each other. When we bless someone, we are asking God to “keep that person,” and we are asking God to “be gracious to that person,” and we are asking God to “give that person peace.” The summation of blessing another person is that God gives every believer the authority and privilege to put God’s Name on another person, asking for the blessing’s effects.

In the Beatitudes we find certain human activity that is blessed. That does not necessarily mean that a person is happy if they do such an activity. It means that God is happy when a human does the activity described in the Beatitudes. God will put God’s Name on people who do the activities described in the Beatitudes. God puts His stamp of approval on humans who do the Beatitudes. To be a disciple or follower of the Lord Jesus means that one should be developing and applying the activities described in the Beatitudes.

III. THE LORD JESUS'S SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Usually we do not think that the Lord Jesus had a spiritual development. However, the Scriptures clearly assert: "Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered" (Heb. 5:8). The Apostle Paul also shares that people develop spiritually through suffering. He writes:

Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong (2 Cor. 12:7-10).⁵

When we are serving the Lord, we undergo "insults" or "distresses" or "persecutions" or "difficulties." When this happens, we need to ride out the mistreatment in the most godly manner one can. I have known Caucasian missionaries serving in African American Churches. Their mission board attacked them for contextualizing the gospel into the African American ways. I have known pro-life Christians who stood up in a godly manner against the abortion industry and were mistreated by their churches for not submitting to government authorities (Rom. 13:1-3). When we go through such difficulties, we should expect to increase in ministry activity. One's ministry will graduate into a ministry of power. The glory will be the Lord's.

How does graduating into a ministry of power relate to the Beatitudes? Just before the Beatitudes in Matthew 5, in Matthew 4, we find that the Lord Jesus was led out into the desert and suffered temptation by the devil. The Lord Jesus suffered terribly in the desert. In Luke's account we find that the Lord Jesus was "full of the Holy Spirit" when He was "led around by the Spirit in the wilderness." Like Matthew's gospel, Luke's gospel depicts that the Lord Jesus suffered terribly in the desert. After the temptation was over, Luke's gospel shares that the Lord Jesus has developed spiritually. The Lord Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit going out into the wilderness. After the horrible trial was over, Luke shares that the graduation had occurred: "After Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit" (Luke 4:14). What happened to the Lord Jesus is what Paul taught in 2 Corinthians 12:9 that Christ's power was perfected in weakness.

Soon after the desert trial, the Lord Jesus preaches the Sermon on the Mount. Some I have encountered have thought that the Lord Jesus preached such a sermon in a "golf voice." If one has ever watched a golf match on television, one has heard the announcers barely whispering while describing the action. Remember, the Lord Jesus was preaching in the outdoors. He had to be preaching loudly so that He could be heard. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew gives this commentary: "When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes." If the Lord Jesus had a golf voice, crowds could not hear Him to be amazed (Matt. 7:28f).

When we go through horrible trials or insults or distresses or sickness or difficulties in a godly manner, expect that, though the horrible trial is overwhelming, one will graduate from having a ministry full of the Holy Spirit to one of having a ministry "in the power of the Holy Spirit" (Luke 4:14). When we go through horrible trials and we hold onto the Lord Jesus, expect that God will tell you what God told the Apostle Paul: "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected

⁵ One cannot emphasize enough that weakness in this passage does not mean moral weakness. I have heard a new believer say: "I am going to commit fornication because then I can glory in my weakness so that Christ's power will dwell in me." Such thinking is completely revolting. Weakness in this passage is parallel to "insults," "distresses," "persecutions" and "difficulties." None of these are moral weakness but horrible actions of others against one's person.

in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9). Our Lord Jesus has died on the cross, been raised from the dead and exalted into heaven. In the Great Commission, the Lord Jesus says: “All power is given unto me in heaven and earth” (Matt. 28:18 KJV). Power has been perfected in His ministry in that all power in heaven has been given to Him. After that pronouncement the Lord Jesus wants us to do ministry (Matt. 28:19-20).

IV. BEATITUDES PROPER, THE FIRST THREE BEATITUDES: INWARD HUMILITY OF A BLESSED DISCIPLE (5:3-5)

a. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (v. 3).

“Blessed” means “This is what God will put His Name on.” God will “put His Name on” (i.e., “bless”) the human character of being “poor in spirit.” I know what it means to be poor in money. It can be a humiliating experience. Here the Bible says, “poor in spirit.” This means that one realizes that one does not have any worthwhile spiritual assets. This is the first step to come to the Lord. One comes without anything to offer. One knows one cannot justify oneself in the presence of God. One is completely spiritually bankrupt in the presence of God. One knows that one needs a Savior to save oneself. Humility is the first step in coming to God.

To those who come to God in humility, God will put God’s name on such humble character. God will also reward such people in that they will inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.

As for earthly kingdoms, the Middle East has not changed much in the last three thousand years in the area of eliminating churning political instability. One kingdom rises up and takes a portion of the Middle East. Then another kingdom rises up and takes that same portion of the Middle East. In other words, there is complete kingdom instability in the Middle East. “Who is going to conquer us this year?” “We have a somewhat stable government now...but how long is that going to last?”

When Saddam Hussain was toppled, one pastor commented: “They toppled one dictator. Now we have twenty different horrible dictators to deal with.” When Libya’s Kaddafi was overthrown, the chaos that arose from that new political power was much worse than Kaddafi ever was.

Conversely, when a first century believer hears the concept of “kingdom of heaven,” he/she hears “finally a stable kingdom.” The Lord Jesus is promising political stability (but of course not in this life).

When I write, the United States is in what I think is “civil war.” I believe it could become very politically unstable. I have had friends from Europe tell me that my country has been lucky in that we have had only one civil war. Despite the possibility, one knows that no matter how much chaos ensues, one will have a stable kingdom: namely, the kingdom of Heaven.

b. “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (v. 4).

God will also “put His name on” the human character of mourning over one’s sin. This Beatitude is parallel to the first and third Beatitudes. God wants us to be humble. “Poor in spirit,” “mourning over one’s sins,” and “being gentle or meek” (the following Beatitude) are very similar.

A common verse when explaining the Gospel is Isaiah 64:5: “All our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment.” The term “filthy garment” (צִדְקָתָם) refers to rags that have soaked up menstrual flow. God is saying that, if we come to God thinking that our righteousness is impressive, God will respond: “All your righteousness is like a pickup bed full of used tampons.” Really not very impressive.

Instead, God wants us to be shocked at how horrible our sins are. Our sins are so horrible that we need a Savior to die for our sins. We need to mourn that our sins are so horrible that they killed the Lord Jesus. If we mourn over our sins, we have a great promise. God will comfort us.

c. “Blessed are the gentle or meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (v. 5).

God will “put His name on” or “bless” the human characteristic of being gentle or meek. One can see how the first three Beatitudes are similar. God does not want us to be bullies or dictators or pompous kings or queens. God wants us to be meek.

Every dictator, mafia boss, ecclesiastical thug, political bully, etc. has the hope of conquering the world, or conquering some large part of the world, or conquering some small part of the world. The Lord Jesus shows in this verse that the hope of the tyrant of conquering the world is not by being a tyrant but by being meek.

As our world escalates violence, Christians need to realize that humility wins the whole world eventually.

V. BEATITUDE PROPER, THE SECOND FOUR BEATITUDES: OUTWARD CHARACTERISTICS OF A BLESSED DISCIPLE (5:6-9)

a. “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied” (v. 6).

God will “put His name on” (or bless) the human behavior of hungering and thirsting for justice.

While we do not know what kinds of crazy chaos will occur, what God wants from us is a keen sense of justice. We need to be so zealous for justice that we should hunger and thirst for it. We need to treat people fairly. We need to care for the stranger in our land. We need to care for women when they are mistreated in churches. We need to care for the widow and orphan. We need to stand for the unborn. Some evangelicals might be surprised that we find a basis for various liberation theologies in the Beatitudes. We need to remember that Moses’s calling was one of liberation of God’s people from Egypt. We need to remember Micah’s question: “And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God” (6:8).

The fruit of such blessed character is that one will be satisfied.

b. “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy” (v. 7).

God will “put His name on” or “bless” the human characteristic of being merciful. I have been in churches where we hid illegal aliens (the biblical term is “stranger”). They needed letters of sponsorship from a church. We gave such letters. In the midst of escalating violence, one needs to show mercy. The reward, if we show mercy, is that we will receive mercy.

c. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (v. 8).

God will bless or “put His name on” the human characteristic of being pure in heart. What does this mean? It means that your outward actions are connected to your heart. Throughout the Sermon on the Mount the Lord Jesus wants to see heart and actions connect. One not only does not murder people but one does not have a heart of anger that will escalate to murder (5:21f.) One not only does not commit adultery, one does not have a heart of lust that will escalate to adultery (v. 27f.).

“Pure in heart” means that one does not do outward actions that are correct but for boastful reasons. The Lord Jesus does want us to give to the poor, but He does not want us to blow a trumpet announcing our generous offering. The Lord Jesus wants us to pray but He does not want us to pray so that others might marvel at our prayers (6:5f).

The reward for such blessed behavior is that we will see God.

d. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (v. 9).

God will bless or “put His name on” those who work for peace among warring factions.

Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev has written one of the great articles on war and peace in the Middle East: “No Winners in a World War.” He mentions how the church attempted to be

peacemakers in the civil war in the Ukraine of 2014:

When the civil unrest began in Ukraine last winter, the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church, to which the majority of the population belongs, did not support either side. The Church's members have ended up on both sides of the fence. The Church has called for a peaceful solution to all the accumulated problems and has acted as a mediator between the warring parties: monks from the Kiev-Pechersk Monastery took to Independence Square in Kiev and for many days stood in the pouring rain as a living shield, to prevent the two sides from clashing in mortal combat. The church sees its missions as one of reconciling enemies, preventing violence, and protecting people's lives.⁶

All around the world, we need Christians to be peacemakers. It is interesting that the Lord Jesus gives one of his titles to those who do the work of peacemaking. They will be called "sons" of God. The Son of God died on the cross for our sins. He is our peacemaker. His name is the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6).

VI. BEATITUDE PROPER, THE LAST TWO BEATITUDES: CONSEQUENCES OF BEING A BLESSED DISCIPLE (5:10-12)

a. **"Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven" (v. 10).**

One would think that, since one has been developing the blessed inward characteristics (poor in spirit, mourning over one's sin, and meekness) that God wants and the blessed outward behavior that God wants (hunger and thirst after justice, mercy, purity in heart and peacemaking), that one should be making great progress in one's walk with God. And one is indeed making great progress in one's walk with God, however, the next step is persecution. The Lord Jesus has just given us who are peacemakers one of his titles—sons of God. Now we, as sons of God, will follow the Son of God in suffering persecution. In other words, if we walk with God and are mistreated and persecuted, God's face shall shine on us.

The reward for being blessed while persecuted is the same reward as we find in the first Beatitude: "for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." Why is it repeated? It is repeated to give encouragement to those who know that there is no permanent or stable government on this side of life. The churning of governments has been happening for millenniums. The churning of governments is happening today. We should not put our trust in any human government. We should put our trust in the Lord Jesus who is the King of Kings and the Prince of Peace. And we should be helping our governments discover that fact.

b. **"Blessed are you when people insult and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad for your reward is heaven is great, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (vv. 11-12).**

God's face will shine on us if we are insulted, persecuted and lied about because of the Lord Jesus. I know that I have been persecuted because I followed the Lord Jesus. I know that God's face is shining upon me.

Many people have trouble with how one can rejoice and be glad while being persecuted. The reason is that one is not attached to this world. I have a biblical community of others who have been mistreated. The prophets have been persecuted. (See the "Hall of Faith" in Hebrews 11.) The governments of this world will churn. I do not believe any government of this world is truly Christian. I know that I belong to the only stable government. I belong to the Kingdom of Heaven. I belong to the Lord Jesus: "For a Child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us; And

⁶ Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev: "No Winner in a World War," *Breitbart News*, August 31, 2014.

the government will rest on His shoulders; His Name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace....” (Isa. 9:6-7a).

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The Book of Ruth as a Journey: A Devotional¹

SARAH AGO

There is a Chinese proverb that says, “Do not believe that you will reach your destination without leaving the shore.”²

Don’t we wish we could eliminate the hurdles of life in order to grasp our dreams? Reaching a destination, however, requires movement. It requires effort. It often requires pain. We have to leave the shore, even if metaphorically.

This article will lead us through a journey with Ruth and Naomi. The Book of Ruth is a powerful story of redemption, both large-scale for the people of God and small scale in the renewal of individual lives. We travel through loss, grief, rebuilding, and restoration with these two women. We are invited to embrace community, allow for authenticity, and receive abundance on our own journeys with God. We find our way back to hope through looking deeply at the experiences of two women whose pain drives them to live with whole-hearted faith. We join Naomi and Ruth on the road that moves them from inexplicable pain to defiant joy.

The Book of Ruth is a story about two women who “leave the shore.” But, I would argue that, even though our Old Testament book holds Ruth’s name, it is really *Naomi’s* story. The book begins and ends with telling the story of Ruth’s mother-in-law. Ruth functions as a channel of blessing and restoration in *her* life.

Some of us like to know the ending of a movie or book before we watch or read it. If we were to take this approach to Naomi’s story, we would turn to the back of the book, Ruth 4:14-15, to glance ahead. We would see the conclusion of Naomi’s beautiful story. Scripture says:

The women said to Naomi: “Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a guardian-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth.”³

That is her destination. But, what I want to focus on is what she goes through to get there. We are going to look closely at the journeys of these two women. We’ve looked ahead and seen that it ended well. Now, let’s look at what happened to get them to their beautiful landing place.

THE WOMEN FIRST LEARN LESSONS OF HOPE AND LOYALTY

Ruth 1:1-7 begins the story:

In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. The man’s name was Elimelek, his wife’s name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there. Now Elimelek, Naomi’s husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband. When Naomi heard in Moab that the Lord had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah.

1 This article was adapted from a devotional given for the international CBE Conference, August 2022.

2 Vinh Chung, *Where the Wind Leads: A Refugee Family’s Miraculous Story of Loss, Rescue, and Redemption* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2014), epigraph.

3 All Bible quotations are from the NIV.

Here we are introduced to the woman who is central to the story- Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi. Scripture tells us that she, her husband and two sons left Bethlehem for Moab during a famine. Right away, the story presents us with a tragedy- Naomi's husband died after they moved. Yet, even in this painful loss, Naomi had something in her favor; she had two boys. In that society, women were not able to be independent and we can only assume that, as a foreigner, she was even more disadvantaged. Her *hope* would have been for her sons to secure her future.

Naomi's sons married wives from Moab and life seemed to move on, as it somehow does after loss. But, then we come to verse 5 and read a hauntingly sad statement: "Both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband." Translation- Naomi lost everyone in her immediate family. If that weren't bad enough, she was left completely empty-handed and utterly vulnerable. All hopes for provision were gone. This tragedy leaves us wondering how Naomi was able to get up in the morning after a loss of such magnitude.

Naomi was not ready to give up, however, because a glimmer of hope came her way. She heard that her homeland was no longer suffering a famine and she began the process of returning to Judah. Ruth 1:7 says, "With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah."

She left what had been and set out on the road to her destination, ironically going back to where she had left. Similarly, sometimes a detour comes our way and we find ourselves on a road that looks very familiar. Sometimes, God takes us *back* in order to take us forward.

Naomi doesn't give up and die in Moab. I am sure there were times when she wanted to. Her loss was unfathomable; a husband and two sons taken from her. Many of us cannot imagine such devastation. Yet, somewhere deep within her was hope. It was the hope to *live*.

Naomi started walking toward that hope. She didn't know what would be waiting for her on the other side after so much time away. She had no idea if she would make the journey without complications. She even tried to excuse her daughters-in-law from going with her. She encouraged them to leave in order to pursue their own lives. Ruth 1:8-13 says:

Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the LORD show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband." Then she kissed them goodbye and they wept aloud and said to her, "We will go back with you to your people." But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons— would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD's hand has turned against me!"

One woman reluctantly went back, with many tears. A chapter of her life had just ended and she had no idea what was ahead, but she wanted the security of her homeland. Who could blame her?

The other woman, an important figure in this book, a woman of remarkable *loyalty*, declares something powerful. Ruth 1:16-18 explains:

But Ruth said, "Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die—there will I be buried. May the Lord do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!" When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

These verses are quoted at many weddings, but let's not miss the context. This was not eternal love being pledged between husband and wife. This was life-long loyalty promised to someone who was not even her blood relative! This was one woman who chose to cling to another in her grief.

The two then take the journey together.

THE WOMEN THEN LEARN THREE LESSONS IN THE JOURNEY:
EMBRACE COMMUNITY, ALLOW FOR AUTHENTICITY, RECEIVE ABUNDANCE

The first point I notice about their story is that a successful journey requires *more than one*. We were not meant to walk alone, nor should we.

Wouldn't you like to have been a butterfly fluttering by these two ladies as they walked? I would have loved to have overheard the conversation! But, perhaps, they didn't talk much. Maybe they just walked together in silent support and comradery. Maybe the grief they felt was too heavy to allow for many words and they simply walked together quietly.

Sometimes we need that, don't we? We need people to just walk alongside us, not offer pat answers or comforting clichés or push us to talk when we can't. Their presence alone brings *comfort and strength* when they are simply present with us. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 says, "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For, if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help."

Ruth and Naomi's trip would have taken between 7-10 days.⁴ It was 30-60 miles, depending on the route they took. It would have required them to cross the river Jordan and to descend 4500 feet into the Jordan Valley and climb almost 4000 feet in elevation to reach Judea.⁵ Perhaps there was something therapeutic in the hard climb home, the effort it took to move up a steep hill, the length of time to walk. Maybe they welcomed the chance to focus all their energy on walking. Perhaps it was a nice break from the weight of the grief consuming their mind; a way to work out emotional pain through a test of physical stamina.

I wonder if Naomi would have made it back without Ruth? If she had attempted the trip by herself, perhaps she would have stopped or fallen into danger. It would not have been wise for her to journey by herself, a woman alone and unprotected. Ruth knew this and, because of this and her fierce loyalty, she refused to let her walk alone. She stood by her side.

"Where you go, I will go," Ruth had said. "Where you stay, I will stay." No wonder the women at the end of the story declare her to be better than children who had been born of Naomi's body, better than the blessings a son at that time could bring. There are bonds that are stronger than blood, family that is formed of people who are unrelated, but can become closer to us than genetic relations are. That is what Ruth was for Naomi.

The beauty of loyalty is rather breath-taking, isn't it? It's a marvelous thing and something deeply lacking in various cultures today. Many of us long for this kind of loyalty. We would love to hear, "Yes, I'm here! I won't let you go alone. I'm in it for the long-haul. Where you go, I'll go there too!" But, are we willing to be loyal people, even when it is costly? When it hurts? When it requires giving something up? That is exactly what Ruth did.

Yes, the journey requires more than one. We're not meant to walk this journey alone.

