

AFRICANUS JOURNAL

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Goals of the *Africanus Journal*

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

Two issues normally are published per year.

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

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Life of Julius Africanus

Julius Africanus was probably born in Jerusalem, many scholars think around AD 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 AD 231–233. In AD 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, Samuel Cullen Capehart, J. Saemi Kim, Seong Park, Nicole Rim, John Runyon, Aida Besançon Spencer, William David Spencer

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Summary of Content:

This issue is a multiethnic one concerned with issues of justice as it relates to women, Blacks, Christianity, the poor, and the church, from the perspective of the Bible, apologetics, theology, history, and application.

THE AFRICANUS GUILD



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

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

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

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

Looking Back to Move Forward¹

DIANNA POHLMAN BELL

When I first committed to serve as the first female Chaplain in the United States Navy in 1973, I was blessed to have a husband (Rev. Dr. Donald Bell) who was a true partner, supporter, encourager, and strength. He was the primary reason I was able to maneuver successfully through those three challenging years. And for fifty years after, we pastored churches as a clergy-couple. We moved to all four coasts of the United States to find welcoming congregations. Few, it seemed, knew what to do with an ordained woman or a pastoral team! Since my partner's death, I have re-learned even more what a precious gift he was in work and life. I have re-learned that the communities that surround us (family, friends, coworkers, neighbors and nation) are the ones who recognize our presence and reflect our value. Without this reflection, we can feel invisible. We humans work best when our connections provide mutual care, respect, and appreciation.

Initially I accepted the opportunity of becoming a Navy Chaplain because I needed a call and this presented an exciting, creative challenge. I thought I was doing something new in my family. As it turns out, such service was not so new to us. For generations my family members have served the nation and the world in war and in peace.

My great-grandfather lost his left arm for the Union in the Civil War. Great Uncle Frank helped the US Department of Agriculture bring the date industry from the Middle East to South California. In 1943, my father volunteered for the Marines but was refused, since his work on the B-24 bomber was deemed too valuable to lose. Nephews and nieces, aunts and uncles served in both military and peaceful service to the nation and internationally. My brother and his two sons served in the Army as aircraft mechanics, another in Information Technology. Two nephews served with the Marines in Afghanistan. Two nieces also served in the Army, one in administration, the other as a Chinook helicopter test pilot. Other family members have been active globally with the Lutheran and Presbyterian churches as ministers, doctors, and educators. The more these stories emerged, the more inner strength I felt to do my job with pride and purpose. Inner strength is part of what the Chaplains Corps calls "spiritual readiness."

Back in the early 1970s, we Chaplains were called "morale officers." "Spiritual Readiness" incorporates a more comprehensive and accurate vision of what our personnel need for their mission. Spiritual Readiness includes the ability to make a commitment to a task and stick with it. That's not easy for 17-25 year olds! But it is possible with strong support from the community. As a Chaplain in a Recruit Command, I counseled many young people who were away from home for the first time. It was imperative that I help them see the larger picture. Not all of them succeeded, but those who did grew stronger. Spiritual Readiness includes inner strength. Chaplains are equipped to develop discipline of the spirit, much as others are equipped to develop discipline of body and mind. Body, mind, spirit: the trifecta of maturity and readiness to serve.

But Chaplains are not the only leaders so equipped. Every individual at every level is called to be part of an effective community team. In my Naval experience, this began with Navy Chaplain Mel Willard. Mel was present at my final ordination exam before Presbytery in San Diego, January 1973. He greeted me and introduced me to the fact that Congress had just opened the military chaplaincies to women and the Navy was eager to be the first. Without that action on his part I would not be serving today (others would have come along of course to fill this role, but someone needed to recruit!)

Individual action in forming supportive community must work at the unit level as well. To-

¹ This article was adapted from a presentation at PME (Professional Military Education for Chaplains), Washington D. C. May 19, 2023

day, I serve at Coast Guard Station Duluth, Minnesota. I feel a strong Spiritual Readiness among these team members, as all are encouraged to develop their career and person as much as possible. Our OIC (Officer in Charge) Master Chief Justin Olson practices a strong Command Philosophy. Posted in the mess hall, it reads:

For the Crew: ensure that all crew members are physically and mentally sound. That as a unit the best training and education is available to them and creates an atmosphere of open communications within all levels of the unit.

We must treat everyone with honor and respect in all aspects of our work...

Safety is paramount. Avoid high risk behavior.

Hold yourself and your shipmates to our core values of Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty at all times.

For the Mission: We must strive to achieve the highest degree of operational excellence in everything we do by balancing all facets of safety. Maintain the public's trust and conduct ourselves in a professional manner while in the public eye and when we are not.

Moreover conduct yourself in a POSITIVE and PROFESSIONAL manner always!!

This philosophy supports the mission by supporting the people who accomplish the mission. They work effectively together.

I cannot tell you how different this environment at Station Duluth feels from the one I encountered in Orlando in 1973, when I began working as part of a staff of thirteen Chaplains with a Senior Chaplain who did all he could to keep me outside the team. For example, accepting the first female chaplain on his staff was a good step to his later becoming Chief of Navy Chaplains. However, when the DOD (Department of Defense) commissioned a combat artist to paint my portrait, he failed to tell the other 12 chaplains on staff, leading them to believe I had commissioned the portrait. Margaret Holland Sargent spent one week painting the life-size image, causing my work to be shifted to the others. My supervisor routinely failed to pass valuable information to help me understand the dynamics, terminology, and operational process of our mission, excluding me from the team. Spiritual Readiness, enhanced by every person at every level, must always be our goal. This is true even from the top levels of command.

The change in military culture fifty years ago would not have been possible without the vision of CNO (Chief of Naval Operations) Admiral Elmo Zumwalt. Admiral Zumwalt had the audacity to recognize that these were human beings whom he commanded, not cogs in a machine. And they needed to be treated as real humans. As a result, he was willing to begin opening areas of service to those previously denied and provide necessary support. He required Race Relations training for all personnel on the base. Zumwalt also recognized that alcohol and drug abuse diminished the effectiveness of service members in their mission. In response he developed treatment programs for both wet and dry substance abuse ("wet" is alcohol). My husband was hired as a G-6 (civilian pay grade 6) to develop and direct the Alcohol Dry Dock on the same base with me. Some "dry dock" clients were identified among the Battalion Commanders as he taught them effective management.

Now these programs have expanded across the Services and in our culture into a much larger emphasis on mental health recognition and treatment. When we take our humanity seriously, with its strengths and challenges, we function differently, and much more effectively. No longer do we simply call it "battle fatigue" or PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). We develop programs to strengthen and heal our Wounded Warriors. We use animal therapy and adaptive sport programs. In my region of NE Minnesota, the "River Runners for Recovery" use kayaks and canoes along our bountiful waters for veterans to help other veterans heal from trauma. Prevention and recovery

programs work together for strength and resiliency in our service members.

Recently, at my Princeton Seminary Reunion, I learned of two books about a deeper approach to healing. One is called *Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury after War* by Gabriella Lettini and Rita Nakashima Brock. The other is *What Have We Done: The Moral Injury of our Longest Wars* by David Wood. This field calls for our serious exploration.

In her book *Finding the Mother Tree*, Canadian forest researcher Suzanne Simard describes the source of strength in our largest growing communities - our natural forests. Their vitality, she describes, is rooted in the strong active community of underground organisms, as the trees coordinate, cooperate, and care for each other, not unlike healthy human families. When we walk in the woods on the dirt beneath our feet, we may fail to recognize this intricate, functioning community of life support. The wisdom and work of every individual in the community is key to the *vitality* of our overall life and mission accomplishment.

And no longer do all the best ideas have to come from the top down. Our forward-thinking new Commandant of the Coast Guard, Admiral Linda Fagan, wants to drive a culture of innovation by inspiring and supporting innovators at *all levels* of the workforce. Recognizing the increased diversity of our members and culture, she intends to build pathways to receive and implement the “best ideas to address organizational gaps at the speed of need.” “Top down” management can now be augmented by “bubble up” innovation.

It has always felt good to me to know I am a stronger citizen of this nation for having served in uniform. I would like to conclude by suggesting a Way Forward for the betterment of our nation and its citizens.

For many years I have envisioned the benefits of re-instituting a mandatory service to the nation. It could be similar to the Swiss pattern, with opportunities for both military and peaceful paths of service. This Registration would be for post high school young people, both female and male, and terms of service for two to three years.

This could accomplish many benefits:

- instill the attitude of service to our country,
- provide education with purpose and discipline,
- develop understanding of and commitment to citizenship,
- serve the real needs of people, families, and communities across the nation,
- serve as an alternative for government aid for education and social benefits,
- help individuals form focus and a spirit of community as part of a supportive system, and
- provide tangible benefits for those who participate (unlike the totally volunteer Vista and Peace Corps programs).

A functioning *reality of this dual option* of national service is already in place. Our Maritime services span a wide spectrum of military and peaceful service: Marines, Navy, Coast Guard. Under the overarching Naval Sea Service, our Marines are the undisputed forward warriors, and the Coast Guard bridges the gap between law enforcement (DHS), diplomacy (State Department), and defense (DOD). (Allow me to crow a bit about my new field of service, which more people need to understand.)

Through the Coast Guard “we are humanitarian first responders, and environmental stewards.” We operate at both the national and local level, cooperating with American communities to manage our ports and inland waterways. “Our vast network of international, interagency, industry, inter-

governmental, tribal, and non-governmental partners allows us to collaborate and lead through crises.”²

We do all of this through the Coast Guard ETHOS of
PROTECT
DEFEND
SAVE
with HONOR, RESPECT, and DEVOTION to DUTY.

The above values and opportunities to serve are attractive to contemporary young Americans looking to join a meaningful workforce - a fair and equal opportunity for employment: training (for them) and service (to others). The Coast Guard insists on a safe and fair workplace culture.

Add to the above the Spiritual Readiness focus of the Chaplains Corps for service members and their families, and we have an appealing emphasis on the development of human resilience in the face of a changing and challenging world.

Our observance of Four Chaplains Day³ on February 3 reminds us that a dynamic, respectful partnership between diverse faith traditions and the state and its militia can have a profound positive impact on people. Surely this was part of the vision our foremothers and forefathers for our nation’s moral compass.

Rev. Dianna Pohlman Bell, a native of San Diego, retired from active ministry in 2004 after serving three years as a Navy Chaplain and the remaining years as a parish pastor. On moving to Duluth, MN, she volunteered in the USCG (United States Coast Guard) Auxiliary Chaplain Support Program (ACS) to minister among the Coast guard personnel active on the Great Lakes. Called back into service in the church, she is now Moderator of the Presbytery of Northern Waters. She lives in Duluth, MN with her daughter and granddaughter.



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² U.S. Coast Guard Strategy, Oct. 2022, pp. 3-4.

³ Google “Four Chaplains story,” e.g., <https://www.ohiolegion.com/wp-content/uploads/Four-Chaplains-Story.pdf>.

Four or More Forms of Biblical Justice

TIMOTHY PAUL ERDEL

Introduction

There is an old saying in philosophy that truth is the first virtue. No matter how attractive or elegant a theory is, if it isn't true, it should be discarded. There is a similar line with respect to the subfield of ethics. There, justice is the first virtue; and, if an ethical theory doesn't promote justice, it should be rejected. But what is justice?

I have been speaking, teaching, and writing, on-and-off, about Christian social justice since the mid-1970s. From the outset, I generally sided with Anabaptists such as Ronald J. Sider (1939-2022)¹ and the Evangelicals for Social Action,² with Wesleyans such as Donald W. Dayton (1942-2020)³ and the Salvation Army, with Anglicans such as John R. W. Stott (1921-2011)⁴ and the documents emerging in the wake of the *Lausanne Covenant*,⁵ and with the Latin American Theological Fraternity⁶ in arguing for a seamless whole, when it came to Christian mission and social justice. At the same time, I pushed back against the more strident forms of Latin American Liberation Theology, beginning with a critical review of *A Theology of Liberation*, by Gustavo Gutierrez,⁷ whom I would meet decades later at the University of Notre Dame and dialogue with

1 Timothy Paul Erdel, Review of *The Battle for World Evangelism*, by Arthur P. Johnston, *Evangelism and Social Justice*, by Ronald Sider, and *Church Mission in the Modern World: What the Church Should Be Doing Now!* by John R. W. Stott, *Trinity Journal* 7 (Fall 1978): 206-208.

Cf. The articles, memorials, and obituaries in the special issue, "Paying Tribute to the Life and Legacy of Ronald J. Sider, 1939-2022," *Brethren in Christ History & Life* 45.3 (December 2022): 372-418. I last conversed with Ron on 19 November 2014.

2 Cf. David R. Swartz, *The Moral Minority: The Evangelical Left in an Age of Conservatism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

3 See, e.g., Donald W. Dayton, "Yet Another Layer of the Onion: Or Opening the Ecumenical Door to Let the Riffraff in," *The Ecumenical Review* 40.1 (January 1988): 87-110, as well as his two best-known titles, Donald W. Dayton, *Rediscovering an Evangelical Heritage: A Tradition and Trajectory of Integrating Piety and Justice*, with Douglas M. Strong, with a Foreword by Jim Wallis, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2014), and Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, with a Foreword by Martin M. Marty, *Studies in Evangelicalism*, no. 5 (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1987; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Francis & Taylor, 1987), with multiple subsequent editions and translations. See also, Dayton, *From the Margins: A Celebration of the Theological Work of Donald W. Dayton*, ed. Christian T. Collins Winn, Princeton Theological Monograph Series, no. 75 (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2007).

In-person memorial and graveside services were finally held for Don at the end of the Wesleyan Historical Society & Wesleyan Theological Society annual meetings (the first gathered WHS/WTS meetings since the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic) at Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky, and at the Bluegrass Memorial Gardens, Nicholasville, Kentucky, on 4 March 2023. It was good to be part of a tribute to a faithful friend. Don was a former brother-in-law of Ron Sider, although they disagreed about matters relating to biblical authority and evidential apologetics.

4 See note 1 above. My two closest interactions with John R. W. Stott, both unexpected, came totally at his initiative, one after a faculty meeting at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, the other when he invited himself to our home ("Bookend") for breakfast in Kingston, Jamaica, on 6 February 1992, to discuss the future trajectory of his Langham Partnership.

5 See, e.g., the documents posted at <https://lausanne.org/category/content/>, accessed 27 February 2023, especially the ongoing stream of occasional papers (67 to date, some with their own sub-streams of papers) crafted and adopted subsequent to the original *Lausanne Covenant* in 1974, as well as the *Manilla Manifesto* (1989) and *The Cape Town Commitment* (2010).

6 See the early analysis by Dieumème E. Noëlliste, "The Church and Human Emancipation: A Critical Comparison of Liberation Theology and the Latin American Theological Fraternity," Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1987. Cf. a more recent work by him, id., with Mirlenda Noëlliste. *Authentic Engagement: The Role of the Church in Social Transformation* (Carlisle, Cumbria, England: Langham Global Library, 2023).

7 Timothy Paul Erdel, Review of *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*, by Gustavo Gutierrez, *Trinity Journal* 4 (Spring 1975): 104-109, originally part of a paper for a course on Contemporary Theology taught by Carl F. H. Henry at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Fall Quarter, 1974; see also, id., "Liberation Theology: A Christian Theology?" *Trinity World Forum* 1 (Winter 1975-1976): 4-5; cf. id. and Timothy Wilder, "Marx or Jesus: The Challenge of Higher Education in Latin America," *Scribe*, 1 May 1975, 7-8.

amiably.⁸

Nevertheless, early on in my thinking and writing, and for an embarrassing long time, I simply assumed there was a common, intuitively obvious, widely agreed upon notion of justice, with relatively minor variations. It is rooted in the notion of fairness. As N. T. Wright says, “You don’t have to teach children about fairness and unfairness. A sense of justice comes with the kit of being human. We know about it, as we say, in our bones.”⁹ Then it began to dawn on me that the meaning of “justice” itself is multifaceted and sharply debated. How do you define fairness? And is there more to justice than mere fairness?

Moreover, if a Christian ethic is primarily an ethic of love, what is the relation of Christian love (*ἀγάπη*) to Christian justice (*δικαιοσύνη*)? Are they the same? Merely compatible with each other? Do they stand in tension with each other? If so, is the tension *motivational*, *directional*, or both?¹⁰ Questions multiply rapidly.

Nicholas Wolterstorff confesses to a similar sort of naiveté in his autobiographical memoir, *In This World of Wonders*:¹¹ “When I wrote *Until Justice and Peace Embrace* (1983), I said a good deal about justice without having in mind a theory of justice; I relied upon my intuitions. But I was uneasy about that. There are a number of different ways of understanding justice. If I was to write more in the area, it was incumbent on me to stand back and ask what justice is.”¹² This led Wolterstorff to ponder further the meaning of justice and to write two additional monographs, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs*¹³ and *Justice in Love*,¹⁴ as well as still other articles and essays, some collected in *Hearing and Call*,¹⁵ as a way of probing the notions of justice, human rights, and their relation to Christian love more deeply. He argues first for a rights approach to justice, as opposed to eudaimonism (emphasizing human flourishing),¹⁶ then for inherent natural human rights as emanating from God. Individuals have inherent worth not necessarily because they are made in the image of God, according to Wolterstorff, but because God’s love for all humans gives each person a unique *bestowed* worth. He also argues for a Christian ethic of love that is not the same as but fully

8 I engaged Gustavo Gutierrez more than once, but our most important conversation occurred on 24 October 2011. His views had moderated some over the years, if I understood him correctly (he now acknowledges there are frequently limits to truly identifying with the poor, and the spiritual must take priority in seeking social change); and he held those views with winsome humility.

Though I once studied under the Yugoslavian/Croatian philosopher, Gajo Petrović, at the summer Institute on Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture (1983), Marxian philosophy ultimately seems a (godless) dead-end to me, even in the anti-Stalinist form taken by the Praxis School, headed by Petrović, which focused on the more attractive humanism of the young Marx. Nevertheless, some Marxian questions seem very important to me. The longest paper I ever wrote in graduate school was on Marx’s appropriation of Aristotelean insights. Another paper, which was accepted for publication, but which I later withdrew, was on the young Marx and religion.

9 N. T. Wright, *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense* (New York: HarperOne, HarperCollins, 2006), 4.

10 *Motivational* tension questions whether one is acting from justice or from love. *Directional* tension looks at conflicting requirements set by justice and love that would in turn lead to different actions or results. See the discussion of these matters by Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice in Love*, with a new Preface [for the paperback ed.], Emory University Studies in Law and Religion, gen. ed., John Witte, Jr. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015), vii. Wolterstorff goes on to develop his argument that there are *neither* motivational *nor* directional tensions between love and justice.

11 Nicholas Wolterstorff, *In This World of Wonders: Memoir of a Life of Learning* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2019), 284-289, see especially 284 for quotation.

I do not mean by this allusion to a possible similarity between our experiences to suggest, even remotely, that I am in the same league as a philosopher, ethicist, or moral theologian as is Wolterstorff. For one brief interlude, he was one of my instructors at the CCCU Disciplinary Workshop on Philosophy, Calvin Seminars in Christian Scholarship, Calvin College (now University), Grand Rapids, Michigan, July 2005. We chatted most recently at Calvin on 26 October 2022.

12 Id., *Until Justice and Peace Embrace: The Kuyper Lectures for 1981 Delivered at the Free University of Amsterdam* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983).

13 Id., *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008).

14 Id., *Justice in Love*.

15 Some are collected in id., *Hearing the Call: Liturgy, Justice, Church, and World: Essays*, eds. Mark R. Gornik and Gregory Thompson (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2011).

16 See notes 26 and 28 for definitions.

compatible with Christian justice. Doing justice is but one *example* of love. But this is moving too rapidly.

To back up, what does it mean to enter debates about Christian mission and social justice, if we don't even know what justice means? The same sorts of foundational questions about justice could be raised with respect to other issues I have addressed elsewhere, sometimes repeatedly, including quarrels between Just War theory and pacifism,¹⁷ ruminations on the place of Christian ethics in a secular state,¹⁸ contested claims about gender¹⁹ or sexual orientation,²⁰ warnings about the dangers of American exceptionalism,²¹ relations between Sabbatical Year and Jubilee themes in Scripture and contemporary economic systems,²² reflections on the meaning of ethnic identity,²³ debates between culturalists and structuralists,²⁴ and proposals about making racial reparations,²⁵ among others.

Plato, Aristotle, and Ulpian

Since the time of Plato (or before), philosophers have proffered conflicting theories about personal and social justice. Book I of the *Republic* offers a whole series of rival definitions of δίκαιοσύνη that arise out of discussions between Socrates and his interlocutors. They include: 1) truth-telling and paying what you owe, 2) doing good to friends and harm to enemies, 3) pursuing a craft to benefit others without necessarily gaining a personal advantage over them, 4) adhering to

17 E.g., Timothy Paul Erdel, "Is Just War Still an Oxymoron?" *Criswell Theological Review* [theme issue: "War and Peace"], n.s., 4.2 (Spring 2007): 53-76; id., "Pacifism and Non-Violent Resistance: 1900-1950," in *The History of Evil in the 20th Century (1900-1950)*, ed. Victoria Harrison, vol. 5 of *The History of Evil*, gen. eds. Charles Taliaferro and Chad Meister, 6 vols. (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2018): 5:163-183. Cf. id., "Approaching the Problem of Violence in *Esther*: Does Gratuitous Evil Undermine an Otherwise Delightfully Subversive Text?" paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Region of the Society of Biblical Literature, The Middle West Branch of the American Oriental Society, and the American Schools of Oriental Research, Trinity International University, Deerfield, Illinois, 20 February 2005, printout (photocopied), and id., "The Great War, the 'Good War,' and Their Challenges to Christian Pacifism, paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Philosophical Society, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 16 November 2012, printout (photocopied).

Cf. also, Timothy Paul Erdel and Sally Elizabeth Erdel, "Nazi Nurses, Mennonite Nurses: Teaching Professional Nursing Values with Case Studies from World War II," paper presented at the Symposium on Faith & Culture, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, 30 October 2010, printout (photocopied).

18 E.g., Timothy Paul Erdel, "'Go Tell That Fox!': Reflections on Religion and the Public Square," in *The Activist Impulse: Exploring the Intersection of Anabaptism and Evangelicalism*, eds. Jared S. Burkholder and David Charles Cramer, with a Foreword by George Marsden and an Afterword by Sarah Wenger Shenk (Eugene, Or.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, Pickwick Publications, 2012), 321-345.

19 E.g., id., "Should Christian Egalitarians Be Gender Essentialists?" paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Providence, Rhode Island, 16 November 2017, printout (photocopied).

Cf. id., "The Book of Ruth and Hope in Hard Times," *Priscilla Papers* 25.1 (Winter 2011): 5-8, and id., "Exploring the Garden of Feminine Motifs in *Song of Songs*," *Priscilla Papers* 34.2 (Spring 2020): 3-9.

20 E.g., id., "Is Sexual Autobiography Self-Authenticating? Assessing Moral and Spiritual Claims from LGBTQ Communities," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, San Francisco, California, 17 November 2011, printout (photocopied).

21 E.g., id. and Robby Christopher Prenekert, "The 'Third Testament': American Exceptionalism as a Case Study in the Global Temptation to Political Idolatry," *Anabaptist Witness* ["Omnibus Edition"] 7.1 (May 2020): 11-30.

22 E.g., Timothy Paul Erdel, "The Bethel Bubble and 'Dude Week,'" chapel address at Bethel College [now University], Mishawaka, Indiana, 3 February 2017, audio archive and printout (photocopy), and id., "What Does It Mean to Follow Jesus on the Sabbath?" sermon preached at Mt. Carmel Missionary Baptist Church, South Bend, Indiana, 7 August 2016; cf. id., "What Ever Happened to Zion (Illinois)?" sermon preached at First Mennonite Church of Champaign-Urbana, Urbana, Illinois, 2 February 1986, typewritten (photocopied).

23 E.g., id., "Am I Latino (or Just Liminal), and Does It Matter? Dialoging with Jorge J. E. Gracia on Latinos, Philosophy, and Social Identity," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Philosophical Society, New Orleans, Louisiana, 18 November 2009, printout (photocopied).

24 E.g., id., "Fractured Families and Marginal Men: Orlando Patterson and the Culturalist-Structuralist Debates," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Philosophical Society, 18 November 2015, printout (photocopied). Cf. id. and Robby Christopher Prenekert, "Mentoring Marginal Men in Tower Hill, Kingston, Jamaica: Nascent Hoop Dreams and Nagging Regrets," *Anabaptist Witness* ["What is Mission? Evangelism, Justice, and Beyond"] 3.1 (April 2016): 87-103.

25 E.g., id., "The Christian Case for Racial Reparations," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Fort Worth, Texas, 18 November 2021, printout (photocopied).

what rulers legislate, or 5) acknowledging the raw advantage of the stronger over the weaker.

Plato then spends the next nine books articulating his own vision of justice as a complex virtue of the individual soul rooted in the ideal state, a delicate balance between personal and social virtues, with both dimensions rationally ruled by wisdom, giving rise to justice as an emergent, culminating virtue, though also as a timeless form. Justice turns out to be the right social order, one ruled and regulated by the wisdom/prudence of philosopher kings, giving rise to courage/fortitude necessary to the next class of guardians (police/soldiers), and encouraging moderation, self-control, temperance among the professional and productive class(es), those persons who are allowed to accumulate wealth and enjoy family life. Each virtue appears in a mix appropriate to each of the three main social classes, a social order in which each person also has a well-ordered soul (psyche), one with just the right mix of personal virtues, which mirror the social ones. The rational mind is the charioteer reining in and guiding the two wild horses—will and passions—such that they demonstrate courage/fortitude and moderation/self-control/temperance rather than their natural inclination to wild excess, doing so in a manner appropriate to the individual’s social function within the social order.²⁶

Aristotle will continue the discussion of δικαιοσύνη/justice, especially in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book V, though also his *Politics*, Books III, V, & VI.²⁷ One important insight is found in his stress on the appropriate behavior toward one’s neighbor in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book V, chapter 1, where he treats *universal* justice as the *whole of moral virtue*, a move which echoes Plato’s treatment of justice as a culminating virtue, especially in the *Republic*. While Aristotle’s overall treatment of ethics complicates and enriches Plato’s teachings in fascinating ways, which in some respects I find rather attractive,²⁸ his treatment of justice as a *particular* virtue is more limited,

26 There are, of course, at least five or six basic ways to read the *Republic*, so this is a very truncated, allusive summary of his approach to justice; see Timothy Paul Erdel & Cristian F. Mihut, “Reading the Sermon on the Mount as a Radical Critique of Plato’s *Republic*,” paper presented at the Evangelical Philosophical Society annual meeting, Atlanta, Georgia, 17 November 2010, printout (photocopied).

Cf. a different approach to explicating the Sermon on the Mount, comparing it to Hebrew Wisdom literature and Greco-Roman virtue ethics in Jonathan T. Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2017). Pennington champions the continuity between a Greco-Roman virtue ethic of *eudaimonia* (human flourishing) and the Sermon on the Mount, while Erdel and Mihut focus on the radical discontinuities between Plato and Jesus. See also note 60.

27 For better or worse, I am generally ignoring Aristotle’s other works related to ethics at this point. See Peter L. P. Simpson, trans., *The Eudemian Ethics of Aristotle* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 2013), and id., trans., *The Great Ethics of Aristotle [Magna Moralia]* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2014).

28 I would lean toward Aristotelean definitions (aside from biblical ones), which seem both fuller and subtler to me than Platonic ones. Familiar dimensions of his thought include: the importance of material conditions for the full actualization of human potential; the strong tilt toward an ethics of virtue (including both intellectual and moral virtues); the cultivation of good habits and healthy dispositions in training for virtue; the notion of the golden mean (sometimes confused with mere moderation, rather than a fully developed virtue opposed to contrasting vices); the crucial roles of practical wisdom (*phronesis*) and proper action (*praxis*) appropriate to the situation (not relativism, since there is a correct response, but the right judgment at the right time, given all the circumstances); an account of weakness of the will; the enormous good of genuine friendship (as well as of the family and other social relations); the goal of *eudaimonia* (the greatest good—human flourishing/happiness); Natural Law as a ground for ethics, including a functional analysis of the nature of things that leads to a strong sense of purpose (*telos*) and a “God’s-eye-point-of-view” consequentialism; plus the analysis of politics, a separate but related domain for Aristotle, whose ethical, social, and political thought will inform Hegel and Marx, among others.

For one contemporary example of neo-Aristoteleanism, see Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 103-123, as well as id., *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed., with a new Prologue (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), and id., *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990).

Since the Fall, any discussion of justice needs to take seriously human sin and perversity, which many secular thinkers fail to do. Aristotle’s discussion of the weakness of the will may be a step in the right direction, going beyond Plato’s attribution of evil to ignorance or lack of genuine knowledge, but it does not go as far as the Apostle Paul, who seems to underscore the perversity of the will in his writings, especially *Romans*. See Langdon Gilkey, *Shantung Compound: The Story of Men and Women under Pressure* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966); cf. Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics* (New York: Charles Scribners, 1932).

focusing mostly on the distinctions between distributive justice and corrective (rectificatory or remedial) justice, as well as between natural and conventional forms of justice.

Aristotle's *Politics* is especially concerned with the notions of fairness and equality, which should not be based upon wealth or democratic freedom, so much as upon a person's superior virtue. Aristotle is famous for saying, "All men think justice to be some sort of equality."²⁹ A basic theme running through his various discussions is that justice is connected to equality, injustice to inequality.³⁰ Howard Adelson adds: "Professor Irani has certainly emphasized the most crucial point about Aristotle's conception of justice, which is that *equals be treated as equals and unequals as unequals* The problem is how to give each his due, that is, his just deserts, and at the same time to treat all equally."³¹ The relative brevity of Aristotle's work on justice as a *particular virtue* is, in some ways, disappointing, since one must tease out and enlarge upon tantalizing insights.³² His greatest medieval disciple, Thomas Aquinas, will author a more substantial treatise on justice [see especially questions 57-122 in the *Summa Theologica*], though Thomas considers theological issues that go far beyond Aristotle's more "secular" discussions.³³

Wolterstorff suggests that there is a great divide in Western intellectual history with respect to justice, but that the divide is not so much between Plato and Aristotle as between Aristotle and Ulpian:

Two competing accounts of justice have come down to us from antiquity, one from Aristotle, the other from the Roman jurist Ulpian (c. 170-223 CE). Aristotle's view was that justice consists of the equitable distribution of benefits and burdens. Ulpian's view was that justice consists of rendering to each person what is his or her *ius*—that is, his or her right or due. I was drawn to Ulpian's view. Aristotle's view seemed to me untenable for a number of reasons, one of them being that it seems to me grotesque to

29 Aristotle says, "All men think justice to be a sort of equality," in his *Politics*, bk. 3, chap. 12/1282b, 41. See Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. with an Introduction by Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), 1192.

30 See Izhak Englund, *Corrective and Distributive Justice: From Aristotle to Modern Times* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1-10; D. S. Hutchinson, "Ethics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, Cambridge Companions (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1955), 222-224 [195-232]; Marco Zingano, "Natural, Ethical, and Political Justice," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Politics*, eds. Marguerite Deslauriers and Pierre Destrée, Cambridge Companions (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press), 199-222; Ronald Polansky, "Giving Justice Its Due," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. Ronald Polansky, Cambridge Companions (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Richard Kraut, "Aristotle's Ethics," rev. ed., *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, revised ed. posted on 2 July 2022 at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics/>, accessed 26 February 2023; and Fred Miller, "Aristotle's Political Theory," rev. ed., *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, revised ed. posted on 1 July 2022 at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-politics/>, accessed 27 February 2023.

31 Howard L. Adelson, "The Origins of a Concept of Social Justice," in *Social Justice in the Ancient World*, eds. K. D. Irani and Morris Silver, Contributions in Political Science, no. 354, Global Perspectives in History and Politics, series ed. George Schwab (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1995), 29 [25-38]. The articles referenced in the ellipses, material omitted from the block quotation, are by K. D. Irani, "Values and Rights Underlying Social Justice," and by Charles Evans, "Justice as Desert," 45-46 & 52, are both from *Social Justice*, ed. Randolph Braham (Boston: Martinus Nijhof, 1981), 35-41, and esp. 37 [Irani]; cf. 45-46 & 52 [Evans].

The quotation, "*equals be treated as equals and unequals as unequals*," seems to be a summary paraphrase (rather than a direct quotation) of Aristotle, *Politics*, bk. 3, chap. 8/1280a, 10.

32 See the sources in notes 29 & 30 above and the brief discussions of justice in G. E. R. Lloyd, *Aristotle: The Growth & Structure of His Thought* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1968), passim, and in David Ross, *Aristotle*, 5th ed., rev., University Paperbacks (paperback ed.: London: Methuen; New York: Barnes and Noble, 1964), 209-215.

33 See Christopher Kaczor and Thomas Sherman, *Thomas Aquinas on the Cardinal Virtues: A Summa of the Summa on Justice, Courage, Temperance, and Practical Wisdom*, with a Foreword by Ralph McInerney (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press of America, 2008), 57-224. Cf. "Justice: *Debitum* and *Personae*: The Metaphysical Foundation of Justice," *Thomistic Philosophy: The Enduring Thought of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, posted at <https://aquinasonline.com/justice>, accessed 27 February 2023, and the course lecture notes and handouts by Alfred J. Freddoso, the University of Notre Dame, "Phil 453 Aquinas on the Cardinal Virtues: Treatise on Justice," posted at <https://www3.nd.edu/~alfreddoso/courses/453/justice.htm>, accessed 27 February 2023.

suggest that what makes rape, for example, a violation of justice is that benefits and burdens are distributed inequitably.³⁴

Although Wolterstorff proceeds with a theistic account of inherent natural rights, rights bestowed by God based on his love for human beings, inherent natural rights that serve as the proper ground for justice, my account focuses on a different divide. I see the great divide as between those who look to some form of fairness or equality as the starting point for thinking about justice, and those who champion another definition of justice altogether.