Next to notice is that the journey requires *authenticity*. We are invited into vulnerability with those who walk with us.

The story continues in verses 19-22, describing the women arriving and the whole town being stirred up! The people ask, "Can this be Naomi?" It is, but it isn't. She came back a different

4 "Ruth and Naomi: Follow Their Path from Bethlehem to Moab on a Biblical Journey," Accessed 22, Dec. 2022, www.livingpassages.com/footsteps-ruth-and-naomi/.

5 "Ruth 1:19-22 Commentary," 27 Oct. 2022, www.preceptaustin.org/ruth_119-22.

person. She left full and she returned empty. She left with a heart full of promise and hope. She returned with loss and despair.

It's interesting that Naomi felt safe enough to tell the people in the town how she really felt. No stiff upper lip for her. She knew that appearing to be strong did not make her more spiritual. No, Naomi became real and she did it quickly. She said, "Do not call me Naomi, which means pleasant, rather call me Mara, which means bitter." Naomi was even honest about her feelings toward God. Verse 21b says, "I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty, why call me Naomi when the Lord has dealt harshly with me, and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?"

Can you relate?

I think there is a hunger in the Body of Christ for getting real! I think people are looking for a Christianity that calls them to an *honest* discipleship, one where we are unafraid to name our struggles and where we are bold to live into the power of transformation that Christ provides. I think that people want to be set free. I believe that Jesus actually wants to do that! What good is a sermon if it does not lead to transformation? What good are pleasant thoughts about the Christian life if we never access the power of truth? We have to be real. We have to name our struggles *and* our joy, our multifaceted realities. There is nothing spiritual about denying them.

Hebrews 12:1b-2 notes:

And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus endured. He endured because there was a mighty joy ahead of Him. But, notice that small, but powerful phrase in the middle of the verse. He scorned the shame of what He endured. He didn't need to embrace the shame. He didn't need to pretend that what He went through wasn't shameful. It was! It was horrific and horrendous! It was unspeakable! He scorned that, or, as some versions say, he despised it.

Some of our readers have been through unspeakable things. These have brought shame and pain to your soul. Perhaps, somewhere along the line you were told you had to deny those things. You believed that you needed to keep quiet about them and not acknowledge them. Or, you embraced the idea that you were supposed to just "count it all joy" and move on. Friends, listen to Naomi. She spills her complaint out and she calls her life what it was. It was bitter. What else would you call the loss of a spouse and children?

Naomi had been on a journey since long before she and Ruth set out for Bethlehem. A need had driven them to seek refuge in a foreign land. Years had passed with the building of a family. Loss had unfolded with unrelenting force. A desire to go home to start again drove Naomi back to Bethlehem.

When we think about journeys, we often think about the destination, which makes the pain of the journey worth it. That's natural. If you are like me, you might enjoy the thought of the destination more than you enjoy the "getting there." Often, it's the destination that propels us forward. But, we must not miss the lessons God has for us along the way. The journey itself is of great value. It is in the journey that we are formed.

I believe God is more interested in the journey than in the destination. I say this because He is forming vitally important things in us that must be learned in the step-by-step walking. Our determination to learn from our pain is critical to our formation. Our right now is just as important as what will be.

Do you believe that? Do you believe that your life right now matters, not just what you hope will be, what you are planning for, or what is around the next bend? The right now, the everyday.

Do you believe that this matters? We learn from Ruth and Naomi's story that *every* step was important.

Every moment of these women's lives mattered and was working together to form something truly grander than they could ever have imagined. Naomi had a vital part in the story of Jesus because from her daughter-in-law would come the ancestors of Jesus, who was God made flesh, Savior of the world. Without this journey to Bethlehem, the story would have been very different. The journey was necessary.

As you consider your life in light of Naomi's journey, consider these questions: What might God be doing in the here and now, that, if you were to skip, you would miss out on a magnificent unfolding? Might God be at work in the very places where you would least expect to find Him? Could He be unraveling a more nuanced story than you can imagine?

I often need to reflect on these questions because I really like the idea of getting to where I am going! It's the bumps, bruises, and battle scars that I don't like. If I could skip the often long and arduous journey required to get there, I would. But, the destination is not what forms me. The journey forms me and prepares me for that destination.

I am sure that Naomi liked where she eventually ended up. But, I do wonder if she would have chosen to go through all that she went through if she knew what was on the other side?

What about us? If some of us were given that view—a view of the struggle that was ahead and the good that would come out of it—would we say “Ok?” or “No thanks, I'll skip the treasure if it means going through a jungle to get there?”

I'm glad that God knows what we can handle and when. He knows that we are human. He often shows us little bit by little bit and opens each door just as it needs to be opened, not a moment sooner. Think of the way Jesus handled His own disciples, showing them that He was going to die and rise again. He tells them in increments as evidenced in John 16:12, “I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear.”

I think he is often saying the same thing to us: “Oh, my child, I have so much to show you, but you can't handle it right now. So, I will take you step by step on this path, leading you slowly, leading you steadily, leading you faithfully.” We can be, we must be, authentic as we walk with Him and others through the unknowns.

The third point I notice is where Naomi and Ruth's path leads: their journey produces *abundance*. Often the abundance comes in unexpected ways. There is a hope that rises up within us against all odds as we wait. Abundance is all around us, but we have to open our eyes and actually look for it, in order to find it. It can be easily missed.

Abundance took both Ruth and Naomi by surprise. The story goes on to explain how they design a brilliant plan to glean grain from nearby fields. Ruth knew this was an option to her, as it was a central provision in the Israelite economy. Farmers were to leave corners of their fields untouched so that the poor and the foreigners could take what they needed (Lev. 23:22). As a woman of initiative, Ruth brought her plan to Naomi and headed out to obtain what they needed.

Ruth 2:3 describes what happens that day in celebration of the providential hand of God: “As it turned out, she found herself working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimilek.” The field of Boaz, a relative of Elimilek, Naomi's husband...How divinely coincidental! “As it turned out...she found herself” right where she needed to be.

Has that ever happened to you? Have you found yourself exactly where you need to be? The winding, unpredictable, and tumultuous journey has indeed led you to the exact space your heart desired. This was Ruth's experience.

If you know the story, you know that the owner of the field was a good man who went above and beyond to provide for Ruth. But what strikes me most is the way he saw her and the way that he acknowledged the very real sacrifices and loyalty that had defined her choices. Hear his words in Ruth 2:11-12:

But Boaz answered her, “All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. May the Lord reward you for your deeds, and may you have a full reward from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge!”

Boaz saw that Ruth had sacrificed greatly and had shown abundant kindness to her husband’s family. He saw that she had gone above and beyond in her efforts, more than what was expected and required of her. He saw this about her and he blessed her.

Boaz is called Ruth’s close relative who can act as her kinsman redeemer—someone who could give back what had been taken away. Boaz illustrates two characteristics of God as evidenced by two of the names of God: *El Roi*—the God who sees; and *Goel*—Redeemer.

God sees what no one else sees. There are many things in our lives, things we do for others, things that are done to us, that no one sees. But, God sees. God *redeems*. He specializes in giving back what has been taken, maybe in a different form or in a different way than we expect, but He delights in doing this! His redemption is often so abundant, so beneficent, so remarkably detailed and personal, that we are overwhelmed by it. The key is that we need to have our eyes open because we might miss God’s provision if we are not paying attention.

The story ends with Boaz marrying Ruth after she proposes to him. Abundance comes to Naomi through the family they create, including a son named Obed. Verse 16 tells us that Naomi was the one who cared for Obed. In fact, she had such a prominent place in his life that he was known as *her* son (Ruth 4:16). Her arms had been empty because her two beautiful boys had been ripped away. How her empty arms must have been filled with her grandson! A boy, like the beautiful boys she had lost, now lay in her arms. The women of the village said that Obed would renew and restore her life.

God is all about renewing and restoring our lives. Ruth’s journey led her to abundance in blessing. The joy of the destination did not cancel out the pain of the pathway. But, that pathway prepared her for a joy she could not have imagined.

Through the lives of two seemingly vulnerable and grief-laden women, we learn lessons of immense value. We learn the lessons of hope and of loyalty. We remember that the journey requires more than one, that the journey opens a door for authenticity, and that the journey leads to abundance. The result is strength and redemption.

Wherever you are on your journey today, will you choose to be *all* there? Will you choose not to rush ahead to the destination at the expense of learning the right-now lessons that this long walk has to teach you? Will you trust that even in the valleys and the shadows, abundance is on the other side? It might not look like what you think it will, but it will be an abundance of God’s good work on your behalf and for the sake of His kingdom purposes.

Even in the midst of seemingly random and painful experiences, He is the God who sees, Our Redeemer. He is plunging His hands into all of it and turning it toward our good. I hope you keep this image in front of you- the image of huge hands extending down from heaven and breaking into the mess, churning it all up and redirecting it into order, life, and abundance beyond measure.

May we give ourselves fully to Him as we move forward on our journey, just as Ruth and Naomi did on theirs.

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Visit me at www.sacredsnapshots.net and let's journey together!

Be on the lookout for my upcoming book,
**The Canary Chirps: Finding
Freedom From Self-Betrayal.**



**Review of *Brown Church: Five Centuries of Latina/o Social Justice, Theology, and Identity* by Robert Chao Romero
(Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020)**

RODNEY L. PETERSEN

This study of the “Brown Church” and “Brown Theology” is both comprehensive and definitive. Through clear expression and helpful segues, Romero takes us on a journey from an exploitive settlement of the Americas five hundred years ago to contemporary Chicana/o university research. Our journey through history comes with biographical sketches of persons representative of each thematic period.