Some Further Definitions of Justice

The Western intellectual tradition proceeds in the wake of Plato, Aristotle, and Ulpian, so a basic sense of fairness (or some form of attendant equality) remains at the core of most subsequent theories of justice. We begin our lives with strong intuitions about what is fair or unfair. Lady Justice holds scales that are balanced. There are numerous quarrels over what makes something fair, what balances the scales. For example, should fairness be measured in terms of equal *opportunities*, of equal *requirements*, or of equal *results* (actual equity)?

Dennis Hollinger suggests that a good government should promote *order*, *freedom*, and *justice*.³⁵ He then identifies three basic dimensions of (biblical) justice: *retributive*, *distributive*, and *restorative* (also known by such names as *corrective*, *rectifying*, or *reparative* justice), thereby omitting another form of justice, *commutative justice*, which focuses on relations between individuals within a community, as compared to *distributive* justice, which deals with the relation of a community to individuals. Since a main function of *commutative justice* is to remedy wrongs,³⁶ it is sometimes placed with *restorative* theories of justice, though Nicholas Wolterstorff apparently places it closer to *distributive* discussions.³⁷ Secular theories of *distributive justice* are frequently divided into those which focus on distribution according to *merit* in response to *opportunity*

34 Wolterstorff, *World of Wonders*, 285.

35 Dennis Hollinger, "The Role of Government and the Immigration Issue: A Christian Ethics Response," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 63.4 (December 2020): 759-771; cf. id., *Choosing the Good: Christian Ethics in a Complex World* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2002), 216-237.

Just naming these is shorthand, of course. For example, I am much taken by the Roman Catholic social teaching on *subsidiarity*, namely, that a higher order community should not intrude upon or interfere in the internal life or functions of a lower order, unless there is a clear and overwhelming need to do so. I presume this teaching of *subsidiarity* might temporarily fall under the rubric of *freedom*, but it also acknowledges a natural *order* of things, and it would abrogate the autonomy of a lower order only if fundamental *justice* (or charity) would require some form of intervention. Otherwise, matters should be handled by the smallest, lowest, most local, least centralized authority.

This preference for the more local is mirrored in the writings of Wendell Berry, *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry*, ed. with an Introduction by Norman Wirzba (Berkeley, Calif.: Counterpoint, 2002), id. *New Collected Poems* (Berkeley, Calif.: Counterpoint, 2012), id., *This Day: Sabbath Poems: Collected and New* (Berkeley, Calif.: Counterpoint, 2013), and id., *The World-Ending Fire: The Essential Wendell Berry*, selected with an Introduction by Paul Kingsnorth (Berkeley, Calif.: Counterpoint, 2017). Cf. Timothy Paul Erdel, "Creation and Community: Wendell Berry's Challenge to the Church," paper presented at the Evangelical Theological Society annual meeting, San Diego, California, 20 November 2014, printout (photocopied), and id. and Robby C. Prenekert, "Wendell Berry and the Incarnational Mission Controversy," paper presented at the Evangelical Missiological Society, North Central Region annual meeting, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Bannockburn, Deerfield, Illinois, 2015); cf. also Timothy Paul Erdel, "Should Christians Be Communitarians? What Would It Mean if They Were?" paper presented at the Evangelical Philosophical Society annual meeting, Providence, Rhode Island, 16 November 2017, printout (photocopied).

There could be quarrels. Did deeply embedded slavery require intervention by a higher order (a nation) into the affairs of smaller communities (states, families)? It would seem so, since many of the smaller communities showed little or no interest in abandoning the great evil of slavery. Does patriarchy require similar intervention? Do the concerns of the LGBTQ communities? There could be a slippery slope here, as well as fundamental clashes of beliefs, doctrines, and worldviews.

36 See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, pt. 2, q. 62.

37 Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs*, ix.

(Robert Nozick³⁸), on distribution that strives for *equality* (John Rawls³⁹), or on distribution based upon *need* (Karl Marx⁴⁰).

Hollinger correctly notes that it is not necessary to turn to secular thinkers to expound upon the merit, equality, or need-based elements of distributive justice. *All three types of distributive justice are clearly referenced in the biblical text.* Our attitudes and actions lead to consequences, and they will sooner or later be duly rewarded or punished (*merit*). There is an inherent dignity in all human beings, who are made in the image of God; thus, we are to love our neighbors and avoid favoritism based upon wealth, class, ethnicity, or the like (*equality*). There is also a special concern throughout Scripture for the poor, the widows, the orphans, the aliens, and the oppressed (*need*).

Of course, *merit*, *equality*, and *need* may overlap, just as the larger categories of *retributive*, *distributive*, *commutative*, and *restorative* justice may not always entail discrete domains. Thus, the ability to make formal distinctions does not mean we can always make material ones. Think about the implicitly overlapping elements in the story of the persistent widow before the unjust judge (Lk.18:1-8).

Moreover, achieving justice sometimes stands in tension with the two other major functions of government, namely, providing order and freedom. Still worse, in a Fallen world, the attempt to set things right can go horribly wrong, terribly off-track. Self-proclaimed attempts by Marxist-Leninists to achieve *distributive justice* led to the wholesale slaughter of millions, as have concerns for the *needs* of mothers overwhelmed by unwanted pregnancies.⁴¹ So good intentions are not enough.

38 Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974).

Others say that Nozick is merely defending *entitlement*, rather than *merit*, see Jonathan Wolff, *Robert Nozick: Property, Justice and the Minimal State*, Key Contemporary Thinkers (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991), 9. That is, someone may legitimately inherit something they neither need nor deserve and that even aggravates inequality, but Nozick would say they may still be *entitled* to their inheritance. It is possible, however, that merit was involved at some point, if the person who first acquired the wealth “mixed his labor” [borrowing John Locke’s phrase, see *Two Treatises of Government*, edited with an Introduction and Notes by Peter Laslett, Student ed., Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought, series eds., Raymond Geuss and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1988), bk. II, sec. 27] with raw materials.

39 John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999).

The enduring influence of Rawls and his *Theory of Justice* (first published 1971) led to the recent conference hosted by the University of Notre Dame, “John Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice* at Fifty: An Anniversary Conference,” the University of Notre Dame, 24-25 September 2021.

Charles Wade Mills (1951-2021), the most famous contemporary critic of Rawls, who advocated for non-ideal approaches to social justice/injustice rather than Rawlsian idealism, was scheduled to speak, but died of cancer on 20 September 2021, just four days before the conference. Mills, whose first degree was from the University of West Indies, was repeatedly eulogized at the conference. Henry Richardson did point out, however, that Rawls was especially interested in structural justice/injustice; and Rawls did acknowledge that race has been the number one example of structural injustice in the US.

40 Karl Marx, “Critique of the Gotha Program,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, edited by Robert C. Tucker, [translator not identified] (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1972), 382-398. See p. 388 for the famous line, “From each according to his ability, to each according to his need.”

41 Anonymous, “What’s Killing Us?” *Mission Frontiers* [theme issue: “Making a Killing: The Global Death Industries & Missionary Response”], September/October 2019, 12-17, and Alyssa Johnson, “The Abortion Industry and the Gospel of Life,” *Mission Frontiers* [theme issue: “Making a Killing: The Global Death Industries & Missionary Response”], September/October 2019, 18-19.

Advocates for abortion should remember that in some cultures ready access to abortion leads directly to widespread *gendercide*, the deliberate killing of females in favor of males, and that this has led in turn to imbalances in population, with a disproportionate number of angry, socially restless young males, longing for female partners, but frustrated by the tilted demographics. See, e.g., Victor Grech, “Gendercide and Femineglect,” *Early Human Development* 91.2 (December 2015): 851-854, posted at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0378215002182?via%2Dihub>, accessed 15 March 2023.

Cf. Ronald J. Sider, ed., *The Early Church on Killing: A Comprehensive Sourcebook on War, Abortion, and Capital Punishment* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2012), and one of his earliest works, Sider, *Completely Pro-Life: Building a Consistent Stance [on Abortion, the Family, Nuclear Weapons, the Poor]*, with the staff of Evangelicals for Social Action (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1987). The extended cover title is in brackets.

One basic approach to *restorative justice* that has in recent years gained considerable attention internationally, and has repeatedly been implemented in diverse, deeply troubled spots around the globe, reportedly with a fair degree of success, is known as *transitional justice*,⁴² although it has generally not been tried or implemented within the US.⁴³ *Transitional justice* has been used in the wake of war, genocide, or other catastrophic, human-made disasters as a way to bring some measure of healing to victims and rapprochement between formerly bitter enemies, who had in cases gone so far as to subject each other to atrocities. Key elements of *transitional justice* include:

1. Criminal prosecution of the worst offenders.
2. Truth-seeking and truth-telling (most dramatically, with former perpetrators confessing their deeds in face-to-face meetings with victims).
3. Actual reparations, whether individual, collective, material, or symbolic.
4. Reforms of legal, policing, military, and intelligence gathering systems.⁴⁴

To date, however, *transitional justice* has been applied more-or-less to contemporary wrongs, not to damages done a century or more ago.

While there are elements of the foregoing theories of justice that may seem fair, right, and biblical, there may be nothing uniquely Christian about the various points made so far. They could have been derived from secular theories of justice, or from other religious worldviews.⁴⁵ The exceptions may have occurred with respect to applications of *transitional justice*, where there have, at times, been extraordinary moments of grace in places such as Rwanda and South Africa, where victims even embraced their former abusers and tormentors in the name of Christian forgiveness.⁴⁶

42 See “What Is Transitional Justice?” *ICTJ: Justice, Truth, Dignity* [web site] (New York: International Center for Transitional Justice, 2021), uploaded 2021 at <https://www.ictj.org/about/transitional-justice>, accessed 23 June 2021. And “United Nations and the Rule of Law: Transitional Justice,” uploaded by the United Nations in 2021 at <https://un.org/ruleoflaw/thematic-areas/international-laws-courts-tribunals/transitional-justice/>, accessed 23 June 2021.

43 Anthony Bradley, “Transitional Justice,” presentation at Acton University Online [online conference], Acton Institute, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2021, uploaded by Acton Institute at <https://auonline2021.app.swapcard.com/event/acton-university-online-2021/planning/UGxhbm5pbmdfNTQ1NDY1>, accessed live 23 June 2021.

44 “What Is Transitional Justice?”

45 As a Christian with some Thomist (and Aristotelean) sympathies, I suspect that these insights, while supposedly available apart from Christianity, are still rooted in some form of Natural Law (what C. S. Lewis called the Tao), hence, ultimately, in a moral universe created by God; cf. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man: Or, Reflections on Education with Special Reference to the Teaching of English in the Upper Forms of Schools*, Riddell Memorial Lectures, Fifteenth Series, Durham University (London: Oxford University Press, 1943), see especially the Appendix.

Indeed, some of the most virulently anti-Christian worldviews that have arisen among Western intellectuals are still, even if unintentionally, mirroring Christian forms of thought, cf., e.g., Carl Lotus Becker, *The Heavenly City of Eighteenth-Century Philosophers*, 2nd ed., with a new Foreword by Johnson Kent Wright (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003).

46 One is reminded of similar deeply moving stories, such as the gracious actions of the Amish immediately subsequent to the merciless shooting of their children at West Nickel Mines School in Pennsylvania on 2 October 2006, see Donald B. Kraybill, Steven M. Nolt, and David Weaver-Zurcher, *Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy* (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 2007), or the incredible, unconditional forgiveness repeatedly extended by Black parishioners to Dylann Roof, following his shooting and killing of nine persons (“the Emanuel Nine”) at prayer at “Mother” Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, on 17 June 2017. The forgiveness made no sense to some who reject Christian teachings on the love of enemies or the importance of forgiving one’s enemies. This was especially so since Dylann wrote the following in his journal, well after the attack. “I would like to make it crystal clear, I do not regret what I did. I am not sorry. I have not shed a tear for the innocent people I killed,” see Matt Zaposky, “Charleston Church Shooter: ‘I Would Like to Make It Crystal Clear, I Do Not Regret What I Did,’” *The Washington Post*, 4 January 2017, uploaded 4 January 2017 at https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/charleston-church-shooter-i-would-like-to-make-it-crystal-clear-i-do-not-regret-what-i-did/2017/01/04/05b0061e-d1da-11e6-a783-cd3fa950fd_story.html, accessed 23 June 2021.

These actions were foreshadowed, in some respects, by similar acts of inexplicable grace exhibited by persons such as Ruby Bridges during the Civil Rights movement, see Robert Coles, “The Inexplicable Prayers of Ruby Bridges: A Harvard Psychiatrist Is Mystified by a Six-Year-Old’s Faith,” *Christianity Today* 29.11, 9 August 1985, 17-20 and id., *The Spiritual Life of Children*, *The Inner Lives of Children*, vol. 3. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1990), or by certain Allied prisoners

I am less interested here, however, in pursuing the subtleties of philosophical arguments about justice than I am in thinking about what a biblically informed Christian position might be.

What would make a Christian approach to justice, including social justice, uniquely Christian? Presumably it would be the awareness that Jesus defines justice in a way that goes way beyond anything discussed so far. Jesus shifts the focus radically, from simple fairness, to the radically *unfair* as the supreme form of justice. The scales are deliberately and dramatically tilted toward mercy and grace.

Moreover, the message, ministry, and mission of Jesus were each deeply rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures; and a careful reading of the Old Testament suggests that the tipping of the scales toward mercy and grace is not unique to the teachings of Jesus. The move is instead grounded in the character of God and in his loving relationship with his covenant people.⁴⁷

Such claims require amplification.

Christian Justice

C. S. Lewis famously wrote on the four loves.⁴⁸ While all four are biblical—affection, friendship, eros, and charity/ἀγάπη—of the four, there is a sense in which ἀγάπη might have the best claim to being uniquely Christian in its content, at least as commonly understood, even though the Greek term ἀγάπη predates the rise of Christianity.⁴⁹ Christian sacrificial love extends even to one’s enemies.

One of my inchoate intuitions is that there are similar situations in other domains, where there may be universally acknowledged elements, but also some uniquely Christian content. For example, I have suggested elsewhere that, while various religions may share some notion of “faith” as a virtue, Christianity is almost unique in the way it understands the dimension of personal “trust”

of war in the Valley of the River Kwai during World War II, who were determined to respond to their Japanese captors (and the Korean guards they employed) with the love of Jesus Christ as taught in the Sermon on the Mount, see Ernest Gordon, *Through the Valley of the Kwai* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1962) and *To End All Wars*, directed by David L. Cunningham, written by Ernest Gordon (book) and Brian Godawa (screenplay), music by John Cameron, starring Robert Carlyle and Kiefer Sutherland, cinematography by Greg Gardiner, film editing by Tim Cilano, and produced by Jack Hafer and David L. Cunningham (Kailuna Kona, Hi.: Argyll Film Partners, Gumshoe Productions, Integrity Partners, and Pray for Rain Pictures; Beverly Hills, Calif.: Twentieth Century Fox, 2001), DVD, as well as by many other martyrs throughout the history of the Church.

Ultimately, these examples of extraordinary forgiveness and the love of one’s enemies reflect the spirit of Jesus at his crucifixion (“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing”—Luke 23:34a) and of Stephen at his stoning (“Lord, do not hold this sin against them”—Acts 7:60). Some scholars point out that Luke 23:34 is not in the best Greek mss.

I do not mean, by this focus on utterly gracious, pre-emptive forgiveness, to undercut the need for genuine repentance, including reparations. William J. Abraham (1947-2021) makes a good case that the failure to expect true repentance, including reparations, may cheapen and undercut the meaning of forgiveness and grace. See William J. Abraham, *Shaking Hands with the Devil: The Intersection of Terrorism and Theology* (Dallas, Tex.: Highland Loch Press, 2013), 150. I last spoke with Bill on 11 August 2015.

47 See Jože Krašovec, *God’s Righteousness and Justice in the Old Testament*, with a Foreword by Craig G. Bartholomew (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2022); cf. Beth M. Stovell, Review of *God’s Righteousness and Justice in the Old Testament*, by Jože Krašovec, *Didaktikos Journal* [special issue: “2022 Fall Books Preview”] (Fall 2022): 15-17.

48 C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1960). One could contest the tidy typology by Lewis based upon the four Greek terms, since their semantic ranges seem wider than Lewis implies. To say the least, they sometimes overlap. To take this a step further, the sole and consistent use of ἀγάπη in the LXX to designate love could be read more than one way. Does ἀγάπη reference erotic love, or were the translators aggressively “spiritualizing” an erotic text when it was the term for love employed in Song of Songs?

But Lewis was still a genius. I think a case can be made that the Pauline explication of ἀγάπη, most notably in 1 Corinthians 13, is giving a very rich, specifically Christian definition of ἀγάπη as the highest form of Christian love. Lewis builds on that.

49 Nicholas Wolterstorff finds Lewis less clear than many assume, since Lewis also identifies the four loves as need-love, gift-love, appreciation, and affection. Wolterstorff calls these four loves as love of advantage, benevolence, attraction, and attachment.

(for example, πιστεύω + εἰς constructions) as an essential element of faith.⁵⁰

My proposal here is that Christianity can, at least to some degree, affirm the more traditional notions of *retributive*, *distributive*, *commutative*, and *restorative justice* noted above, and that there is some sense in which each is legitimately biblical.⁵¹ But just as both ἀγάπη (sacrificial love) and personal trust as an element of faith exhibit uniquely Christian elements, so do the core teachings of Jesus about justice or righteousness (δικαιοσύνη), which are rooted in the Old Testament, not just in the Sermon on the Mount or the Gospels.

I am not going to make the case for Old Testament justice as loving, merciful forgiveness in this article, except to reference the *magnum opus* by the Slovenian scholar Jože Krašovec. In his Introduction to *God's Righteousness and Justice in the Old Testament*, Krašovec asserts:

The characteristic biblical belief in creation and the historical revelation of a personal God implies that cosmic justice and personal justice form a harmonious and complementary relationship. The concept of justice within the Jewish-Christian tradition is not based on the principle of equality but on the polarity of the organic relationship between the Creator and his creation on the one hand, and between the Redeemer and his covenant people, on the other. The divine foundation of the world itself forms the basis for the imperative of total obedience of all created beings to the lawgiver.⁵²

While the focus is on God as the ground and source of righteousness and justice, the Hebrew conception of justice, when applied to a human context, focuses on the virtuous character expected of a just person who is made in the image of God and of just communities in covenant relationship with God. Justice is more a matter of loving relationships than it is some form of fairness. Cosmic justice and personal justice are deeply intertwined, and they are made possible and held together by the loving, merciful character of God Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

In the New Testament, the Greek word δικαιοσύνη glosses both justice and righteousness. In Spanish translations of the New Testament, as in Greek, one term covers both: *justicia*⁵³; whereas, in English, translations tilt toward *righteousness*, so ordinary English readers may forget to gloss *justice* as well.⁵⁴ I have argued elsewhere that the Beatitudes entail a core definition of δικαιοσύνη, one that is amplified and elaborated upon in the remainder of the Sermon on the Mount and throughout the Gospel of Matthew, as well as the other Gospels.⁵⁵ Moreover, the teachings of Jesus

50 See Timothy Paul Erdel, "'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus': What a Comparative Analysis of Trust in Different Religious Traditions Suggests about the Uniqueness of Christian Faith," *Caribbean Journal of Evangelical Theology* 8 (2004): 21-41.

51 There are, of course, quarrels as to how these forms of justice might be related to core Christian doctrines. For example, there are at least ten metaphors or motifs related to atonement in the Bible, see John Driver, *Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1986); cf. the discussion of several major models by Mark D. Baker and Joel B. Green, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2011), 142-191. But many evangelicals have settled upon penal substitution as *the* theory of the atonement and have linked it tightly to the need for retributive justice (*lex talionis*, or eye-for-an-eye retribution). See, e.g., a recent defense of penal substitution theory by William Lane Craig, *Atonement and the Death of Christ: An Exegetical, Historical, and Philosophical Exploration* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2020).

Craig makes no reference to the major proposal by Darrin W. Snyder Belousek that atonement is better linked with **restorative** rather than with **retributive** justice, and that penal substitution theory has severe limitations; see Darrin W. Snyder Belousek, *Atonement, Justice, and Peace* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012).

52 Krašovec, *God's Righteousness and Justice in the OT*, 6.

53 Cf. French (*justice*) and Italian (*giustizia*).

54 As Ronald Damholt carefully argues, some of the early English translators, the Wycliffites, who chose to use the term *rightwiseness* to translate *justitia*, were understanding *rightwiseness*, what we would now write as "righteousness," to reference "justice." See Damholt, "Rightwiseness and Justice: A Tale of Translation," *Anglican Theological Review* 97.3 (Summer 2015): 413-432. So, the evolution of English usage leads to a false reading of a term intended to underscore "justice."

55 Timothy Paul Erdel, "Holiness among the Mennonites," *Reflections* [theme issue: "An Anabaptist-Holiness

concerning δικαιοσύνη⁵⁶ are compatible with and resonate throughout the writings of the Apostle Paul (see also Micah 6:8 and James 2:13).⁵⁷ Thus, in the Sermon on the Mount, δικαιοσύνη is as much a foundation stone for Christian *theology* as it is a core building block for Christian *ethics*. Δικαιοσύνη is both the personal, salvific gift of a great and good God and a cornerstone of his eternal Kingdom. I will briefly elaborate on these claims.⁵⁸

Christian δικαιοσύνη is not earned; but it is the gift of God to those who least deserve it and could never acquire it on their own: “Blessed are those who *hunger* and *thirst* for righteousness, for they will be filled” (Matt. 5:6 NIV).⁵⁹ We hunger and thirst for what we most lack, but God graciously fills us with the righteousness we so need and could never attain on our own.⁶⁰ Thus, the most crucial understanding of justice, for Christians, is in an important sense of something profoundly *unfair*, for it is a δικαιοσύνη that could never be earned, merited, or achieved by its recipients, but comes solely and uniquely as the gracious gift of God. The recipients of such grace give meaning to that grace by showing mercy to others, by living pure lives, and by engaging in the difficult task of peacemaking, which will almost inevitably lead to persecution. To be infused

Synthesis”] 10.1-2 (Spring & Fall 2008): 5-42, cf. id., “The Great Commission and God’s Righteous Kingdom,” *Mission Focus: Annual Review* 16 (2008): 93-115, and id. and Mihut, “Radical Critique.”

My “chiastic” interpretation of the Beatitudes was contrasted with the “ladder” interpretation favored by Augustine in an online forum presented by David C. Cramer and Myles Werntz on “Virtue and Violence: Reflections from the Sermon on the Mount,” hosted by the Centre for the Study of the Bible & Violence, Bristol Baptist College, England, 29 November 2022, see the announcement, though without a link to a recording, at <https://www.csbvbristol.org.uk/webinar-virtue-and-violence-reflections-from-the-sermon-on-the-mount/>, accessed 28 February 2022. I did not enter the discussion, but merely observed as an online “lurker.” If I had commented, I might have pointed out that my chiastic approach has an element of the ladder as well, since I see a progression in the way other Beatitudes flow into and then out of the central message of the chiasm.

For an overview of the influence on and interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount by eleven notable Christian thinkers, see Jeffrey P. Greenman, Timothy Larsen, and Stephen R. Spencer, eds., *The Sermon on the Mount through the Centuries: From the Early Church to John Paul II* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2007).

56 For other perspectives on δικαιοσύνη in *Matthew*, see Pennington, *SOM & Human Flourishing*, 87-91, and Jacklyn S. Nembai, “The Seven δικαιοσύνη-Passages in the Gospel of Matthew,” *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 35 (2019): 45-73.

57 One of the more enduring assumptions of modern New Testament scholarship is the divide between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith (Pauline Christology). One of the several scandalous assertions of this paper is that such a divide is as much a canard of critical scholarship as it is derived from the text. More specifically, as far as the term δικαιοσύνη is concerned, there is far more overlap between Paul and the Gospel writers than there is a divide. While both seem infused with “righteousness,” in both cases a closer look at δικαιοσύνη suggests a gloss in meaning that entails both “righteousness” and “justice,” perhaps even tilting toward “justice.”

On Paul’s use of δικαιοσύνη as “justice,” see Douglas Harink, “Romans: A Treatise on Justice?” *Directions* 44.1 (Spring 2015): 30-42, and id., *Resurrecting Justice: Reading Romans for the Life of the World* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2020). Harink *prefers* “justice” to “righteousness” as the better translation of δικαιοσύνη in Romans.

Cf. Matthew D. Jensen, “Justification in Jesus and Paul: Two Voices in Unison,” *The Reformed Theological Review* 77.3 (December 2018): 172-192.

58 This paper went through several preliminary drafts before the recent article by Daniel Philpott appeared and came to my attention. While his is a much fuller, richer discussion, there is a clear overlap in our work, see “Resurrecting Justice,” *Journal of Moral Theology* 11.1 (January 2022): 167-192.

59 Cf. God blesses “those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied” (NLT) or, in Greek, “μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.”

60 Pennington argues that δικαιοσύνη should be interpreted in an ethical sense in the Sermon on the Mount, rather than a theological one. I would argue for *both concurrently*. I tilt heavily toward multiple meaning, layered understandings of many biblical texts, rather than the “single meaning” view popular among certain evangelicals, including my former professor of hermeneutics, Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. (I also think that trying to discern “authorial intention” is frequently a hopeless cause, but that is another matter.) This is so partly because I understand human actions to be inherently layered in meaning, and that includes our speech-acts. It is also because I tend to agree with David C. Steinmetz and think that Medieval approaches to texts were in some ways better than modern critical ones, which follow in the wake of the Reformers. See the classic article by Steinmetz, “The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis,” *Theology Today* 37.1 (April 1980): 27-38; cf. Daniel J. Treier, “The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis? *Sic et non*,” ns 24.1 (Spring 2003): 77-103.

My disagreements with the excellent work by Pennington extend to other arguments he makes that hinge on an either/or bifurcation of meanings, including his extended discussion of *makarios* (μακάριος) and *’ashrê* (אַשְׁרֵי) versus *brk* (בָּרַךְ), 41-67, where he explicates “two conceptual rails.” By way of analogy, I don’t think *lógos* (*logos*) in the Prologue to the Gospel of John is limited either to its possible Greek or its Hebrew allusions, but cleverly references both.

with God's grace, beginning with his unmerited forgiveness, is to enter his Kingdom. The personal and the social are one and the same. That is why, when the Apostle Paul is in the heat of debate, defending the heart of the Gospel message of God's grace from any form of legalism, he pauses to affirm in Galatians 2:10, "All that [James, Peter, and John] asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do."

This form of divinely infused justice/righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) leads to merciful actions towards others, actions that entail the Christian love (ἀγάπη) one should exhibit towards one's neighbor, even if one's neighbor is also an enemy. Our perfection in righteousness culminates when we mirror the perfection of the Heavenly Father. Just as He loved his enemies, so should we love ours (Matt. 5:43-48).

A paramount example of Christian love is found in the story of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:29-37), where the selfish attitudes and actions of the robbers ("What's yours is mine!") and of the priest and Levite ("What's mine is mine!") are thoroughly exposed and repudiated by the merciful, loving response of the righteous Samaritan ("What's mine is yours!").⁶¹ This simple story undercuts multiple false notions about what is just, including the all-too-selfish notion of basic property rights so common and pervasive in the United States (and elsewhere), "What's mine is mine!" Love is more than just, but it entails a radical form of justice.⁶²

In one sense, the most basic claim I am making in this article is that the Christian case for social justice should be rooted most deeply in this form of justice (δικαιοσύνη), a justice so tilted toward mercy and grace, so filled with forgiveness,⁶³ so infused with Christian love (ἀγάπη), so trusting in our Father in heaven, that quarrels about the fairness or unfairness of potential schemes for retributive, distributive, or restorative justice with respect to repairing personal or social wrongs become almost irrelevant, at least for the Christian.⁶⁴ So, for example, the very real difficulties in working out the details of restorative justice should not keep Christians from embracing the need to make appropriate reparations.⁶⁵ This justice is also at the very core of the Gospel, because this justice (or righteousness) comes as a gift of pure grace from our heavenly Father. This justice (or righteousness) gives rise to lives of mercy, of purity, and of peacemaking.

Another Look at the Semantic Range of Δικαιοσύνη

So far, I have been looking primarily at broadly conceptual (philosophical or theological) rather than lexical or philological definitions of δικαιοσύνη, and I have ignored some possible questions about or objections to my narrative from those more inclined to biblical or classical or linguistic studies.

1. What about the dramatic shift in meaning from the Greek philosophical notion(s) of *justice* to the Hebraic religious notion of *righteousness*? Since the immediate context of New

61 *Deuteronomy* 22:4 suggests that one should not even pass by a suffering animal.

62 I would argue that the Christian notion of *stewardship* challenges common understandings of *ownership*. Cf. Ronald J. Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: Moving from Affluence to Generosity*, 6th ed., with a new Preface (Nashville, Tenn.: W Publishing Group, Thomas Nelson, 2015). The 2nd & 3rd (1990) editions had a Foreword by Kenneth S. Kantzer, the 4th ed./20th anniversary revision (1997) a Foreword by Robert Seiple. Sider, like Gustavo Gutierrez (see note 8 above), moderated some of his views over the years; and Sider came to the end of his life with a greater appreciation for some elements of capitalism and for the private ownership of property.

63 Cf. the analysis and explication of forgiveness in a major new monograph by Cristian F. Mihut, *Gracious Forgiveness: A Theological Retrieval* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2023).

64 I do not mean by this claim that other theories are irrelevant, especially in a pluralistic society, just as ἀγάπη does not erase the riches of affection, friendship, or eros, even as it enriches and supersedes them. I merely mean that, for Christians, just as ἀγάπη introduces a whole new dimension to love, so too the Christian understanding of δικαιοσύνη does to justice.

65 See, e.g., Erdel, "Christian Case for Racial Reparations." A first stab at sorting out this complicated, contentious issue took me some 50,000 words. My brother, John Mark Erdel, called the result a "rambling wreck."

Testament Greek is the Septuagint (LXX), not Greek philosophy, and since English translators would seem to have taken their cue from the LXX meanings and usages of δικαιοσύνη, why persist in pursuing Greek philosophical categories that may be foreign or alien to New Testament authors, even if both ancient Greek philosophy and the LXX employ the Greek term δικαιοσύνη?

This article is questioning whether the notion of justice should be abandoned for righteousness, since the semantic range of both מִשְׁפָּט (*mishpat*) and צְדָקָה (*tsedeq*), both translated as δικαιοσύνη in the LXX and other early Jewish literature, seems to cover both justice and righteousness. Hebrew justice may not be the same as Greco-Roman justice (I would argue that it is not), but justice is clearly part of the referent of δικαιοσύνη in the LXX. So, the slippage is between different definitions of justice within different theories of justice, or even different worldviews (Greco-Roman contra the Hebrew and Christian), not a complete shift from a fixed notion of justice to a very different notion of righteousness.

2. Does the semantic range of δικαιοσύνη really cover both מִשְׁפָּט (*mishpat*) and צְדָקָה (*tsedeq*) in the LXX and other early Jewish literature, and what does it mean if it does?

It seems that δικαιοσύνη really does serve to cover both מִשְׁפָּט (*mishpat*) and צְדָקָה (*tsedeq*) in the LXX and other early Jewish literature (see fuller discussion below). That does not mean that δικαιοσύνη always has the same meaning, or always references justice. But the suggestion here is that justice should be given priority, not relegated to obscurity by replacing an “ethical” term, *justice*, with a “religious” one, *righteousness*, which were once much closer in meaning, but have evolved in different directions, at least in English.

3. Just what do the New Testament writers mean by δικαιοσύνη? Is it righteousness, justice, a mix of both, or something else?

I am suggesting that δικαιοσύνη references a mix of what we now call justice *and* righteousness, but that “justice” should be given a greater place in contemporary discussions. Justice may even be the primary meaning of δικαιοσύνη, where righteousness has frequently replaced it in English. The older English term for righteousness (“rightwiseness”) referenced justice, but that older meaning of righteousness (“rightwiseness”) is now largely forgotten, except by philologists.⁶⁶

4. Does the semantic range of δικαιοσύνη cover more than מִשְׁפָּט (*mishpat*) and צְדָקָה (*tsedeq*)? This question could be taken several ways, but I am especially interested in the different types of *justice* that δικαιοσύνη might reference. How does the NT distinguish verbally, if it does, retributive, distributive, commutative, or restorative forms of justice? Do we really find those linguistic categories in the New Testament? There are four Greek terms for the four loves.⁶⁷ Does one Greek term, δικαιοσύνη (with other δικ-stem words) serve to reference every form of justice?

Unless I am grossly mistaken,⁶⁸ Koiné Greek seems not to have specific terms for different types of justice, the way Greek has distinct terms for four different forms of love. This is a serious dis-analogy to my comparison of ἀγάπη and δικαιοσύνη. The different forms or types of justice lack the level of analytic, linguistic distinctions we have for different types of justice in modern ethical discussions. Nevertheless, discussions of justice in antiquity do seem to point to possible distinctions that illustrate four or more forms of justice. So, while use of contemporary terms for justice may have an anachronistic ring about them when applied to ancient texts, they may still be appropriate as ways of illuminating analytic or conceptual distinctions implicit within those texts.

⁶⁶ Damholt, “*Rightwiseness* and Justice.”

⁶⁷ Recall note 47 for some possible semantic limitations to that Greek typology, but the semantic ranges of each of the four Greek terms for love and the possible implications of the breadth of those ranges are discussions for another day.

⁶⁸ I am very grateful for email exchanges on this point with my colleague, Professor David R. McCabe, 14-15 March 2023.

The closest New Testament Greek term to the δικ-stem cluster of words would presumably be κρίσις, but we are now in the realm of judgment, often judicial judgment, or at least allusions to it. We hope that judges and their judgments are just, but the term κρίσις is not the same as δικαιοσύνη/justice.

5. When δικαιοσύνη seems to take on distinct allusions to the *unfairness* of *grace* or *mercy*, is that move solely signaled by contextual considerations, or is the lexical meaning of δικαιοσύνη by that time fundamentally different from previous usages?

I do think that contextual and usage considerations signal a huge shift in the basic meaning of δικαιοσύνη from the previous Greek *philosophical* definitions. There are strong elements of mercy and grace, which introduce the possibility of *unfairness* into the discussion. This already occurs in the LXX and other early Jewish literature, but the change from strict fairness to the emphasis on mercy and grace is underscored and amplified in the New Testament. This is not a change of vocabulary, but a radical re-definition of traditional vocabulary.