This book is important to digest in today’s era of immigration politics. What French author Jean Raspail both fears and censures in his book, *The Camp of the Saints* (1973), the takeover of Western civilization by waves of immigrants (Rev 20:9), Romero finds central to the theme that frames his political and spiritual agenda (Matt 25:31-46), “*El Plan Espiritual de Galilee*,” the choice is ours to reject or embrace. Political culture in the United States will either be defined by fear of those “outside the gate” (using words of Orlando Costas) or by an inclusive welcome to all to the Beloved Community or Kingdom of God.

Brown Church sets out the wider vision. It begins with the stories of three young adults and their encounter with discrimination, poverty, and issues of immigration status in the U. S. as they struggle with a life of faith and justice. They make immediate the emotional damage and clinical depression resulting from the tendency to ignore community cultural wealth and the teachings of Critical Race Theory.

In addition to personal factors, many issues stand in the way of a clear-sighted look at the origins of the Brown Church. To name but a few: There is a lingering ecclesial hostility that antedates ecumenical engagement. Sixteenth century religious polemics continue to color contemporary church life. The interests of Anglo American theology and its emphasis on entitlement mark modern mainline and evangelical church communities. The Doctrine of Discovery (1493), the Papal Bull “*Inter Caetera*,” issued by Pope Alexander VI, played a central role in the Spanish conquest of the New World and defines much continuing perception.

However, contemporary Global Christianity offers the space and historical legitimacy to express suppressed expressions of church life and theology. Having begun with the testimony of three young adults, Romero situates the Brown Church within the radical “good news” of Jesus Christ. He reframes the message of Christianity so that it can be heard by Latina/o academics and activists. Romero follows the example of N. T. Wright, who argued that Jesus reframed terms such as “Son of God,” “Lord,” and “Saviour of the world.” By doing this, terms were taken from the political culture of the day to challenge the authority of Caesar. Today, the power of Caesar comes to us in the socioeconomic and political powers that oppress. The “*El Plan Espiritual de Galilee*” might also be called the *Antioch Agenda* insofar as it offers a vision of the oppressed sending out a mission to the privileged world.¹

Romero identifies the first “layer” of the Brown Church with colonial Dominican Friars Antonio de Montesinos and Bartolomé De las Casas, and with the vision of *La Virgen de Guadalupe*. Under their work, the principles of social justice teachings were put down, marking a spiritual heritage that was grounded in faith and extended to justice. The large role in popular piety was focused on La Virgen de Guadalupe. As Romero mentions,

¹ See: *The Antioch Agenda: The Restorative Church at the Margins. Celebrating the Life and Work of Orlando Costas*, eds. D. Jeyaraj, R. Pazmiño, and R. Petersen (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2007).

“Las Casas’s conversion narrative represents one of the first recorded examples of *concientización*, or awakening of critical consciousness, in the Americas. As discussed by Paulo Freire, *concientización* is the experience of becoming awakened to the reality of injustice in the world” (55).²

A second foundational “layer” came with the voices of colonial resistance. Romero examines the history of the Spanish caste system in Latin America and its role in shaping contemporary racial attitudes among United States Latinas/os. The *sistema de castas* came out of Spanish imperialism. This chapter examines the lives and ideas of three central leaders of the Brown Church, Garcilaso de la Vega el Inca, Guaman Pomma, and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz.

Having referenced the role of Spanish colonialism in defining social injustice in the Americas, Romero turns his attention to North America, to the missional work of Padre Antonio José Martínez, the impact of the U. S.-Mexico War and the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo (February 2, 1848). Mexicans and other U. S. Latinas/os began to be recognized as “*Brown*.” Mexicans were wanted for their labor but not for their color or *mestizo* culture. As a people, they were located somewhere between that of black and white, thus “Brown.” As a result of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, Latinas/os were reluctantly granted U.S. citizenship in exchange for millions of acres of land, the American Southwest. The seizure of lands and exile to political liminality of Latinas/os peoples was justified by the doctrine of Manifest Destiny. This granted Anglo Americans, seen as culturally and religiously superior, divine right to conquer Mexican lands. The theology implicit to Manifest Destiny gave birth to racial segregation and socioeconomic and political marginalization of Latinas/os in the twentieth century.

Romero next challenges the doctrine and exploitative nature of Manifest Destiny. This chapter explores the spiritual formation and praxis of Chicano leader César Chávez. Chávez’s leadership in the famous grape strike of 1965-1970 is a result of his spirituality. As Martin Luther King dealt with the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow and gave leadership to the African American community, César Chávez inspired a Mexican American movement working to end Manifest Destiny and the legitimacy it appeared to offer to Anglo American theology. Additionally, Chávez wrestled with the effects of the Great Mexican migration to the United States in 1910-1930 in the face of racial patterns of immigration, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Asiatic Barred Zone of 1917, and from 1924 the restrictions of persons from Southern and Eastern European countries. The need for Mexican labor in the U.S. was clear, but it came with a price: that price was segregation and exploitation. This orientation was often air brushed out of accounts of Brown Church activism. The story of César Chávez points up the necessity of an ecumenical context and growing reach to include wider voices, in this case that of women.

Romero highlights three aspects of César Chávez’s spirituality, that of the women in his life, in particular his grandmother (*abuelita* theology); second, the Roman Catholic social teachings of Pope Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum* (1891), and Pope Pius XI’s *Quadragesimo anno* (1931). Both Leo and Pius argued that employers are responsible for a living wage for employees. Third, Chávez learned much from Saul Alinsky-based community organizing methods. These led to the first successful agricultural union in United States history. His grounded piety can be seen, Romero argues, in the 25-day march from Delano (CA) to Sacramento called, “Penitence, Pilgrimage, and Revolution” (1966), concluding with a celebratory mass. Chávez’s belief in nonviolence is seen in the figures he emulates, Francis of Assisi, Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King, all of whom subscribed to a notion of community that transcended racial and denominational boundaries. Like King, Chávez’s vision was on the “beloved community.” However, with the failure of the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act (ALRA), Proposition 14 (1975), Chávez’s autocratic tendencies and susceptibility to the New Age religion of Synanon undermined his appeal and led to his demise.

² *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (NY: Continuum, 2005) 33, 67, 109.

With Chávez's waning influence, there grew a need for a theology for the social justice movement. This would come from the articulation of Liberation Theology and the *Misión Integral*. Romero writes that 1968 was a defining moment in the history of the "Brown Church." In that year, Latin American Roman Catholic bishops gathered in Medellín, Colombia, and "opted" to take the side of the poor who had been cast aside for five hundred years, the *desachados*. Since 1492, those of Spanish descent had controlled the land and stolen or controlled the natural resources. Liberation theologians of the Brown Church such as Gustavo Gutiérrez, Méguéz Bonino, and Leonardo and Clodovis Boff reminded others of the biblical preferential option for the poor. The bishops moved in a variety of directions from a zealotry heavily shaped by Marxism to a more passive conservatism in alliance with landed interests. Vision and inspiration were often drawn from predominantly lay Base Christian communities.

Romero turns next to Latin American Protestants who fostered a movement referred to as "*Misión Integral*," a radical evangelical movement of missionary endeavors of the *Comunidad Internacional de Estudiantes Evangélicos* (CIEE). This was led by persons closely associated with Carlos René Padilla, J. Samuel Escobar Aguirre, and Pedro Arana Quiroz Mortimer Arias, Orlando Enrique Costas, Emilio Antonio Nuñez, and Peter Savage and were some of the pastors and theologians who played central roles in the development of Latin American evangelical theology in the 1970s.

The CIEE was formally established at Cochabamba, Bolivia in 1958 and was the Latin American expression of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES). The IFES was formed in 1947 in Boston by the leaders of evangelical student movements from throughout the world. IFES is the representative body that emerged from InterVarsity Christian Fellowship-USA. René Padilla (Ecuador) and Samuel Escobar (Peru) created innovative campus ministry programs that helped produce the radical evangelical movement: important to distinguish between what the Bible actually taught and the *ropa anglosajon*, or Anglo-Saxon cultural clothing. This distinction proved immensely valuable in the wake of the Cuban Revolution of 1953 as many students gravitated to revolutionary protest.

As the need for a mature social justice theology emerged, the *Fraternidad Teológica Latinamericana* (FTL) was formed with three objectives: 1) "to offer reflection on the Gospel and its significance for the people and society in Latin America"; 2) "to become a platform for dialogue among thinkers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and God, and who are willing to think in the light of the Bible in order to build a bridge between the Gospel and Latin American culture"; and 3) "to contribute to the life and mission of the Church of Christ in Latin America, not pretending to speak in the name of the church nor assuming to be the theological voice of the evangelicals in Latin America." Ruth Padilla DeBorst writes:

The greatest theological contribution of FTL and the radical evangélicos has been the framework of *misión integral*. According to the theology of *misión integral*, biblical mission must include "both proclamation and demonstration of the good news of the Reign of God through Christian teaching, presence, and social engagement for transformation" (158). (citing Ruth Irene Padilla DeBorst, "Integral Mission Formation," 124.)

Romero writes that *misión integral* would make its way to the population of U. S. Latinas/os through Fuller Theological Seminary and other institutions – "to this day not implemented en masse in the pews of *evangélico* and Pentecostal churches *el otro lado*." Together with Roman Catholics, Protestant Latin Americans took the step of "decolonizing" their theology. Under the influence of Liberation Theology and the *Misión Integral*, it became more theocentric, bibliocentric, Christocentric, with pneumatological theological commitments. Now it objected to the Anglo cultural clothing in which it was all too frequently dressed. Nevertheless, in the new theological world of Liberation theology and *misión integral* of 1960s -1980s, there were many Catholics and

Protestants who felt uncomfortable taking a strong public stand against the status quo as shaped by centuries of colonial Christianity. They all too often preferred a social justice neutrality.