These brief answers may require a bit more explanation.

The initial evidence from the LXX seems clear, at least to me. While the δικ-stem cluster of words may be used to translate both מִשְׁפָּט (*mishpat*) and words with צְדָקָה/צִדְקָה (*tsdq/tsedeq*) roots, the tilt seems to be strongly in favor of δικ-stem terms being used for צְדָקָה roots.⁶⁹

But the discussion quickly becomes more complicated. For example, it would seem that מִשְׁפָּט (*mishpat*) and צְדָקָה (*tsedeq*) may themselves be used as nearly parallel synonyms throughout the Hebrew text. Consider Job's memories of his former life in 29:14:

יְטַפְּשָׁמָהּ יִלְבָּ֑טְוּ לִי־עֵמֶכ׃ יִגְשְׁבִלְוִי׃ יִתְשַׁבֵּל קִדְצ׃

Righteousness covered me like a robe, and I wore justice like a turban (NLT).

Similar parallel usages may be found in Ecclesiastes 5:8 (“perversion of *justice* and *righteousness*”), Isaiah 28:17a (“the measuring line of *justice* and the plumb line of *righteousness*”), in Isaiah 32:16 (“*Justice* will rule in the wilderness and *righteousness* in the fertile field”), and in Jeremiah 22:15b (“But he was *just* and *right* in all his dealings. That is why God blessed him”). In fact, there are dozens of pairings of מִשְׁפָּט (*mishpat*) and צְדָקָה (*tsedeq*) or their roots (at least sixty-six!) in the Hebrew Scriptures.⁷⁰ So, the dividing lines between מִשְׁפָּט (*mishpat*) and צְדָקָה (*tsedeq*) seem a bit blurred. Their frequent pairing is more than an ordinary hendiadys, or so it seems to me.

Moreover, many biblical scholars would agree that both מִשְׁפָּט (*mishpat*) and צְדָקָה (*tsedeq*) are, for Hebrew Scriptures, best defined in terms of right relationships, both with God and with fellow human beings.⁷¹ Therefore, δικαιοσύνη can serve to cover both words, when it too is primarily understood as turning on the notion of right relationships.⁷² This motif continues into the New

⁶⁹ See the basic articles on δικη and related δικ-stem terms by Gottfried Quell and Gottlob Schrenk in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, eds. Gerhard Kittel (1-4) and Gerhard Friedrich (5-9), trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromley (vols. 1-9), comp. Ronald E. Pitkin (10/index), 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964-1976), 2:174-225. See also the anonymous entry for δικαιοσύνη and related δικ-stem terms in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Moisés Silva, 2nd ed., 5 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2014), 1:723-741.

⁷⁰ See the lists compiled by José Porfirio Miranda, *Marx and the Bible: A Critique of the Philosophy of Oppression*, trans. John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1974), 93-94 & 107, n. 35-38.

⁷¹ See, e.g., Krašovec, *God's Righteousness and Justice in the OT*; Harold V. Bennett, “Justice, OT,” in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* [NIDB], gen. ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, 5 vols. (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 2006-2009), 3:476-477; Jutta-Leonhard-Balzer, “Righteousness in Early Jewish Literature,” NIDB, 4:807-813; Scot McKnight, *A Community Called Atonement*, Living Theology, series ed. Tony Jones (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 2007), especially 124-133, Harink, *Resurrecting Justice*; and Philpott, “Resurrecting Justice,” among others.

⁷² Remember the way Hebraic terms frequently are better defined by the breadth of their associative connotations rather than by sharp distinctions drawn with analytic rigor. By way of illustration, I am thinking of basic words such as רוּחַ (*ruach*). Limiting δικαιοσύνη to righteousness seems wrong on multiple levels, beginning with the breadth of meaning

Testament and is central to Paul's thought in the book of Romans.⁷³ I have already argued it is the primary meaning for Jesus in his core teachings.⁷⁴

Philpott (following Wolterstorff) attempts to summarize the semantic scheme of right relationships in a fourfold grid.⁷⁵ Here is my truncated version of both scholars' viewpoints.

1. Divine *primary* justice means right relationships are established by God through Creation and covenants.
2. Divine *rectifying* justice means right relationships are restored by God by means of his great salvific acts, supremely in the death and resurrection of Jesus.
3. Human *primary* justice (*distributive* and *commutative*) means establishing right relationships with each other by right actions with respect to God, the natural world, and fellow human beings, actions motivated by love for God and each other, actions appropriate to God's revealed will about relationships.
4. Human *rectifying* justice means restoring broken relationships by responding to past wrongs in the ways that God has revealed are appropriate to the wrongs that have been committed.

None of this, however, would seem to undermine the basic claim I am making, based upon the New Testament definition and usage of δικαιοσύνη, that Christian justice turns supremely upon mercy and grace, rather than fairness, and that it is therefore in some important sense a form of justice characterized by unfairness.

A Mini-Case Study: Christian Mission and Social Justice

If the definition of justice (δικαιοσύνη) I have been championing is correct, then Christian justice clearly overlaps with Christian grace and mercy, and both justice and grace are at the core of the Good News. This insight has application to many issues, but I have space here to look briefly at one. I have already argued elsewhere in print that the Great Commission references and is rooted in the Sermon on the Mount.⁷⁶ Biblical evangelism, mission, and social justice cannot be separated in Christian life and witness, whatever analytic or conceptual distinctions are possible to make in discussing them.

I might not have been able to define justice fully or properly then (nor now, for that matter), but I suspect my youthful intuitions were on the right track. Sider, Dayton, Stott, and the Latin American Theological Fraternity were correct—evangelism, mission, and social justice are so biblically intertwined that they cannot begin to be materially disentangled, with one given priority over the other.

Thus, any attempt to prioritize evangelism or mission over social justice is unbiblical, just as any attempt to institute Christian justice that fails to evangelize or carry forward Christian mission is less than fully biblical justice (righteousness), whether personal or social.

inherent in both מִשְׁפָּט (*mishpat*) and צְדָקָה (*tzedeq*) in the Hebrew Scriptures or in δικαιοσύνη in the LXX.

73 See Harink, *Resurrecting Justice*; cf. Marion L. Soards, "Righteousness in the NT," NIDB, 4:813-818.

In discussions concerning the thorny questions surrounding the meaning of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ, "justification" looms large, "justice" less so, even though Luther tilted toward the language of "justice" (*iustitia Dei*). See, e.g., Nicholas Dodson, "Paul's Use of ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΥΝΗ ΘΕΟΥ and the New Perspective Interpretation," *The Journal of Ministry and Theology* 19.2 (Fall 2015): 133-164; Denny Burk, "The Righteousness of God (*Dikaïosunē Theou*) and Verbal Genitives: A Grammatical Clarification," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 34.4 (June 2012): 346-360; and Richard K. Moore, "ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΥΝΗ and Cognates in Paul: The Semantic Gulf between Two Major Lexicons (Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker and Louw-Nida)," *Colloquium* 30.1 (May 1998: 27-43).

74 Erdel, "Holiness among Mennonites"; see also John C. Haughey, "Jesus as the Justice of God," in *The Faith That Does Justice: Examining the Christian Sources for Social Change*, ed. John C. Haughey, Woodstock Theological Center: Woodstock Studies, no. 2 (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 264-290.

75 Philpott, "Resurrecting Justice," 170; see Wolterstorff, *Justice*, ix-x.

76 Erdel, "Great Commission and God's Righteous Kingdom."

It is no accident that C. S. Lewis began *Mere Christianity* with an appeal to our basic sense of “Right and Wrong as a Clue to the Meaning of the Universe,”⁷⁷ or that N. T. Wright began *Simply Christian* with a chapter on “Putting the World to Rights.” As Wright reminds us, “[Christianity] is about justice, because Christians not only inherit the Jewish passion for justice but claim that Jesus embodied that passion, and that what he did and what happened to him, set in motion the Creator’s plan to rescue the world and put it back to rights.”⁷⁸

Christian evangelism and mission reference retributive justice because Christian witness begins with calls to repentance: “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” Repentance is the first step in avoiding the divine retribution we so richly deserve.

Christian evangelism and mission include distributive justice because we readily share with the persons we encounter the mercy we have received so unfairly. We show mercy by making sure others have opportunities in life to exercise their gifts and talents properly. We also show mercy by making sure no one is treated unfairly, and all of us get our fair share. We especially show mercy when we do for others what they could never do for themselves, because their own needs far outstrip their personal abilities or resources, just as ours do. We are interdependent with other humans, as well as dependent upon our heavenly Father.

Christian evangelism and mission entail restorative (or reparative or rectifying or transitional) justice because the heart of the Christian message is about God’s great work of reconciliation,⁷⁹ which repairs and restores relations between God and humans and between divided, warring humans.

Christian evangelism and mission turn especially upon divine δικαιοσύνη because the Christian message is about a loving, gracious God who tilts the scales of the universe radically toward grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

My larger point is that applications such as this could be made in many domains.⁸⁰

Timothy Paul Erdel is a former Professor of Religion & Philosophy and in the Committee on the Humanities, as well as an Alumni Association Distinguished Professor at Bethel University, Mishawaka, Indiana, where he is also the Archivist for the Missionary Church. He spent his formative years in Esmeraldas, Ecuador, where three generations of his family have lived, and later served in Kingston, Jamaica, with his wife, Sally, and their three children, Sarah Beth, Rachel, and Matthew. He has held visiting or occasional appointments at some two dozen schools, from a rural Baptist seminary in Cuba to Columbia University in NYC. He still teaches for the Caribbean Graduate School of Theology.

77 C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity: A Revised and Enlarged Edition, with a New Introduction of Three Books: The Case for Christianity, Christian Behaviour, and Beyond Personality*. (New York: Macmillan Co., 1952). See Book I of IV. Book I, “Right and Wrong as a Clue to the Meaning of the Universe,” contains five chapters.

78 Wright, *Simply Christian*, 10.

79 Remember Billy Graham’s first great best seller (1953), *Peace with God*, rev. and expanded (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1984).

80 I am especially grateful to my brother, David A. Erdel, for his comments on and corrections of an earlier version of this essay, as well as for the email exchange with David R. McCabe, already noted above.

I have yet to address thoughtful questions about suffering from my faculty colleague David E. Schmidt, except in the almost incidental allusion to the final Beatitude in the Sermon on the Mount (5:10-12), which says that those persecuted for the sake of δικαιοσύνη(ς)/justice/righteousness are blessed. Prof. Schmidt suffered profound abuse as a child. How does Christian justice speak to his story?

Various portions or iterations of this paper were presented at the Evangelical Theological Society annual meeting in Fort Worth, Texas, 18 November 2021 (as part of an extended paper on “The Christian Case for Racial Reparations”), at the Evangelical Missiological Society North Central Region annual meeting (online), 19 March 2022, at the Evangelical Philosophical Society annual meeting, Denver, Colorado, 17 November 2022, and at the Midwest Meeting for Biblical Studies, with the Chicago Society of Biblical Research & the Catholic Biblical Association of America, St. Mary’s College, Notre Dame, Indiana, 18 March 2023. I am grateful for helpful questions from and dialogue with audience members in each of those settings, though this version does not begin to deal with all the thoughtful points that were raised in those discussions. This article was revised 17 May 2023.

The Christian World Liberation Front

The Jesus Movement's Model of Revival and Social Reform for the Postmodern Church

JEANNE C. DEFazio

FOREWORD BY Julia C. Davis

AFTERWORD BY William David Spencer

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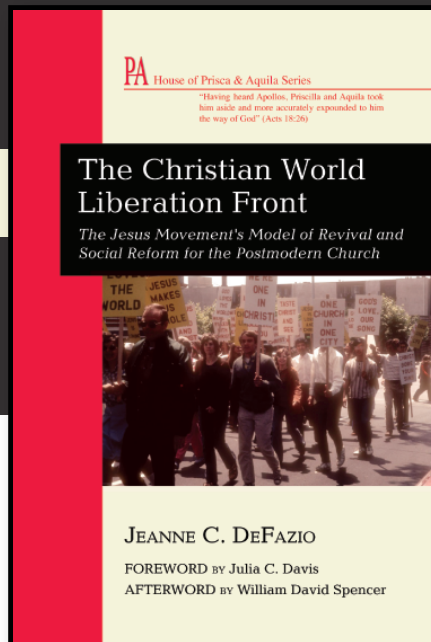
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JEANNE C. DEFazio is the author of *Keeping the Dream Alive: A Reflection on the Art of Harriet Lorence Nesbit*; co-author of *How to Have an Attitude of Gratitude on the Night Shift with Teresa Flowers*; and editor of *Berkeley Street Theatre: How Improvisation and Street Theater Emerged as a Christian Outreach to the Culture of the Time*. She also edited *Specialist Fourth Class John Joseph DeFazio: Advocating for Disabled American Veterans*, *The Commission*, and *Finding a Better Way* and was the co-editor of *Creative Ways to Build Christian Community*, *Redeeming the Screens*, *Empowering English Language Learners*, and *An Artistic Tribute to Harriet Tubman*. She is a contributing author to *Christian Egalitarian Leadership*.

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A Brief Introduction to the History of Christianity among the Ancient Uyghurs

MARK CHUANHANG SHAN

About the writing background of the article

In my previous article, “Silk Road Christianity in Tarim and Turpan Basin Prior to AD 640 When Tang China Took Over Kocho Kingdom,” I state that throughout more than a century, studies on the ancient religions of the modern-day Turpan Basin and the Tarim Basin of Central Asia in northwest China have relied on historical journals and collections of ancient transcripts discovered in the Turpan Basin (and Dun-huang) early last century to conclude that the Uyghurs, after migrating from the modern-day Mongol Steppes to the Western Regions around the Tian-shan Mountains to become the Kocho Uyghurs in the ninth century, initially remained Manicheans, then converted to Buddhism with Christianity as a minority religion among them. Overlooked evidence, however, reveals that many do not understand that the Kocho Uyghurs were mostly Christians that converted from Manichaeism after a period of time and were never officially Buddhists, with maybe only a handful of Uyghurs actually accepting Buddhism. In addition, Uyghur Manichaeism did not disappear, but continued to exist in a highly mutated form through a concealed way until the Islamic conquest at the end of the fourteenth century.¹

The article presented a religious landscape of the Kocho-Turpan Basin and the Northeastern Rim of the Tarim Basin prior to and after the Uyghurs fell and officially migrated to these regions in AD 841. My observation is primarily based on information gathered from relevant Chinese classics, in order to promote a better understanding of ancient Uyghur religions against the larger social ethnical-geographical context, at least for the latter part of the ninth century.

Since the Russians pioneered the study of Central Asian peoples and religions, the research method used in academia has been mainly through archeology, the study of discovered building ruins, objects, pictures, and texts. Among them, the main research method is the translation and interpretation of the manuscripts dug out by archaeologists through learning ancient languages, and it is a method still used today as the main approach in the field. However, though the translation method is fundamentally important, and the scholars’ related works are valuable, it is not enough, because those fascinating archaeological discoveries, including their textual materials, are fragmented and localized (i.e., limited to local places), and very often they reflect short ranges of historical fragments. Therefore, the study of Christianity in Central Asia, including Xinjiang, China, has always lacked a comprehensive construction, which is regrettable after over a century of studies.

In my many years of research, I have found that this regrettable situation can be broken through by refocusing the study on existing official historical materials, which, themselves, interpret the partial puzzle pieces of archaeological discoveries. For example, by researching the written materials left by the Syrian missionaries, the materials left by the European and Vatican envoys, and the systematic and detailed records of the Chinese court that have been preserved to this day, I gradually constructed a macro context of ancient Christian history in Xinjiang Province, a key site on the ancient Silk Road of religious, ethnic, and historical significance.

In addition to sophisticated and comprehensive textual research, I also benefited from a new method of multidimensional research and constructional study, that is, a detailed study of the evolution of ethnic identity through geographical coordinates and religious attributes. On this basis, I studied ethnic history and religious history as different but complementary sides of the same

1 Mark Shan, “Silk Road Christianity in Tarim and Turpan Basin Prior to AD 640 When Tang China Took Over Kocho Kingdom,” *Africanus Journal* 13:2 (2021): 26.

coin. As a result, the above-mentioned breakthrough was achieved and a macroscopic and overall picture of the history of Xinjiang Christianity was obtained. According to this overall picture, the fragmented and partial archaeological discoveries regained more meaning and value, thus supporting and revising this overall new historical picture.

This present article is based on years of my research, especially the textual analysis of ancient Chinese and Syrian historical materials, as well as archaeological discoveries, to construct a macro-framework of the history of ancient Uyghur Christianity. Although such a framework is relatively rough (and assumably a surprise for many scholars of the rich and significant Christian history for ancient Uyghurs over five hundred years), it can provide a reliable macro-model and a grand framework for the detailed study of Uyghur Christianity in different historical stages, thereby being able to place many fragmented discoveries and research into this framework and produce a coherent and more accurate understanding.

This short article provides a typical model of ethnic-religious history, constructing a macro-model of the historical development and the changes over time in Uyghur Christianity, as a new contribution to the academic community. Against the model and picture, scholars are able to fill in more details and even further correct the accuracy of the overall historical model.

Preface: The Origins of the Branch of Christianity Introduced to the Ancient Uyghurs

The Syrian Church, which started in the Kingdom of Edessa in Asia Minor, evangelized to the east, following the Silk Road. By AD 225, not only had it established more than twenty bishoprics in Mesopotamia and Persia, its diocesan sphere of influence extended even into the Bactria YueZhi Kushan Kingdom of Central Asia.² But later, the East Syriac Church, which was the major branch of Syrian Christianity that flourished in Persia, endured more than seventy years of brutal persecution from the Persian Empire and was forced to declare its ecclesiastical independence in AD 410-414, calling itself the Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East (shortened to Assyrian Church of the East or Church of the East). Although it was not recognized as such by the other patriarchates, it became the *de facto* fifth patriarchate (called the Patriarchate of the East), after the Patriarchate of Rome, the Patriarchate of Constantinople, the Patriarchate of Alexandria, and the Patriarchate of Antioch.³ The Catholicos (Patriarch) of the East Syriac Church was appointed by the king of Persia. The seat of its Patriarchal See was the Persian capital Seleucia-Ctesiphon (today's Baghdad). It used the Peshitta version of the Syriac-language Bible, and its sacraments followed the East Syriac tradition.⁴

After the AD 431 Council of Ephesus, the East Syriac Church in Persia and its School of Edessa (and later its School of Nisibis) continued to hold fast to the Christology of Patriarchate Antioch's theological tradition, which the Ephesus Council and the AD 451 Council of Chalcedon had condemned as heresy and which was also called Nestorianism, created to present a powerful challenge to the Mariology doctrine that was then before the Council.⁵ It is imperative to clarify the difference between Nestorianism and the Christology of the East Syriac Church.

These are the other names that have also been used for the Christianity spread by the historical East Syriac Church: Persian Christianity, Da-qin *Jingjiao* (Luminous religion), *Tarsa*, *Mishha* Christianity, *Arkgun* religion, etc. Today, the Assyrian Church of the East, whose headquarters still remain in Iraq, is generally referred to by academics as East Syriac Christianity and Church of the East, and is a branch of Christianity, like the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, and Protestantism. In 1994, the Roman Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the

2 Alphonse Mingana, *The Early Spread of Christianity in Central Asia and the Far East* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2010), 298.

3 Wilhelm Baum and Dietmar W. Winkler, *The Church of the East: A Concise History* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 19-20.

4 Qianzhi Zhu, *Jing Religion in China* (Beijing: People's Press, 1998), 41, 43.

5 Baum and Winkler, *The Church of the East*, 23, 26.

East issued a joint declaration announcing their reconciliation, ending the historical debate over Mariology and Christology.⁶

This dispute over Christology began when the Patriarch Nestorius of Constantinople disagreed with the concept and term of *Theotokos* (God-bearer) and suggested instead *Christotokos* (Christ-bearer), because he represented the Antiochian theological view, believing that it was necessary to emphasize at the same time the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ, while *Theotokos* only reflects the divinity of Jesus Christ. In addition to theological accuracy, Nestorius also worried that believers would fall into an idolatry of Mary, especially attracted and alienated by the idol of a certain Egyptian goddess. Nestorius was condemned as a heretic at the Council of Ephesus in AD 431. It should be noted that, when the Assyrian Church of the East in Persia declared its independence officially in 414, not only had Nestorius not yet served in Constantinople and had not entered history, but also the Council of Ephesus was not convened until about 17 years later. Therefore, calling the Assyrian Church in Persia “Nestorian” is not consistent with historical facts. Furthermore, the Christology of the Assyrian Church came from Antioch-Syriac theology, not Nestorius, whose Christology came from the same source.

To understand Antiochean-Nestorius’ Christology, one needs to refer not only to the ruling documents of the Ecumenical and Chalcedon Councils, but also to Nestorius’s self-defense book, *The Bazaar of Heracleides* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925), as well as the authoritative evaluations of later generations. For example, the Christian reformer Martin Luther once commented on Nestorius’ Christology, explaining that the accusation of Nestorius was not on the right target. He wrote:

...For awhile I myself could not understand just what Nestorius’ error was; in any event, I thought that Nestorius had denied the divinity of Christ and had regarded Christ as no more than a mere man, as the papal decretals and all papal writers say. But their own words, when I really looked at them, made me change my mind. They accuse Nestorius of making two persons out of Christ, namely, God and man. Some, who also failed to understand him, thought he taught that Christ was first born of Mary as mere man and then led such a holy life that the Godhead merged with him, and he thus became God, and their writing is so confused that I think they still do not know today how and why they condemned Nestorius.

Luther further stated:

...For it appears that the pope and his followers put the words into Nestorius’ mouth that he viewed Christ as a mere man and not also as God, and that he took Christ to be two persons or two Christs. This appears (I say) not only from the histories, but also from the very words and documents of the popes and their writers... Thus Nestorius’ error was not that he believed Christ to be a pure man, or that he made two persons of him; on the contrary, he confesses two natures, the divine and the human, in one person-but he will not admit a *communicatio idiomatum*.⁷

6 Also refer to the following footnote for the official redress of Christological dispute and joint declaration by the Roman Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East, although not a redress of Nestorius who thus remains as a heretic in church history.

Mar Dinkha IV, Ioannes Paulus PP. II. “Common Christological Declaration of Pope John Paul II and His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV, Catholicos-Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East,” Friday, 11 November 1994, Vatican City. https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1994/november/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19941111_dichiarazione-cristologica.html “That is the reason why the Assyrian Church of the East is praying the Virgin Mary as ‘the Mother of Christ our God and Saviour.’ In the light of this same faith the Catholic tradition addresses the Virgin Mary as ‘the Mother of God’ and also as ‘the Mother of Christ.’”

7 Martin Luther, “On the Councils and the Church,” 1539; Eric W. Gritsch (trans. and ed.), Gordon Rupp (intr.), and Helmut T. Lehmann (ed.), *Church and Ministry III, Luther’s Works*, American edition, volume 41 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 96-97, 99, 100, and 104.

However, Luther also agrees with the council that “God was born of Mary” and that “Mary was *theotokos*,” so on this point Nestorius “was rightly condemned in the council, and ought to be condemned.” For Luther, “This council condemned far too little of Nestorius, for it dealt only with the one *idioma*, that God was born of Mary.” Furthermore, “Although Nestorius confesses that Christ, true God and true man, is one person, but does not ascribe the *idiomata* of human nature to the same divine person of Christ, he is in error, just as much as if he denied the nature itself.”

As for the Christology of the Assyrian Church of the East, the main reference should be based on the exposition of the theologian and the appointed Catholicos-Patriarch of the Church, Babai the Great: “One is Christ, the Son of God, glorified by all in two natures (*kyane*); begotten by the Father without beginning before time; born of Mary in his humanity, united in the fullness of time in one body. His divinity is not of the nature of the mother, nor is his humanity of the nature of the Father. The natures are preserved in their *qnome* (hypostases) in one person of the one sonship.”⁸

1. Early Uyghur Christianity (AD 720s-841)

Christianity was first introduced to some of the Uyghur people and its confederation nation in the eighth century, and it flourished among the Uyghurs from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries. Uyghur Christianity officially died out at the end of the fourteenth century because of the Islamic conquest and was not introduced again until the late nineteenth century. Today most Uyghurs live in Xinjiang, China.

The Christianity that was introduced to the Uyghurs was also the same Christianity that was introduced to Central Asia, East Asia, and Siberia. They are all part of East Syriac Christianity; that is, they all are part of the ecclesiastical institution of the Assyrian Church of the East. According to historical texts of the Syrian Church, from the mid-fifth century to the mid-seventh century, the East Syriac Church achieved historic success in its missionary work in Central Asia, establishing at least four bishoprics on the south bank of the Amu or Oxus River, including the Metropolitanate of Merv, and going even further, establishing the Samarkand diocese in the river basin on the northern bank.⁹ Thus the Church’s jurisdiction extended into the Pamir Mountains. In addition, we can conclude from Chinese historical court documents that, by no later than the fifth century, the reach of the East Syriac Church had extended to the eastern side of the Pamirs, from the Tarim Basin all the way eastward to the Turpan Basin. This success meant that, in several Indo-European states, East Syriac Christianity became one of the two dominant religions, the other being Buddhism.¹⁰

In AD 751, Islamic military forces defeated China’s Tang dynasty army and gained control of Central Asia. The East Syriac Church, under the leadership of Catholicos Timotheos I (AD 780-823), continued to strengthen and promote its eastward missionary work in Asia, achieving breakthroughs in East Asia and Siberia.¹¹ A precious West-Syriac document, a bishop’s letter, written in about the eighth century, stated in descriptive detail that four Turkic-Tatar kingdoms on the present-day Mongolian steppes were Christian,¹² a remarkable mission accomplishment.

My analysis of historical texts in several languages shows that, in the early eighth century, before the Uyghur Khanate was founded, one of the Uyghur tribes (the Ongut Uyghurs, who were the first to convert to East Syriac Christianity), along with three other Christian kingdoms on the grasslands, were designated by the Patriarchal See of the East Syriac Church as jurisdictionally belonging to the specially established metropolitanate that was likely located in the north foothills

8 Refer to Baum and Winkler, *The Church of the East*, 39.

9 Mingana, *The Early Spread of Christianity*, 298, 304-305.

10 See Shan, “Silk Road Christianity in Tarim and Turpan Basins Prior to AD 640 When Tang China Took Over Kocho Kingdom,” 26-45.

11 Baum and Winkler, *The Church of the East*, 47-50; Mingana, *The Early Spread of Christianity*, 320-25.

12 See the translation of the Letter of Mar Philoxenus, Bishop of Mabbug, to Abi ‘Afr, Military Governor of Hirta of Nu‘man. Mingana, *The Early Spread of Christianity*, 352-67.

of the Tianshan Mountains (now Qitai county, Xinjiang, China).¹³ In AD 780, Tun Bagha Tarkhan (AD 780-89) forcibly seized power to become the fourth khan of the Uyghur Khanate, established since 744 in the grasslands of what has become present-day Mongolia. Even though Manichaeism was the khanate's state religion, the new khan was hostile to the Manichaeans. In 781, the same year that the Xi'an *Jingjiao* Stele was erected, Catholicos Timotheos I established a new metropolitanate in East Asia (its location now is unknown) that might have been established especially for the Christian church in the Uyghur khanate. Later, the Chinese Tang emperor "Saint" Dezong, who supported (or believed in) *Jingjiao*, in other words, East Syriac Christianity, gave one of his daughters in marriage to this Uyghur khan.¹⁴

In AD 841, the Khyrgyz in north Siberia defeated its neighbor the Uyghur Khanate to the south, and the defeated Uyghurs were forced to separate into three groups and migrate westward. The yellow-headed, (i.e., blond-haired) Sari Uyghurs branch migrated west, settling in the Hexi corridor and the Dun-huang area (now China's Gansu Province), while the largest branch continued further west, settling in the Turpan Basin and the Tarim Basin south of the Tianshan Mountains, establishing another khanate, historically known as the Gaochang (Kocho) Uyghur Khanate (or West Uyghur Khanate, or "Xizhou Uyghurs" in Chinese court history). Another branch of the Uyghurs continued to migrate even further west, settling west of the Pamirs and later becoming the Kara Khanate, modern day Uzbekistan.¹⁵ The Ongut Uyghurs chose to migrate south until they came to areas abutting Tang China, settling in today's Datong Basin. The Gaochang Uyghur Khanate occupied and ruled the northern and southern regions of the Tianshan Mountains, including the large and small Indo-European city-states in the Tarim Basin of the Tocharian-Sarmatians, who believed in East Syriac Christianity and Buddhism since no later than the first half of the fifth century.¹⁶

2. Indigenized Uyghur Christianity (AD 841-1218)

Before the Uyghurs moved west, likely no later than AD 823, Kashgar, at the western end of the Tarim Basin, used to be ruled by a Christian prince in the eighth century,¹⁷ had already become the seat of the metropolitanate of the East Syriac Church, with jurisdiction over the East Syriac Christianity of the Tocharian-Sarmatian people and other Indo-Europeans in the Tarim Basin. After migrating west, Christianity among the Gaochang Uyghurs developed steadily for about a century and might have been a part of the Qitai diocese (probably a metropolitanate). Uyghur Manichaeism, meanwhile, remained an institutional force, while Buddhism continued to be present mainly among the local Tocharian-Sarmatian people.¹⁸

During this period, the Christians among the Sari Uyghurs, along with the local Han Chinese and Indo-European Xi-xia (West Xia) Christians were all part of Dun-huang Christianity, belonging to the Tangut Metropolitanate. The Christian tribes among the Uyghurs on the west side of the Pamirs were part of Turkic Christianity,¹⁹ including some ancestors of Turkey, and

13 Guan Ren and Jian Wei. "The Main Archaeological Achievements of the Excavation in 2021 at the East Syriac Christianity Temple Site in Tangchaodun of Qitai, Xinjiang," *The Western Regions*, No. 3 (2022): 106-113. Urumqi, China: Xinjiang Social Science Academy.

14 Xu Liu, *Old Book of Tang* (Beijing: Zhonghua Book, 2000), 3544.

15 Jing Jing, *Roman Christianity Spread in China Stele* [AD 781]; Liu, *Old Book of Tang*, "Uyghurs"; Xiu Ou-yang and Qi Song, *New Book of Tang*, "Uyghurs" (Beijing: Zhonghua Book, 2000); René Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia*, Naomi Walford (tr.) (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970), 120-27.

16 Liu, *Old Book of Tang*; Xiu Ou-yang, *New Book of Tang*; Tuo-tuo, *History of Song*, "Gaochang; Uyghurs" (Beijing: Zhonghua Book, 2000).

17 Baum and Winkler, *The Church of the East*, 49.

18 Mark C. Shan, *The Development of Mutation of Ancient Uyghur Manichaeism—And an analysis of why academia mistakenly thought the Kocho Uyghurs were Buddhists* (Boston: Chinese Christian Academic Association, 2019).

19 Clarifying and recognizing that ancient Turks and ancient Uyghurs belong to different ethnic groups and countries will help to understand the overall and detailed composition of ancient Christianity in Central Asia. Thus, this article establishes and distinguishes the names of "Turkic Christianity" and "Uyghur Christianity" The concept is precisely based

with the local Turks, Tocharians, Sogdians, and other Indo-Europeans belonged to the Samarkand Metropolitanate, the Indo-European Christianity. The Christians among the southerly migrating Ongut Uyghurs belonged to the Datong (Xijing) Metropolitanate.

By the tenth and eleventh centuries, in addition to the Uyghur Christian Khanate, five other Christian nations of different ethnicities and races emerged, spread over a vast area from the Altai Mountains in the west to the Daxinganling (Greater Khingan) Mountains in the east. Islam entered the Tarim Basin at this time. In 1130, the Khitan Liao Kingdom in East Asia was defeated by the Jurchens and moved west, occupying Central Asia, including the Gaochang Uyghur Khanate, historically known as the Western Liao. Its Da-he-shi royal family followed Christian traditions. The ruler at the end of the Western Liao Empire strongly supported Christianity and suppressed the Islamic forces in the Kashgar Metropolitanate. By 1218, Genghis Khan's Mongols had defeated the Western Liao and other kingdoms, occupied Central Asia, and then established their Chagatai Khanate under the jurisdiction of the Mongol Empire.

3. Highly Developed Uyghur Christianity (AD 1218-1368)

After the Mongols conquered Central Asia, they put Uyghurs in important positions to govern the empire, develop the Mongolian script from the Uyghur script, and civilize the Mongolian khan nobles. The highly developed Uyghur civilization and its Christian attributes were thus displayed to the world. The Mongols called East Syriac Christians "Arkgun," and most of the Khan nobility after Genghis Khan's time²⁰ believed in and supported East Syriac Christianity. At the height of the Mongol Empire, visits by envoys travelling east and west were frequent. The Armenian historians of the time who called the Gaochang (Kocho) Uyghur Khanate "the Kingdom of Tars[a]," that is, the kingdom of Christians, explained their noble ancestors, among whom were the three magi who visited baby Jesus, noting that many of the elites and nobles among the Mongols were Uyghurs.²¹ The Roman Catholic Pope's envoy called the Uyghurs "Nestorian Christians."²² During this period, Christianity and Buddhism continued to dominate in the Gaochang Uyghur Khanate, with Buddhism still mostly among the native Indo-Europeans and Manichaeism still maintained its institutional influence among Uyghurs, while Islam continued to expand.

The vastness of the Mongol Empire enabled a group of Uyghur Christian elites to step onto the world stage and play an important historical role. Among them was the Uyghur Christian Sawut (AD 1169-1252, known in Chinese as Tian Zhenhai).²³ An early follower of Genghis Khan, he was chancellor of the Mongol Empire for more than forty years, serving three generations of khans, and can be considered to be someone who shaped the empire.²⁴ In addition, about 600 senior Uyghur officials served the khans in the Mongolian court, including more than twenty chancellors. Many of these Uyghur elites were Christians. Some sixty high-ranking Uyghur officials served in China's Yuan dynasty, which was ruled by the Mongol Empire. For example, Ma Zuchang, a literary giant in the Chinese language of his generation, was born into an Ongut Uyghur family that had been Christian for generations.