The biographical sketch of Archbishop Oscar Romero is the next historical figure to be cited in Robert Romero's progressive theological development. Initially conservative in theological orientation, but like Bartolomé De Las Casas five hundred years earlier, Archbishop Romero came to experience a radical conversion that would transform him to become the most famous martyr of the Liberation Theology movement. Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador represents Liberation Theology in practice. Following his conversion to Liberation Theology, he was assassinated on March 24, 1980. On October 14, 2018, he was canonized as a saint in the Roman Catholic Church. The model of his life has proven influential in recent social justice theologies.

Since the 1980s, Latina/o theology and interdisciplinary research on the Brown Church have developed in three distinct stages, called by theologian Oscar Garcia-Johnson: founders, builders, and shapers. The Methodist historical theologian Justo González gave his leadership, but so also Roman Catholic pastor and theologian Virgilio Elizondo, the American Baptist missiologist Orlando Costas, and others such as Ruth Padilla-DeBorst, Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, and Eldin Villafañe, all illustrating the ecumenical nature of the movement.

A central question for Latina/o theology, according to Romero, is how to read the Bible. Liberation Theology puts forward the importance of *teología en conjunto*, or collaborative communal theology. Its aim is not individualistic acclaim, but a communal endeavor produced from mutual dialogue of pastors, theologians, and lay folk. It is ecumenical, Protestant and Catholic, and trans denominational – evangelical, mainline, and Pentecostal. While its social location is important, the Bible is valued as God's inspired Word but informed by cultural context. For Justo Gonzalez, it is important to read the Bible with "Hispanic eyes"; Miguel De La Torre emphasizes reading from the view of the oppressed; Gustavo Gutierrez writes of a militant reading of Scripture. Galilee becomes a symbol of multiple rejections, a cultural backwater, or "the hood." Orlando Costas writes that God chose the disenfranchised and stands "Outside the Gate" (Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate*, 1982).

Romero's work helpfully includes a focus on the rise and development of *Mujerista* (Womanist) Theology. One might say that, in its current manifestation, the work of women has come in from "outside the gate" in the contribution of Ada María Isasi-Díaz with her emphasis on the lived experience of Latinas in work, family, and society, and other such theologians. The Pentecostal Latina/o Theology has been welcomed in the work of "*Latina evangélicas*" Loida I. Martell-Otero, Zaida Maldonado-Pérez, and Elizabeth Conde-Frazier who have all built on and contextualized *lo cotidiano*, the daily lived experience. This comes with three emphases: the importance of 1) the Holy Spirit which legitimizes women's ministries, 2) on soteriology, and 3) Scripture. The theology of Pentecost adds a Holy Spirit emphasis on to *Mujerista* theology. Furthermore, Lóez Rodríguez and Daniel Chiquete find that speaking in tongues extends the cultural and communal circle and adds a liberative Pentecostal Latina/o Theology of social justice. This has been fundamentally shaped by Eldin Villafañe in his path breaking book, *El Espíritu Liberador: Hacia una Ética Social Pentecostal Hispanoamericana (The Liberating Spirit: Toward an Hispanic American Pentecostal Social Ethic)* (1993).

Villafañe argues that there are five signs or themes to be discerned for the Latina/o Pentecostal church to carry on its communal mission of unique kingdom calling. As summarized by Romero: 1) *Mestizaje* (culture mixture); 2) *La Morenita (La Virgen de Guadalupe)*; 3) *Migración* (migration); 4) *Menesterosos* (poor and oppressed); and 5) *Modelos sociales* (Hispanic Church as a community model).

Perhaps the most important point made by Romero comes from the attention given to the fusion of Villafañe's vision of the Spirit as Liberator and Costas' Christological framework of

Christ Outside the Gate. Oscar García-Johnson has a pneumatological vision of “the Holy Spirit as decolonizing force” (196). García-Johnson writes that the Spirit of God was moving outside the “gate” of institutional Western Christianity in and before the European conquest. This dignifies the indigenous and African peoples and cultures of the Americas and rebukes the colonial notions of natives and Africans as requiring the civilizing hands of Christian Europeans. In terms of contemporary social criticism, there is no one “outside the gate.”

García-Johnson writes that the colonial wound is perpetrated by a “coloniality of belief” comprising three main misconceptions, or “pillars” of misunderstanding, which sustain and multiply racial injustice in Latin America, especially among indigenous peoples. Romero summarizes (197-98):

1. “*Latin American suffering is a historical reality determined by God as illustrated by the success of the European conquest.*” García-Johnson asserts that this deeply rooted spiritual belief is used to justify the brutal genocide of indigenous peoples and feeds an overriding sense of fatalism in Latin America. It also breeds reluctance to challenge evil and oppression.
2. “*Christ is the representation of tragedy (which is inscribed in our brown bodies and histories) and invites us to contemplate suffering (and almost worship it) in daily life.*” García-Johnson argues that this faulty Christology further justifies the social oppression of indigenous peoples as it casts Jesus as the role model of a conquered Amerindian who lives his life in the reticence of abject poverty.
3. “*God blesses the foreigner-in-power and tolerates the use of imperial violence to accomplish his purposes in our lands and with our people.*” García-Johnson writes that this deeply entrenched belief has made Latin Americans passive in the face of five hundred years of colonial oppression at the hands of Spaniards, Portuguese, French, British, and various other colonial oppressors.

Martin Luther King’s final book, *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community* (1967), draws us to the two social communities envisioned through this review of Romero’s work, *The Camp of the Saints* or the *Beloved Community*. Latina/o practical theology draws us to theology in service to humanity (Alexia Salvatierra), to community development (Noel Castellanos), and to liberty for those in captivity (Raymond Rivera). The choice is ours. It is a choice made with each ballot box and each election.

Romero closes his study of the Brown Church by delineating the tenets of a “Brown Christian” identity. His superb work provides a road map for understanding the emergence of Liberation Theology and *misión integral*. *Brown Church* not only provides the reader with a general understanding of Latina/o church life in the Americas but can serve to be a textbook for seminarians and guide to the kind of community in which we will hopefully choose to live.

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**Review of *Buried Talents: Overcoming Gendered Socialization to Answer God's Call* by Susan Harris Howell
(Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2022)**

DONNA F.G. HAILSON

“Why do you act like such an airhead when you have such a brilliant mind?” This was a question put to me by a friend and fellow student from an International Law class at the university I attended in the 1970s. I remember his words so distinctly because, via his simple yet piercing quizzing, I was sobered, shaken, and launched into a period of self-examination.

Why? Why was I so focused on the inconsequential? Why was I so completely centered on being attractive, on being entertaining, on being the life of the party? Why did I hide and shove aside my God-given intellect? Why did I underuse my God-given abilities?

In her book, *Buried Talents*, Susan Harris Howell (EdD, University of Louisville), provided answers to my questions as she revealed the subtle forms of socialization that had shaped and pushed and pulled me into gendered roles and identities. As promised by one reviewer, the book provided a means of “tracing the roots” of my own conditioning.

Howell, a professor of psychology at Campbellsville University, teaches on gender studies and integrating faith and psychology. She frequently writes and speaks for Christians for Biblical Equality. Her book is directed especially to women in the United States who may be wrestling with calls to ministry, but the volume may provide illumination for all who wish to understand how women and men are fitted into gendered roles by the culture within which they reside.

Howell begins by exploring how—from our childhood through adulthood—parents, teachers, churches, the English language, and media socialize us in gender-specific ways. The toys selected for us, the chores to which we’re assigned, the classes toward which we’re directed, the roles denied to us or opened for us, the androcentricity of the language we speak, the portrayal of one movie character as helpless and another as brave and heroic, Howell says, channels children toward some pursuits and away from others.

My own experience elucidates these points. I received mixed signals from my parents in childhood as my mother provided me with dolls and pushed me to focus on my physical appearance while my father rewarded “good visits” to the dentist with models of planes and ships for me to build. I was called a “tomboy” because I played baseball, built forts, dug tunnels, climbed trees, and did my best to outdo the neighborhood boys. But, by the time I reached my adolescence, something shifted, as it did for many girls of my generation. As Howell notes, teen magazines focused on clearing up one’s skin, wearing the latest fashions, and charming the opposite sex. The movies portrayed females as damsels in distress who needed a rescue; males did the rescuing. I saw my social self-image improve when I curtailed my athletic and academic achievements. These messages of conformity to expectations came into me as if by osmosis; I responded by leaving gymnastics to become a cheerleader. And my classes?

I vividly recall a math teacher telling me again and again he wished he knew how to “light a fire under me.” A chemistry teacher lamented at end of term that she thought I would have been her best student. I wasn’t; I was too busy with “more important matters.”

Nearly twenty years of conditioning, Howell suggests, takes us into adulthood with gendered expectations in leadership roles. Men lead. Women support. Women sacrifice so men can succeed.

I should note, at this juncture, that this review is turning out to be the most personal I’ve ever written, and that fact speaks to the power of Howell’s book to elicit memories, to aid us in

understanding our histories, to enable us to commiserate with ourselves, and to examine critically the who, what, where, when, why, and how of our todays. Readers may find Howell's words of help in putting a stop to the blaming of those who nurtured us, as best they could, given their own conditioning. Howell's words may also inspire us to "pay it forward" by helping others along the path of self-discovery.

Howell's focus, on how some women may hold back on responding to God's call to leadership in the church, reminded me of my own experience. I didn't come to faith in Christ until I was nearing my thirtieth birthday, and I didn't "come into my own" until I was in my thirties and sensing a call to the Lord's service. When I entered seminary, I had no clue as to what sort of work God would call me; I believed—at the time—that I was a tabula rasa, but I realize now, I was reshaped in seminary. The training, for the Master of Divinity degree at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, prepared me for the roles I would fill as pastor, professor, doctoral program director, community leader, renewal agent, reformer, author, and conference speaker.

In *Buried Talents*, Howell visits the complementarian and egalitarian positions on marriage, career, and women in ministry and closes the book with three chapters of advice on how to make changes within ourselves and within our spheres of influence. In summary, her suggestions include building more accurate self-perceptions so an individual may feel released to answer God's call; harnessing thoughts to change behavior; engaging in more positive self-talk; restructuring one's mindset; building a support system; and connecting with likeminded others. Finally, she calls her readers to "pay it forward" in effecting change at the micro and macro levels. A discussion guide and resource list for women's networking are included.

I closed the book wondering how it might be read by the youngest of our generations in the United States who, in many ways, are riding a pendulum swing, a sorting out of a new paradigm.

Howell admits in the initial pages of the book that she can't cover every aspect of a topic as broad as gender, noting especially her decision not to focus on the field that is intersectionality—the study of how gender, race, and class intersect to create distinctive forms of discrimination.

In conclusion, I agree with Mimi Haddad, who provided the Foreword, that *Buried Talents: Overcoming Gendered Socializations to Answer God's Call* does unmask "gendered spheres that sideline women's gifts and callings." The work is, as Haddad asserts, "a compelling call to advance human flourishing." I recommend the book and believe *Buried Talents* would serve as a useful text in pastoral leadership and psychology courses.

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Review of *An Artistic Tribute to Harriet Tubman*, edited by Julia C. Davis and Jeanne C. DeFazio (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2021)

LINDA LOCKHART

William David Spencer summarized the scope of this book: “This heartfelt tribute to the great Harriet Tubman...is a timely reminder that to God every human is precious” (back cover endorsement). The editors’ premise is that Harriet Tubman’s voice must be heard in the midst of the challenge of this time: “Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.”¹ In her own words, Julia Davis, who agreed to “contribute to this dialogue to stand for racial equity,” recognizes that “art-related activities are an effective strategy for social inclusion” (3). She begins this book with a reflection on her visit to the exhibit, “The Yoke of Human Bondage: Christianity and African Slavery in the United States” at Harvard Divinity School’s Andover-Harvard Theological Library. She states that this exhibit “gave a fifth dimension to the racist reality of the nineteenth-century African American slave” and reinforced in her heart and mind that “structural racism cannot be ignored” (2). Davis critiques the original artwork of Tony Gangitano and Olga Soler (4-10) to explain that this brief book (which can be used as an art lesson in a class powerpoint or in a zoom distance learning class for multiracial students) provides: “The opportunity to explore art together as a very effective social inclusion strategy....Students who are allowed to view art as a group have the opportunity to appreciate each other and art –that’s social inclusion at its best.”²

As an African American educator and chaplain, Julia Davis’ foreword explains Harriet Tubman’s influence on her faith (ix-xi). Tony Gangitano and Olga Soler’s artwork in *The Artistic Tribute to Harriet Tubman* (1-12) identifies Tubman as a model emancipator of African American slaves who empowered the black icons of contemporary society. Wilma Mathis’s afterword explains why Harriet Tubman inspires millennial society as an advocate for equality (17).

Mathis’s Afterword ends the book with a prophetic word from Harriet Tubman: “I did not take up the work for my own benefit, but for those of my race who need help. The work is now well started and I know God will raise up others to take care of the future” (16). Julia C. Davis and Wilma Faye Mathis are two African American women who have taken up where Harriet Tubman left off, as editor Jeanne DeFazio observes, “Julia and Wilma share with Harriet Tubman a relationship of intimacy with God and Jesus’ wisdom, which empowers both of them to accomplish the tasks set before them” (xi).

I was encouraged to reviewing Julia Davis’s book after having the opportunity to minister with her at The Joyful Christian Church located at Harvard University in 2020. As a former supervisor of Anchorage Home for Boys in Beverly, MA, and in my extensive work with multiracial at risk youth in other programs, I value art activities that build character and positive identity in youth. As a Christian mother and grandmother of multiracial children, I believe that Harriet Tubman’s life role models the miracle-working power of Jesus available to all Christians. When mentoring African American youth in a clinical setting or in a church outreach or at home, I find the message of Harriet Tubman’s legacy is that of a life built on a solid faith foundation. Harriet’s intimacy with Jesus is a great role model for us all. The book’s strength lies in its ability to speak to the challenges of racial tension of our time with art as a strategy for racial reconciliation. I found no weakness in this book and nothing to disagree with. It is scripturally sound and a great class text for inner city seminarians who can use it creatively, teaching Sunday school lessons using Harriet Tubman’s example as a testimony of faith in Jesus.

1 Siobhan Kukolic, “Every Great Dream Begins with a Dreamer,” HuffPost, posted May 14, 2017. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/every-great-dream-begins_b_9955234.

2 Jeanne DeFazio, et al., *Keeping the Dream Alive: A Reflection on the Art of Harriett Lorence Nesbitt* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2019), xii.

Linda Lockhart, a contributing author to *The Commission* and *Finding a Better Way*, is a mixed-race mother of Cape Verdean descent and a proactive mother, grandmother, and great grandmother of multiracial children, as well as a former supervisor at Anchorage Boys Home in Beverly, MA. She has experience teaching art activities for therapeutic benefit to multiracial at-risk youth in various programs.

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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."

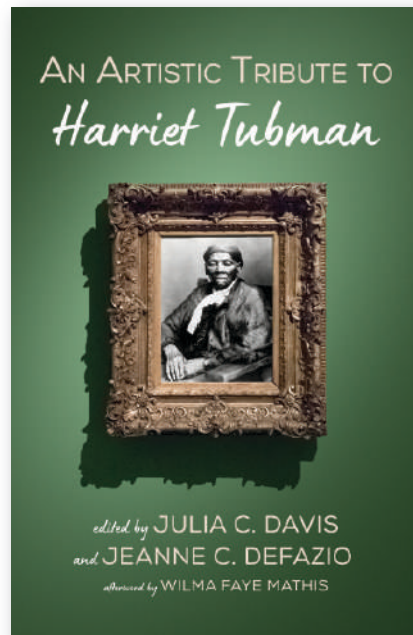
—AIDA BESANCON SPENCER, co-editor of *Christian Egalitarian Leadership*

"*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 POUILLARD, Senior Pastor, Fort Washington Baptist Church, Fort Washington, Maryland



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

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Review of *God Moments in My Publishing Life: The Making of a Writer and Publisher* by Leslie H. Stobbe (Winter Springs, FL: E.A. Books, 2021) and Review of *How God Works: God Moments that Transform: A Study Guide* (Plymouth, MA: Elk Lake, 2022)

WILLIAM DAVID SPENCER

Leslie Stobbe has been and continues to be a significant force in evangelical Christian publishing. He forges into his seventh decade of active involvement with this autobiography, reminiscing on his remarkably disciplined and productive life.

A Canadian by birth with descent from Germany and the Ukraine, he was born “the year after the 1929 stock market crash.” He notes, as a child of the Great Depression, “I was enlisted as a three-year-old to help Dad prepare soil for a vegetable crop when he put me on a horse pulling a plow. I remember falling from it – and being placed right back on it” (1). By the age of six, he reports, “I rode a horse with Dad guiding a scoop that helped dig a basement” for a “German-speaking Mennonite Brethren Church” (5). With these vivid pictures, the first chapter opens. Throughout the book, the writing is spare, action-oriented, and interesting. As swiftly as a well-written novel, the narrative pulls readers in, even as the topics vary from personal memories to writing advice. That he can write so fluidly in English is especially noteworthy since, as a child, German “was still the everyday language in our home” so that he found himself “entering first grade not knowing any English” (4).

These early experiences set the tone of discipline that guides the rest of his life and resounds throughout this book. He also gathers from his earliest memories what he calls, “God Moments,” “breakthroughs in life experiences that only God could have orchestrated.” Under the influence of Jesus and Charles Spurgeon’s use of illustrations to communicate, the author “started collecting stories to enrich and enhance the appeal of my biblical messages” (ix). That guidance permeates his lifetime of writing and it can be seen in this culminating autobiography.

Thus, chapter 1 begins with his earliest memories of growing up in a family of Christian faith. Chapter 2 traces his “spiritual development as a teen” (9). Chapter 3 finds him in college, trying out summer work as a miner and a “despatcher with the B.C. [British Columbia] Forest Service” (18). It also details the unexpected event that ushers him into writing for publication. That transition orients the rest of his life. Chapter 4 tells us how, as a student at Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, he becomes editor of the *Mennonite Observer*. This background then prepares him to seek a position at Moody Press. In the meantime, his life is filled with transitions: marriage to the talented classical singer Rita, work as a teacher, connections to the Christian Booksellers Association, and an eventual job at the Moody Bible Institute bookstore. Chapters 5 and 6 take us into his experience editing, writing, and helping out in various tasks in journalism with magazines and journals. Interesting in these chapters is the variety of publishing entry opportunities he found in each of these spheres. Yet, instead of seeing book authoring as an inevitable outcome of all these jobs, Chapter 7 details his “U-Turn into Books,” beginning with using all his editorial experience “to head up the editorial department of Moody Press” (41). This specific chapter features his encounter with John Perkins, explaining how journalistic interviews gave him access to a wide variety of active Christian trend-setters.