In AD 1278, two Ongut Uyghur Christian monks, Bar Sauma and Marcus, were sent by Kublai Khan on a pilgrimage from the capital city of Khanbalik (Beijing) to Jerusalem. After arriving in

on the logic of ethno-religious studies, and hopes to use this approach to dispel some long-term misunderstandings and confusion in the academic community about ancient Christianity and its national attributes in Xinjiang. Regarding the difference between the two national identities, please refer to Mark Chuanhang Shan, *A Brief Narrative of the Historical and Geographic Attributes of the Uyghur Identity ---And Its Substantive Difference from the Turkic Identity and the Turkish Identity* (Boston: Chinese Christian Academic Association, 2018).

20 Genghis Khan believed in a type of Shamanism holding a conceptual term "Tengri" (i.e., Heavenly God), much likely influenced by Christianity which spread among the nations in the Siberia areas.

21 Hetum, *Flower of Histories of the East* (1307), accessed on July 30, 2018. <https://archive.org>.

22 Grousset, *Empire of the Steppes*, 252, 277.

23 Li Zhichang, *Travels to the West of Qiu Changchun* (Shi-jia-zhuang: Hebei People's Publishing House, 2011).

24 Ibid., 257, 270. Song Lian, *History of Yuan*, "Zhenhai" (Beijing: Zhonghua Book, 2000).

Baghdad, which was the Patriarchal See (resident of the Patriarch, i.e., Catholicos) of the East Syriac Church, Marcus became Catholicos of the East Syriac Christian Church in 1281. His title was Yahballaha III, and he died after thirty-six years in power. In 1287, Bar Sauma represented the Persian Il-khanate of the Mongol Empire traveling to Europe as a Christian envoy. There he met with the Byzantine Emperor Andronicus II, King Philip the Fair of France, King Edward I of England, and finally with Pope Nicholas IV, seeking to persuade the European leaders to join the Mongols in expelling the Muslims from Jerusalem and the surrounding regions.²⁵

From AD 1335 to 1350, the Mongolian Eastern Chagatai Khanate that ruled the northern and southern regions of the Tianshan Mountains completely converted to Islam. In 1392, the Eastern Chagatai army captured and sacked Gaochang City (in the area of today's Turpan Basin), the capital of the Gaochang Uyghur kingdom, marking the official end of ancient Uyghur Christianity.

Mark Chuanhang Shan, originally from Xinjiang, China, a resident in the USA, has authored several books on Central Asia-Xinjiang studies. Three of his research articles were previously published in the *Africanus Journal*, including “The Kingdom of God in Yurts: Christianity among Mongols in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries” (3: 2 [Nov. 2011]:29-41), “The Scythians of Colossians 3:11: Their Origin and Their Legacy in Xinjiang, China Today” (5: 2 [Nov. 2013]:18-36) and “Silk Road Christianity in Tarim and Turpan Basin Prior to AD 640 When Tang China Took Over Kocho Kingdom” (13: 2 [Nov. 2021]: 26-45).

He has also published works in Chinese only, such as *The Development and Mutation of Ancient Uyghur Manichaeism--- And an analysis of why academe mistakenly thought the Kocho Uyghurs were Buddhists* (Boston: Chinese Christian Academic Association, 2019), *History of Christianity in Xinjiang, China— With a Brief History of Xinjiang* (Boston: Chinese Christian Academic Association, 2009).

Mark Shan has an M.A. degree in Religion from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (2006), an S.T.M degree in philosophy, theology and ethics (2007) from Boston University. Currently he is a Ph.D. research student with North-West University, South Africa.

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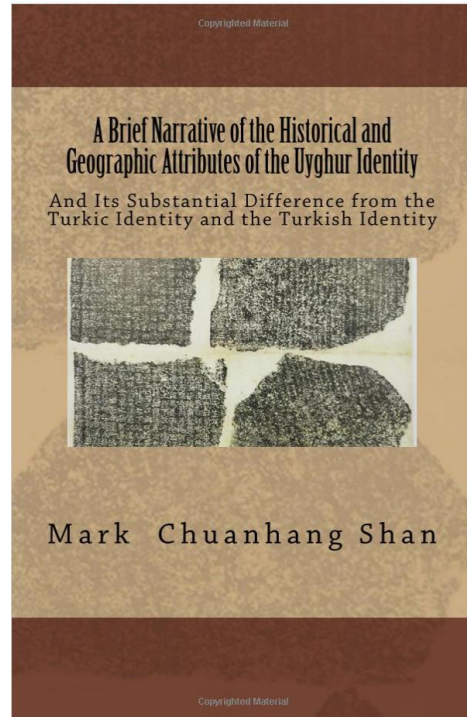
²⁵ E. A. Wallis Budge (tr.), *The Monks of Kublai Khan Emperor of China, or the History of the Life and Travels of Rabban Sawma, Envoy and Plenipotentiary of the Mongol Khans to the Kings of Europe, and Markos who as Mar Yahbb-Allaha III Became Patriarch of the Nestorian Church in Asia* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1928).

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A Brief Narrative of the Historical and Geographic Attributes of the Uyghur Identity
--- And Its Substantive Difference from the Turkic Identity and the Turkish Identity
Mark Chuanhang Shan (2018)

The 144-page book is slightly modified from a portion of Shan's doctoral dissertation. The four-chapter English version of Shan's dissertation, *The Historical Uyghur Identity and its Attributes from Kocho Civilization and East-Syriac Christianity*, was submitted in the summer of 2018.

Shan's dissertation adopts a historical anthropology approach coupled with religious studies, historical analysis and careful textual analysis of original historical records to formulate a **five-dimensional attributes system of geography, history, ethnicity, religion and civilization** that is used to explore the historical transformation of the Uyghur ethnic identity and ultimately to construct a new understanding of the Uyghur identity that fully reflects Uyghur history. Shan undertook the study with the hope of offering to the Uyghur people an alternative choice of their identity.



Through careful study of the historical and geographic attributes, this book traces the changes of the Uyghur identity, and reveals that the Uyghurs are neither Turks nor Turkish, thus clarifying a long-standing misunderstanding of the Uyghur identity. Given that the history of the Uyghurs is complex, this book provides valuable research results from an academic perspective to this field of study.

This book was published in November of 2018 by the Chinese Christian Academic Association (formerly the Chinese Christian Theological Association), Boston (www.ccaa2009.org). It was founded in 2009 as a platform where Chinese Christian scholars can freely voice their academic viewpoints and encourages them toward great academic achievements in their academic pursuits.

The author's email: markshan@bu.edu

Use the link to purchase a hard copy of the book on amazon.com:

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A Christological Reflection through Studying Buddhist Witness Club¹

RUBY LEE

Introduction

Christian heterodoxies typically arise from different interpretations of crucial doctrines from the Bible or from the addition of “new revelation,” such as with the Mormon Church and the Unification Church. At the turn of the twentieth century, however, Christianity found itself in syncretistic teachings as part of religious pluralism, being fused with other religions. Religious pluralism is just as prevalent in the Orient as in the West, but with a different flavor.

This article studies a movement that claims to encompass Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity. It is known as 如來實證 (literally *Tathagata* positivism) or, by its self-given English name, Buddhism Witness Club (BWC). It was established in 2004 in Taiwan by Miao Zen Master, started gaining public attention in 2012, and, as of 2023, BWC has established twenty-seven clubhouses in Taiwan. No books are published on BWC, so most primary resources come from its website² and blog posts of testimonies and interviews. The purpose of this study is to contribute to the more extensive discussion of syncretism between Western and Eastern religions by showing how cultish worship could incorporate Christianity into a religion that is not theistic at all. In response, we, followers of Christ, can enter a deeper worship of what a savior we have in Jesus. The first part of the article is a presentation of Christian Christology based on the Holy Scripture. Then by introducing the doctrine of BWC, the article applies Christology to expose the insufficiency of salvation proposed by BWC and offer suggestions for corrections of faith for those that come in contact with BWC or similar syncretistic groups.

Christian Christology

Christian orthodoxy confesses its faith in Jesus Christ as God *and* human. As it says in the creed of Nicaea, “[Lord Jesus Christ is] true God of true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father... who for us men and for our salvation came down and was made flesh, and became man.” The Definition of Chalcedon also says, “...Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged *in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably.*”³

John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (ESV), summing up Jesus’s ontological differences from humanity as creation: his pre-existence and his deity. He is God, but he was not just *a* god; he was *one with God* (John 1:18; 10:30; Titus 2:13). Not only was Jesus God, but he was also a human. “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). Paul adds, “God sent forth his Son, *born of woman, born under the law* (Gal. 4:4).” To say Jesus was born of woman is to affirm his historicity and physicality. Being born under the law, Jesus was put under the judgment of God (Rom. 3:19), but Jesus did not sin (2 Cor. 5:21); it was in the *likeness* of sinful flesh, which is under the law, that he came and became the spotless lamb.

According to Millard Erickson, “The incarnation involved a bridging of the metaphysical, moral, and spiritual gap between God and man.”⁴ He is our metaphysical salvation because, in Christ, we find the perfect revelation of God (Heb. 1:1-3), for he is God. We are saved to a life in God (John 17:21). Jesus has come into our midst and manifested God’s glory so that, despite our ontological gap from God, we can know Him—something we cannot do otherwise. In addition, by becoming the likeness of humanity, Christ offered himself as the perfect sacrifice once and for all (Heb. 11:14), so that in his death, we may be reconciled with God, spared from His wrath, and rejoice (Rom. 5:9-11).

1 An earlier draft was written for Dr. William David Spencer’s Systematic Theology 2 class.

2 Rulai.org.

3 Emphasis original.

4 Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985), 724.

As we are united with Christ in his death, so are we in his resurrection (Rom. 6:5).

The person and work of Jesus are central to soteriology: it is the loving nature of God that he would save; it is the unity of deity and humanity of Jesus that he could save; and it is the work of Jesus that accomplished salvation. Even today, we have the confidence that we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus (Heb. 10:10). Jesus Christ the righteous is still our advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1).

Buddhism Witness Club

BWC, true to its name, adopts a Buddhist worldview. Meanwhile, it has instilled new semantics into essential Buddhist concepts. Miao Zen Master teaches his own religion— *Three Holy Teaching*. His description is written in only 218 Chinese characters, with no intention of making clear his deviation from Buddhism. *Three Holy Teaching* outlines three steps of correct understanding that lead one to salvation and liberation, as follows (translations are in bold print)⁵:

1. The whole universe and all that is in it, including the ten dharma realms, spirits, and karma, are empty (non-existing); only *Tathagata/ Buddha* is real. The traditional Buddhist belief is assumed here. Buddhism believes that the root of suffering is our desire for impermanent things, by which we are trapped in the illusion of our ego and existence. In reality, the only being is *Nirvana*. Accordingly, one experiences liberation when one is fully enlightened, seeing the reality, “freed from any contaminants of the mind and no longer subject to suffering.”⁶

I, being terrified at birth and death, have become an ascetic for the sake of liberation. Desiring liberation in a world subject to destruction, I seek that happy indestructible abode, --isolated from mankind, with my thoughts unlike those of others, and with my sinful passions turned from all objects of sense.⁷

The full appreciation of salvation comes when one understands the concept of karma: “The law of cause and effect is held to operate in the mental and moral domain no less than in the physical world.”⁸ A Buddhist believes in the reincarnation of life based on what karma one produced in the previous life. Before one can be free from the bondage of reincarnation and existence (hence achieving “Buddha,” the tenth dharma realm, and experiencing *Nirvana*), he or she moves within the dharma realms between different lives and beings based on their karma. This chain of karma is “a chain through the ages.”⁹ *Tathagata* is “Buddha,” which means “the one who thus comes,” indicating that he or she is beyond the birth and death of life.¹⁰

2. The whole universe and all that is in it, including the ten dharma realms, spirits, and karma, are all created by *Tathagata*; therefore, the self-sufficient Buddha essence is in all. The belief of BWC is close to Mahayana Buddhism, believing in “an undifferentiated Buddha essence”¹¹ in all. According to the concept of karma, Buddhism asserts that everything is self-created, thus holding no reality. This belief is highly atheistic. What appears to be a crucial deviation of BWC from other sects of Buddhism is the teaching of an *other-creator*. Despite this *other-creator*, BWC retains a doctrine of inward meditative salvation, as does Buddhism. However, as BWC adapts itself to a pantheist view between the Creator and creations, the key for meditation has shifted from self-denial to self-confidence in recovering the self-sufficient Buddha essence that all beings possess innately. In fact, each person *is* a trinity: a trinity of the spirit, the body, and the Buddha essence.

5 “The Three Holy Teaching,” Miao Zen, <http://www.rulaiweb.org/about/threeholYTEACHING.html>.

6 Charles E. Farhadian, *Introducing World Religions: A Christian Engagement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 126.

7 E. B. Cowell, tran., *Buddhist Mahayana Texts*, Sacred Books of the East 49 (London: Routledge, 2001), 51-52. This was Prince Siddhartha’s journal before becoming Lord Buddha.

8 Norman Anderson, ed., *The World’s Religions*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 175.

9 *Ibid.*, 174.

10 Farhadian, *Introducing World Religions*, 156.

11 Dean C. Halverson, ed., *The Compact Guide to World Religions* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1996), 61.

3. According to dharma, every being under *Bodhisattva* needs to reincarnate into a human body to follow the enlightened Master, who has witnessed Buddha, for his Buddha essence to be enlightened! Upon enlightenment, he will transcend into a spirit that knows no limits or boundaries. All karma is then lifted, and he achieves *Trikaya*, becoming a blessing to all beings. The analogy of our body as a vessel is common in Buddhism. Buddhists see it as the reason reincarnation needs to occur, because it is only in a human body that a person can “sail” to *Nirvana*. On the other hand, a believer of BWC needs to be human to encounter the Master for the possibility of salvation. Here, the analogy of the sun is used often:¹² We all have a clouded sun in us, which is the Buddha essence. When the radiance of a Zen Master, who has witnessed the creator and is enlightened, reflects on our sun, he clears the fog clouding our suns, and we can also be enlightened. (*Trikaya* is the doctrine of the “three bodies.” Here, “bodies” are not to be understood as physical *bodies*, but rather three *aspects*.)

Bodhisattva means the enlightened one. He is the Buddha-to-be, but instead of being free of reincarnation, he compassionately dedicates himself to helping others in their salvation.¹³ This idea of the *bodhisattva*, who is interested in others’ salvation, comes from Mahayana Buddhism. In Mahayana Buddhism, however, a *bodhisattva* only guides people to the entrance of *Nirvana*, but the Zen Master (*bodhisattva*) in BWC can dissolve other people’s karma.¹⁴ BWC claims that there will not be two *bodhisattvas* walking the earth simultaneously. Miao Zen Master is the contemporary *bodhisattva*, as Jesus, Muhammad, and other religious leaders who were the *bodhisattvas* during their lifetimes. It is worth noting here that, by looking at the statues of *bodhisattvas*, the only *bodhisattva* that is often identified as female is *Avalokitesvara*. Even *Avalokitesvara*, though, was a man on earth. The gender of *bodhisattvas* raises little issue in Asia, perhaps due to the yet patriarchal conventions and values in most of Asia. Still, more importantly, gender designation is just emptiness, according to Buddhist belief.

A Critique of BWC in Light of Christian Christology

There are different ways to evaluate BWC and its doctrines. While a comparison with Buddhism is most appropriate, a Christian reflection is also warranted as BWC uses vocabularies and concepts on the person and works of Christ.

“All *bodhisattvas*, such as Lord Buddha, Jesus Christ, and other Buddhist masters, what they have witnessed are the same creator God.”¹⁵ Teachers of BWC often quote John 14:6 (“Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life”) to describe Miao Zen master. However, there are three ways in which Jesus proves to be different from Miao. First, Jesus’s self-proclamation is not a description of a set that can have multiple members, such as witnesses of God can be many. Jesus is *the* way, *the* truth, and *the* life. On the contrary, Miao Zen Master can only claim to have witnessed God. Jesus is the revelation of God, who does not need to be enlightened, but is himself the light of the world (John 8:12). Secondly is BWC’s mystic attribute: Miao Zen Master, claiming to seek his *fated disciples* (or disciples of *yuanfen*, the concept derived from the doctrine of karma), only accepts attendees by private invitations to their meetings.¹⁶ When the religion is questioned, inquirers either face rejection or receive the response that truth should not and cannot be explained. Acknowledging God’s transcendence to human cognition, Jesus, being the Word, is the incarnation and pivotal manifestation of God’s commutative and relational nature. Hence, Jesus is Christians’ confidence to approach the throne of God. Further, when it comes to the problem of suffering, BWC and Buddhists

12 “Encountering the Master, My True Sun! A Surrounding of Love and My Vow to Be a Sun for Others,” Si-Qi Guo, <https://www.rulai.org/testimony/13722>. This is a testimony published on BWC’s website. See also, a hymn titled “You are the True Sun” <https://www.rulai.org/song/10>.