An article I once read suggested that the two primary avenues into book writing tend to be editing or teaching. Chapter 8 adds another entry to that list: book selling. As selling floor supervisor, the young Les learned the power of a book that sells, particularly a Bible like Kenneth Taylor’s *The Living Bible*. As then Director of Moody Press, Dr. Kenneth Taylor had learned what

customers prefer and tailored his rendition of the Bible to meet those needs and garner large sales. Chapter 9 further chronicles writers with whom our author worked, including the well-published pastor Erwin Lutzer. Chapter 10 explains the evangelistic outreach opportunities books provide, while Chapter 11 recounts Les Stobbe's strategic marketing invasion of book clubs. Along this trajectory, Chapters 12 through 14 describe his expansion as an editorial director to "ramp up the acquisition of books" (81) for Here's Life Publishers, a money-earning subsidiary of Campus Crusade for Christ (today's CRU) through its outreach initiatives like *Athletes in Action Magazine* and Josh McDowell's apologetic bestsellers, such as *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*. Chapter 15 is a very interesting aside, telling us that age does not matter in serving God through writing, as he recounts the story of a 67 year old discovery of his who proved with her best-selling book based upon her own God-given moments that God is at work in the lives of active Christians of all ages. Chapters 16-19 take us to the next stage: a series of transitions that lead him to the Evangelistic Association of New England/Vision New England, an application of the Prayer of Jabez to curriculum writing for the Christian Writers Guild (owned by Jerry Jenkins), and teaching as journalist in residence at Gordon College (Wenham, MA), all converging in the trajectory he entered, working as a tiny child with his dad producing all sorts of fruits, and now in later years harvesting yield on all sorts of trees of endeavor. Out of all these experiences, Chapter 20 underscores, came a literary agency with our author representing numerous other authors. With all of the connections he had developed in all the endeavors he had done, informed by all the knowledge his experiences had taught him (only a few of which are mentioned in my synopses of these chapters), he moved immediately into the forefront of representation as an effective agent.

With Chapter 21, the book makes its own transition. Entitled "Yes, Publishers Do Blow It," this chapter offers a series of stumbles by publishers unwittingly publishing fraudulent accounts, rejecting potential best-sellers that other publishers snapped up and took to the heights of success, misreading trends, initiating strategies that backfire, and similar embarrassing, instructive, and thoroughly entertaining vignettes from which readers as well as publishing administrators will benefit in learning what to avoid. Such blunders, appearing to be the antitheses of "God Moments," could we, perhaps, dub "human pratfall seconds?" Very interesting in this and the chapters that follow is how much the author references his past experiences and how, as he entitles Chapter 22, so much of his forward movement in "God Moments" is guided by what he learned from his past associations and experiences, built as they are on his "Family Faith Heritage" (147).

Chapter 23 records his "Reflections at Age 90," a mini-summary of his life so far. These musings lead to the final six chapters, which contain the advice he gives to writers, as a former agent, editor, writer. For those wishing to author successful magazine and book projects, these successive chapters are well worth the price of this book. Chapter 24 highlights the importance of trends (called "book movements") in Christian publishing. Starting with D.L. Moody and his affordable Colportage Library (interesting and accessible enough that the present author of this review read various volumes as a child), Les Stobbe points out the swift success of accessible Bible translations, the astronomic rise of fiction by women like Janet Oke, the popularity of pop-pastors and pop-prophecy from *The Late Great Planet Earth* to *Left Behind*, proving that a readable Bible, a scintillating romance, an inspiring bit of encouragement, and a text-of-terror-apocalyptic-doomsday-horror tale are always in vogue with Christian readers (especially when very loosely "based" on a true story).

For Chapter 25, "Overcoming Challenges Writers Face," he draws again from his own varied and successful background. In his 90s, the writing coach has not left his hoe to rust by the riverside, but is still hard at work – with his stress on the word: work. Like being put by his dad back on the horse off which he fell, he counsels would-be writers: "Sometimes one challenge is God's preparation for an even more difficult challenge" (175). (I myself always tell prospective writers, "You should only write if God made you someone who cannot not-write. Otherwise, get out of the

corner and go out in the sunshine, because, as a writer, you're trading off a lot of other worthwhile opportunities to serve God for laborious work that may never be published.") To all the obstacles that face writers: like negotiating writer's block and the inability to start, responding with grace to an exasperated editor's criticism, handling repeated rejection of one's efforts, minimizing family sacrifices, and all the rest, author Stobbe's solution is this rule: "When I sat down at my keyboard and faced a blank screen I was faced with a huge challenge. So every day for three months I bowed my head before the computer screen and asked the Holy Spirit to give me the outline and the points I needed" (176). That's advice to live by. We should never foray out without girding ourselves in fervent prayer to the Inspirer of Scripture to help out in whatever we need to compose.

Chapter 26 warns, "If we do not use symbol and metaphor to communicate God's message to today's generation, we are actually subverting the way in which the Holy Spirit operates in our reader's heart and mind" (184). This is a message I particularly appreciate in this time when using illustrations in "Communicating Heavenly Ideas in Earthly Terms" (as Chapter 26 is entitled, 179) is regularly savaged by such entertaining diatribes as "St. Patrick's Bad Analogies," which I challenge in my book *Three in One: Analogies for the Trinity* and detail in my article on this topic in the Spring, 2023 issue of *Africanus Journal*. Chapter 27 then emphasizes basic rules of Christian writing (but I think this advice is wise for any writing as well) under the title: "Integrating Scripture and Life Experience in Writing" (197). This chapter includes many worthwhile insights and sound advice such as "dialoging with readers mentally and emotionally involves them" (200).

Next, Chapter 28 should strike a chord with readers of *Africanus Journal*, since "Earning the Right to be Published" might sound familiar, as a previous version of this chapter on what we can learn from the writing of Luke appeared in two previous issues of *Africanus Journal* (vol. 5, no. 1 April 2013 and the Tenth Anniversary Issue, vol 10, no. 2, Nov. 2018).

Now, by way of explanation, I went into detail on summarizing what this book contains because I do not want potential readers to miss the fact that this is far more than an autobiography. This engaging book is most similar to a long, relaxed conversation with a major player who has invested more than 65 productive years in Christian publishing and book marketing. For anyone who feels the urge to write, this insider's knowledge of the field and how to succeed in it is an indispensable God-send. As the author spins out these memoirs, his own gift for mellifluous written expression turns each episode into an adventure. His willingness to take risks and forge ahead with a multitude of opportunities, many at the same time, is propelled by sincere faith, hard work, and an awareness of those "God Moments," so easily missed, when God is answering prayers and moving us forward. And all of this is recorded as an autobiographical crash-course from a seasoned professional on how to write something worthwhile for publication, or, as Chapter 29 states it: "Organizing Your Book for Life-Changing Impact." The end-all goal of writing for Leslie Stobbe is "to achieve life change, whether in your family, in your church, in your community, in society at large" (229).

And, if this were not enough, zeroing in on "How God Works: God Moments that Transform," author Stobbe follows his 244 page compendium of personal experiences and sage advice we've just summarized with a separate 43 page study guide (including pages for reader's notes at the end) that he developed at the request of the adult Sunday school of Tryon Presbyterian Church, North Carolina, where he attends with his wife, Rita, who, with his daughter, Carol, also contributed insights.

The study guide is set up in six brief meditations. The print is large, which will be especially helpful to senior parishioners. Each chapter focuses on a different aspect of God's intervention. Chapter 1 focuses on "how God works out his saving grace" (as he notes in the introduction, ix) in the life of Jacob and compares that with the testimony of famed Western star Dale Evans Rogers as well as the experience of Nicodemus meeting Jesus. Chapter 2 reflects on "God's Method in God

Moments” (7), contrasting the author’s own experience with Abraham’s and the Apostle Paul’s. Chapter 3 moves to “Our Role in God Moments,” looking at God’s “direct intervention” (13) with Paul, Philip (Acts 8:26-35), and, again, the author’s own experience. “Environment’s Role in God Moments” (19) is Chapter 4’s examination of examples in the lives of Esther, Peter, and Paul. Next is our faith’s role in Chapter 5, which goes back to Abraham, interpreted as well by the author’s own example. Finally, Chapter 6, “Celebrating God Moments,” encourages churches to “celebrate the achievements of their members, of their musicians, of their teens, and even of high school and college athletic overachievers” (29), applying Paul’s advice in 1 Corinthians 12:26b to rejoice with those being honored and reprising the “faith achievements of Abraham and Jacob,” who “celebrated their God Moments by building altars and worshipping God” (30). This chapter asks: “As Christians, is it considered a prideful thing to celebrate occasions that reveal God at work in our life? Or is it a woeful failure to express thanks with a celebration?” (32). The inference is that celebrating such activities of God’s empowerment in our lives opens all of our eyes to God at work in our world. Ignoring them closes our eyes and draws us away from our consciousness of the living God at work in our world and that omission will ultimately draw us away from closeness to God (see James 4:8).

At the outset of the guide, the author provides a “Tip”: “For busy people, there may be too many biblical characters in each chapter. Tackle only one or two characters in each chapter” (ix). He also provides a suggestion that group studies can find questions “embedded in the character studies” and provides “a lined section for taking notes.” Hopefully, our current biblical illiteracy of church members has not fallen so far that, with big print chapters ranging from four to six pages with on average three biblical events per chapter, those using this guide will be intimidated. This is a very simple, accessible set of Bible studies, looking at each aspect of God at work in our lives and providing a doorway into coping with all the information in Leslie Stobbe’s larger book which this guide seeks to highlight.

William David Spencer is the Distinguished Adjunct Professor of Theology and the Arts in Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary’s Boston Campus for Urban Ministerial Education. He is co-editor of *Africanus Journal* and co-editor of The House of Prisca and Aquila Series of Wipf and Stock Publishers. He has over 300 publications in print, including 18 books. His newest book is *Three in One: Analogies for the Trinity* from Kregel Academic.



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THREE IN ONE WILLIAM DAVID SPENCER

Analogies for the Trinity

Do our images of “one God in three persons” reflect God well?

Throughout history, Christians have pictured the relationships between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit through analogies. Such illustrations—some from the West but also from Latin America, Asia, Africa, and more—come freighted with theological ramifications that the church has rejected (heresies) or embraced (doctrines). In *Three in One*, William David Spencer shares a lifetime of insights from teaching within the global church, bringing fresh images and analogies of the Trinity to deepen our theological vocabulary.

Drawing from his extensive teaching in geographically and culturally diverse contexts and his artist's passion for evocative words and visuals, Spencer offers readers a rich, many-faceted, and practical exploration of the Trinity. Alongside historical and contemporary theology and biblical studies, he considers the strengths and shortcomings of various analogies used to explain the Trinity, such as these:

- Light
- Water
- The Celtic knot
- The totem pole
- Musical harmonies
- The human body
- The family

Readers of *Three in One: Analogies for the Trinity* will gain a personal understanding of the Trinity as well as tools for teaching about the Trinity in adult and children's ministry contexts.

William David Spencer (ThD, Boston University School of Theology) is distinguished adjunct professor of theology and the arts at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary's Boston campus (Center for Urban Ministerial Education). He has authored, coauthored, or coedited eighteen books, including *The Global God: Multicultural Evangelical Views of God* and *Global Voices on Biblical Equality: Women and Men Serving Together in the Church*, as well as hundreds of publications in journals and periodicals. He has served in urban ministry for fifty-five years.

**Review of *Friend of Science, Friend of Faith:
Listening to God in His Works and Word* by Gregg Davidson
(Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academics, 2019)**

TIFFANY L. KERSHNER

In these times of division, one often feels pressured to decide between modern science or Christianity when debating the origins of the earth and all of God's creation. In fact, with lines drawn in the sand in many cases, we often silo ourselves in one camp or the other. Moreover, such debates pit Christian students against their peers and professors, even within an educational setting. Therefore, reading a book in which science and Christianity are not in conflict but instead in harmony is refreshing.

In this revised volume, Dr. Gregg Davidson, Chair and Professor of Geology and Geological Engineering at the University of Mississippi, brings to the table an opportunity to further our understanding by asking new questions and probing new scientific findings to reflect a "reconciliation" between Christian faith and science (11). As stated in the Preface, this present volume is not just a revision of an earlier version by Davidson, titled *When Faith and Science Collide*. Instead, with this revision, Davidson hopes to draw more attention to a resolution between science and the Christian faith rather than emphasizing the division between the two. At the same time, this revised book presents new material from scholarship in science and religion, as Davidson includes "a maturation of my own understanding of the issues and conflicting voices at the intersection of science and the Bible" (11). Although this book covers a wide range of debates within the intersection of science and religion, it is not a survey or introductory textbook. Instead, Davidson addresses some hot-button issues of interest to readers from all backgrounds, such as common ancestry between humans and all living organisms. The result is a book that will resonate with those interested in reconciling the differences between Christianity and science.

The book is organized into five parts that emphasize a particular theme, each containing one or more chapters for a total of fourteen chapters. The chapters are arranged intentionally to address a specific scientific debate that often challenges interpretations of scriptural evidence and vice versa. The five parts address topics such as Conflicts New and Old (Part 1), The Meaning of Scripture (Part 2), Conflict? (Part 3), The Credibility of Modern Science (Part 4), and War of Words (Part 5). Following the concluding chapter, the reader will be delighted to find a comprehensive bibliography plus two valuable indices, one covering names (nonbiblical) of scholars who are part of the debates addressed in the book and the second containing a detailed subject index. In addition to the scripturally sound content, one of the significant strengths of this volume is, in fact, its informative footnotes as well as its numerous tables and scientific illustrations found throughout.

Chapters 1 and 2 introduce readers to the author's objectives (Ch. 1) and the critical questions (Ch. 2), which frame the discussions in Chapters 3-14. Davidson begins his scientific and biblical treatise in Chapter 1 with a student anecdote that, sadly, many of us are familiar with, sometimes leading to young people losing their faith. How do you reconcile a strong foundation of biblical interpretation and understanding with scientific evidence? How do you handle perceived inconsistencies? Davidson notes at the end of Chapter 1 that his book serves two objectives. First and quite significant, "to develop a general approach for addressing apparent conflicts whenever they may arise, in a way that honors Scripture and honestly engages science" (17). Moreover, Davidson's second objective in writing this book is to apply this approach to "the current discord on origins to see what may be learned" (18). In Chapter 2, starting with Galileo, Davidson provides a historical and contemporary context for the current debate. He then centers the discussion on three probing questions, which he will address in each chapter but more fully answer at the end of

the book. These questions are: (1) Does the infallibility of Scripture rest on a literal interpretation of the verses in question? (2) Does science conflict with the intended message of Scripture? (3) Is science credible? (23) In Davidson's view, the Holy Spirit and a human being's ability to reason allow us to use science and Scripture to answer these questions.

Davidson uses the three chapters in Part 2 to address the infallibility of the Bible as it pertains to one's interpretation of the creation story. Here, he establishes a framework for reading and understanding the Bible by discussing two theological positions on the doctrine of inerrancy: comprehensive inerrancy¹ and divine accommodation.² In Chapter 3, Davidson provides examples of how nature is portrayed in the Bible before moving on to what we can learn by comparing the New and Old Testaments (Ch. 4). Finally, Part 2 concludes with Davidson taking a deep dive into the Book of Genesis, bringing forth his scientific expertise and a detailed examination of various scriptural passages (Ch. 5).

Parts 3 and 4 get to the heart of the debate by tackling Davidson's second question, which also happens to be the title of Chapter 6: Does modern science conflict with Scripture? Here, Davidson builds his case first by dividing the chapter into six sections, that is, topics, including the origin of the universe, the origin of life, the origin of man, death and the fall, the extent of Noah's flood, and ending with genealogies and age. The strength of this chapter lies in its organization. Davidson crafts his argument for each topic by first looking at the biblical message, then, providing a view from scientific evidence, followed by a synthesis, which examines where there may be harmony or conflict between the Bible and science. This approach allows readers to compare and contrast claims from both sides easily. In addition, Davidson provides a series of tables that offer summaries of biblical and scientific perspectives, which the reader will find helpful for future reference. In sum, Davidson argues in Chapter 6 that biblical accounts need not conflict with science.

Part 3 segues nicely into Part 4, where Davidson's expertise in geology shines. In this series of four chapters, Davidson examines the credibility of scientific accounts of the creation of the earth and lifeforms, bringing forth evidence from the fossil record. Most importantly, Davidson spends much time in Chapter 9 addressing the past gap in the fossil record of transitional life features. These gaps, he claims, while accurate, at one point in time, show that "fossil discoveries are now overflowing with transitional forms" (155). Again, the reader is aided in the discussion with diagrams, illustrations, and timelines.

Part 5, comprised of four chapters, confronts alternative perspectives such as Creation Science (Ch. 11), Young Earth Creationism (Ch. 12), and Intelligent Design (Ch. 13). In these chapters, Davidson warns the reader to be vigilant against false dichotomies, misconceptions, half-truths, and other ways these perspectives have distorted or elided scientific evidence. Some readers may see the criticisms in these chapters as rather harsh. However, by presenting these perspectives, he is doing what he proposed to do at the beginning of the book, "address apparent conflicts whenever they may arise, in a way that honors Scripture and honestly engages science" (17). Rather than outwardly rejecting these perspectives, Davidson is inviting us to debate the evidence they provide. As he states so succinctly at the end of Chapter 13, "Truth never needs to fear the open discussion of ideas" (267).

Keeping in mind the importance of critical but non-adversarial dialogue, we turn to the remaining chapter (Ch. 14) and the dilemma faced by the student introduced in the first chapter, Riley, and her crisis of faith. Davidson reminds us that nothing is gained through pitting science and

1 Comprehensive inerrancy, according to Davidson, describes an all-encompassing view of inerrancy of the Bible's teachings. In other words, as Davidson states, "...if the Bible is truly inspired by God and without error, then it must be true for every subject upon which it touches" (33).

2 Divine accommodation, also known as just accommodation, as described by Davidson and citing John Calvin, argues that our "slight capacity" for understanding necessitates that God condescends to our abilities and comprehension" (34). In other words, God's revelation to humanity through the Scriptures must be adjusted according to the nature of human understanding.

faith against each other. One can be both an evangelist and a scientist. Likewise, you can be a friend of science and a friend of faith. In other words, the title of the book rings true, *Friend of Science, Friend of Faith*.

This book thoroughly explains God's creation through a scriptural and scientific lens. The book's strengths include the multiple citations of Scripture and scholarship, the seamless transition from one chapter to the next, and the addition of tables and figures. For these reasons, I highly recommend that faculty assign this book in classes for seminary students. It will provide them with a rich resource to understand the young people to whom they might preach or minister, whether in a church or campus ministry. Finally, I recommend this volume to anyone interested in understanding better the intersection of science and Scripture, as this book will serve as an excellent resource to learn more about this topic from an expert in the field.

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