13 Farhadian, *Introducing World Religions*, 157.

14 Buddhist Witness Club, “Miao Zen Master’s Merciful Teaching: Witnessing the Mind of Buddha,” *Weekly News* 78 (2014) can be accessed at <https://www.rulai.org/weekly/78.html>, the article from BWC’s weekly publication.

15 Buddhist Witness Club, “Miao Zen Master Leading Disciples to Transcend Religious Barriers,” *Weekly News* 8 (2013), can be accessed at <http://www.rulaiweb.org/weekly/08.html>.

16 “Frequently Asked Questions,” Miao Zen, <http://www.rulaiweb.org/faq.html>.

draw attention to the impermanency of reality and deconstruct suffering. While it is comparable with the Christian eschatology that undermines the transitoriness of the current situation, Buddhist teaching resolves to elevate spirit over matter when Christians believe in a God who affirms the present reality with care and the assurance that “neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor power, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38-39).¹⁷

In terms of Christ’s deity, the disagreement that BWC has with Christians is not with Jesus being God but with the concept of God. BWC believes that Jesus is God, but *only* in the sense that every person is God, because we all have the Buddha essence. According to the *Three Holy Teachings*, “The whole universe and all that is in it...are all created by *Tathagata*; therefore, the self-sufficient Buddha essence is in all.” This anthropology is fundamentally different from John’s declaration about Jesus, who is ontologically distinct from us as we are only human (John 1:1). As John asserts Jesus’ unique pre-existence and his role *in* creation, he is not only affirming some divine attributes or image of God in Jesus, but he is identifying Jesus as the God of creation in Genesis. John affirms that Jesus is one with God. BWC deviates from Buddhism in acknowledging a creator God, but the implication of a creator is not clear in its belief system, besides gravitating toward Western religions with their monotheistic twist.

Embracing the idea of a creator-God who is void, without personality, leaves the problems of compassion and salvation wanting. In Christianity, the creator God sustains the world out of love and care for His creation. In Buddhism, the issue of compassion is the absence of a source and account for compassion: “The *bodhisattvas* were motivated out of a sense of their own compassion for the world. However, their compassion is not a reflection of the Void’s feelings toward the world.”¹⁸ The highest ideal and source are void. Thus, compassion would be nothing other than an illusion. On the contrary, the Christian creator God, who is good, creates good (John 1:3; Gen. 1:31). This is significant soteriologically. Accordingly, humankind does not need to find an escape from the physical world. Instead, God is the continual source of compassion, and Jesus is the unique revelation of God’s love for the world (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; 1 John 4:10).¹⁹

BWC would also agree that Jesus is human. *Bodhisattvas* have to be human to help other people. Ironically, BWC’s theology of Jesus and all other *bodhisattvas*’ humanity creates a problem with salvation for BWC rather than providing a basis for it. For BWC, evangelism preaches the urgency for one to become a believer, because of the extraordinary occasion for one to come across a *bodhisattva*, which is limited in time and space! On the other hand, Christians’ motivation for evangelism is not out of the momentary availability of Christ’s salvation. The divine Son of God, by becoming the likeness of humankind, offered himself as the perfect sacrifice *once and for all* (Heb. 11:14). Even on earth, he had the power to heal and forgive (Mark 1:31, 2:5), an authority only attributed to God, and ultimately triumphed over death, so we may also unite with Christ in his resurrection (Rom. 6:5). Christ’s salvation is available to believers throughout time, including right now.

As a human, the *bodhisattvas* have neither authority nor victory over death. They do not have the power to overcome the law of karma. In Buddhist teaching, Buddha once warned a man that he cannot save others from karma but can, at most, point others toward enlightenment. How can the *bodhisattva* help other beings carry their karma, as is claimed by Miao Zen Master, if he has no authority over the law of karma? Not to mention the media exposure of Miao’s three divorced marriages, earlier financial lawsuits between himself and his own master in 1998, and legal and ethical controversies he is a part of.²⁰ Jesus, on the other hand, did not sin (1 Pet. 2:22; 2 Cor. 5:21).

17 See also Farhadian, *Introducing World Religions*, 137-38.

18 Halverson, *The Compact Guide to World Religions*, 63.

19 Ibid.

20 “The Falling Out of the Master and His Apprentice: Miao Tian’s Critique of Miao Zen,” Mirror Media. <https://www.mirrormedia.mg/story/20190305inv025/> The news article includes interviews with Miao Zen Master’s master, who

Miao while creating karma and living under the law, has elevated himself to adoration, while Jesus humbled himself to be the spotless Lamb of God by whose blood we are redeemed (1 Pet. 1:18, 19).

On the one hand, BWC retains the Buddhist framework that supports self-salvation; on the other hand, it also wants to adopt the possibility of external salvation for the role of Miao Zen Master in a believer's life. Like its Buddhist root, BWC affirms the absence of a caring God and a self-sufficient Buddha essence in all humanity. The irony is in needing salvation from another, it recognizes the limitation of self-help. A person who is just like any other person has no more ability to save others than himself or herself. At the heart of this dilemma is a heart too hardened to submit to the salvation of God, even when one perceives one's inability to save oneself. Even when a believer bows down to Miao Zen Master and sings praises to the Master, at the heart of this believer is a belief in a god in themselves. How different is this from Jesus's true humility, for he gave up equality with God, emptied himself by taking the form of a servant in the likeness of humans (Phil. 2:6,7), to glorify God and to save us.

Correction of Faith

The study of BWC and their use of Christian doctrines are close to my heart because I have witnessed their *evangelism* through an invitation extended to my brother. A follower of BWC would approach a Christian claiming to offer a belief that absorbed Christianity with more to offer. BWC has flourished in colleges in Taiwan in a short period, with 130 official campus sites with believers from all kinds of religious backgrounds by 2017. Following are some practical steps to help Christians in the maintenance of faith.

1. Christian meditation: A primary religious practice for BWC followers, which they inherited from Zen Buddhism, is the practice of meditation. In Buddhist meditation, one aims to cease mental activities (karma) to catch the essence of all things. BWC advocates meditating on Miao Zen Master, the key to their salvation. These forms of meditation are spiritually dangerous and do not lead one to the truth. Christianity also values meditation but differs in the content of meditation: "Christianity too connects the practice of being still with knowing God...the call to 'be still' is an invitation not to seek the truth within but to know that God is God—that is, there is someone to trust entirely with one's life."²¹ The key to Christian meditation is to know God and to be filled, which is based on scriptural content and revelation.
2. Bible study and devotion: If a Christian is struggling with BWC, one may suggest studying the book of John with them. John states clearly and at its center that Jesus is God. Author John is also an apostle of love in whose gospel the love of God and its implication for our salvation is explicit. On the other hand, if a non-Christian or Buddhist believer were struggling with BWC, studying the book of Mark may be helpful. Mark is concerned with who Jesus is and with Jesus' authority. Stories of Jesus' authority to forgive, heal, perform an exorcism, and calm storms, among other acts of power, show Jesus as unique from other teachers and religious leaders. In particular, the authority of Jesus to forgive and perform exorcism shows that he is not under reincarnation. Jesus can break the chain of karma for humanity because he is God. That is salvation sweeter than *Nirvana* and exceeds the Buddhist imagination.
3. Prayer and praise: Salvation is more than mental enlightenment, but a reconciliation with God who has already initiated a relationship with us. Miao cannot offer the transformation of the heart any more than he can provide mental enlightenment. Christians need to have confidence in the reality of the gospel in the face of the tide of Eastern spiritual beliefs. The kingdom has come, and God offers communion with us in creation, in the present, and in the new heavens and earth, and we are to enter that communion in prayer and worship. Prayer

recounts his relationship with Miao Zen Master. See also "An Almighty Con? Taiwan's 'Purple Shirts' and Their Master," The News Lens International Edition, <https://archive.is/20170803142155/https://international.thenewslens.com/article/75046>.

21 Halverson, *The Compact Guide to World Religions*, 168.

is much needed for God to change hearts and show people that He is true and more powerful than other spirits.

Originally from Taiwan, Ruby Lee received her M.Div. and Th.M. from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and now studies at Wycliffe College in Toronto. Her Ph.D. research focuses on ambiguities in Ecclesiastes through a historical-literary approach to the text. She has a passion for missions, teaching, and biblical languages, having taught at Tyndale University, Bethel Bible Institute in Thailand, and a distance learning network (Ai-Xue) for Chinese pastors. Before theological education, Ruby was a children's book editor and still considers it a dream come true. She now lives in Mississauga with her husband and children.



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A Synthesis of Church and Community Mobilization Theories for Application and Action

MARK HARDEN

Churches across the world have used a semblance of community mobilization and organizational empowerment practices to address their members' social needs and effect change for centuries. History is replete with churches engaging their members through various forms of social or public ministry to transform church membership and change community circumstances. Research suggests that community mobilization, as a church-based empowerment strategy, can create opportunities for churches to increase member participation, involvement, and personal benefits while achieving mission goals. However, a theoretical model for understanding church mobilization as a distinct form of community mobilization is presently not in the literature. In this article, I explore the implications of explicating and integrating interrelated constructs as church mobilization theory for further investigation.

Churches with church growth and development needs should benefit from church mobilization. First, trends over the past five decades about decreasing rates in member attendance, participation, low confidence in the church, and membership affiliation among younger generations suggest a decline in church influence and credibility. Reengagement through church mobilization may catalyze reversing this trend at the local church level. Second, church mobilization can serve as a measure of readiness for social engagement designed to revitalize church members while addressing a social issue in the community. Churches discerning a need to address a community issue to fulfill their missions may also need to assess their level of readiness. The theoretical framework will assist practitioners with assessment and planning. Third, research can be evaluative to measure the progress and impact of church mobilization using qualitative or quantitative methods. Finally, clergy and church leaders can use the theoretical framework resulting from this thought experiment to design training interventions for member participation related to the church's mission.

The article's central thesis is that community mobilization as intraorganizational empowerment is distinct among churches and requires a framework for further study. Similar strategies among health agencies and public health initiatives serve as models to understand how church-based social ministries and social action initiatives function as empowering institutions by nature. A theoretical framework for church mobilization practices and research is nonexistent, while it is self-evident that churches engage in social ministries to address societal issues. Social ministries and social action activities are not new and have been a feature of social engagement among churches for centuries. The purpose of the study was threefold. First, to explore how community mobilization strategies can contribute to developing a theoretical framework of church mobilization. Second, to discern how theories can provide insight to improve our understanding of how churches become empowered for social engagement. Third, to understand how church mobilization theory can advance applied research. In this research study, theoretical triangulation methods and synthesis of model constructs helped to develop a church mobilization model for member participation, involvement, and personal benefits through social engagement. Community mobilization constructs were adopted and expanded for application in the church context. Theoretical triangulation included community mobilization, social cognitive, and diffusion theories. There was a convergence between the community mobilization theoretical constructs and the proposed constructs for church mobilization. Theoretical triangulation provided findings consistent with the theoretical model for church mobilization. Church mobilization was broadly defined as *empowering internal and external resources to implement strategies to increase member participation through meaningful social engagement to address one or more issues in the broader environment*. Theoretical assumptions derived from the study are identified. A preliminary review

indicated that social ministries depend on meaningful member participation, including intrinsic benefits. Member participation in promoting social engagement and change is a core reason for church mobilization success. The implications are that community mobilization constructs support the development of church mobilization theory. Church mobilization is an intraorganizational phenomenon that involves empowering members for social engagement. Implications for research methods and measuring church mobilization are discussed. Assumptions for investigating validity are discussed with research questions to demonstrate how additional research is needed.

In recent decades, community mobilization and empowerment have undergone conceptual and theoretical development by researchers. Some community mobilization researchers have also included churches in their investigation of the phenomenon (Maton, 1995). However, while it is safe to assume that community mobilization and empowerment are integrated practices in the field, few have investigated these conceptual elements as unique interdependent and empirical realities within a religious context. Theorists suggest that these constructs influence change across the individual and community levels (Spreitzer, 1996; Zimmerman, 1992). Some suggest that individual and organizational empowerment are linked because of specific outcomes associated with organizational processes (Peterson, 2004). For example, they may have understood how collective efforts as an outcome links to group processes such as mutual trust and cohesion (p. 140). I argue that churches routinely implement processes with outcomes as pre- and subsequent conditions for community mobilization and empowerment. This article assumes that mobilization and empowerment processes and outcomes already exist to varying degrees in a church context. While models of community empowerment are extensive in the literature, theoretical frameworks have become available in recent decades in the research literature for the conceptualization and validation of community mobilization. This present research article approached community mobilization and empowerment as complementary concepts empirically investigated as nomological networks underlying an implicit church mobilization theory.

Steps were taken to develop a church mobilization theory. First, community mobilization frameworks were examined and compared to construct a church-based model. Case studies of how churches engage in social ministry use practices that were found common in community mobilization events served as a guide. Church practices served as a basis for characterizing, expanding, and matching those activities with those in community mobilization. Similarities and differences were examined to understand the distinct nature of church-based community mobilization practices. Second, theories unrelated to the dynamics and nature of community mobilization were identified and analyzed with theories for analysis to understand and explain the nature of church mobilization.

This study explores how churches may increase member participation, involvement, and personal benefits, as suggested in the empowerment research literature (Ohmer, 2008; Peterson, 2004). This article depended heavily on constructs of other empirically based sources and viable theories related and unrelated to church mobilization. The purpose of the study was to propose and advance a theory of church mobilization for research and practical applications. There were three research questions: 1) How can community mobilization strategies contribute to developing a theoretical framework of church mobilization? 2) How can theories provide insight to improve our understanding of how churches become empowered for social engagement? and 3) how can church mobilization theory advance applied research?

Literature Review

Community mobilization can be broadly defined as a strategy to implement a community-wide effort to bring about change based on shared interests and concerns (Aulich, 2009; Bank, 1995; Chauke, 2016; Nguyen, 2015; WHO, 2003). Community mobilization applies to everyday situations where community members collaborate to achieve goals related to desired community-

level change. Lippman et al. (2013) conceptualized and measured community mobilization after constructing a model based on converging or assimilating theoretical concepts such as social movements, community empowerment, community development, and community capacity. Drawing on elements from these theories, they identified universal concepts for health-related initiatives. Lippman et al. (2013) define community mobilization strategies as actions “designed to engage and galvanize community members to take action towards achieving a common goal.” Successful change strategies are rooted in shared vision and passions. Such strategies focus on health, social, environmental, and other issues. Examples include public health programming for urban violence (Abramsky, 2014; Hernandez-Cordero, 2011), drug, alcohol, and tobacco use interventions (Nguyen, 2015; Shults, 2009), and behavior change for HIV prevention (Tedrow, 2012).

What members perceive as competence within the intraorganizational environment may be critical for organizational success. Some have found that the perception of an organization’s effectiveness influences involvement and perceived benefits for participating members (Ohmer, 2008; Wandersman, 2000). Others have connected perceptions of processes and outcomes and members’ “involvement in and perceived benefits” (Kelly, 2000; Peterson, 2004, 2008). Zimmerman (2004) concludes that empowering organizations have processes and structures that produce psychological benefits for their members, and empowered organizations are effective at influencing the more extensive system in which they engage. Four main contextual-behavioral empowerment strategies for community empowerment indicate applications for church mobilization theory (Fawcett, 1995). These include (1) enhancing experience and competence, (2) enhancing group structure and capacity, (3) removing social barriers, and (4) enhancing environmental support and resources.

Although theoretical frameworks for these interventions exist for community mobilization research and practice in other fields (Joffres, 2002; Kraftarian, 1997; Lippman, 2016), church mobilization as an empirical model for church empowerment and change is mainly nonexistent in research journals. Churches may have the innate ability to mobilize their members and be empowered by those efforts. Many of the social ministry efforts that may or may not be construed as community mobilization practices support the idea that churches may function as mechanisms for social change (Barnes, 2005; Cavendish, 2001; Dudley, 2002; Lee, 2003; McCalla, 2005; Sider, 2002; Unruh, 2005). Church-based public health initiatives, community interventions, relief, the mobilization of resources, and advocacy for political activism are similar forms that mimic community mobilization practices.

Social ministries involve standard practices that require volunteer participation, which is core to community mobilization. The social ministry activities identified include faith-based community development, political activism, and social justice initiatives (Barnes, 2005; Dudley, 2002; McCalla, 2005; Scheie, 1994; Sider, 2002; Unruh, 2005), leaving researchers to assume that church mobilization models may already exist in theory. For instance, Black churches in the United Kingdom, while assessing issues, became externally focused on transforming how they engage the wider society (McCalla, 2005). Barnes’ (2005) study suggests that churches use cultural capital such as beliefs, ritual practices, stories, and symbols as an “impetus” to mobilize church resources for social engagement. Clergy-led initiatives are standard features of church social action studies (Barnes, 2005; Lee, 2003; McCalla, 2005). Some studies (Lee, 2003) have examined how influence by clergy enables churches to become mobilized to address political issues. These and other studies suggest that churches adapt to their social environment by transforming their organizational systems, structures, and support to implement change strategies (Dudley, 2002; Olson, 2000; Pattillo-McCoy, 1998; Scheie, 1994; Sider, 2002).

Community Mobilization Models

The first community mobilization model (Table 1) is a three-part framework developed by a team of researchers commissioned by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention to examine qualitative and quantitative data from previous research to construct a framework (Kraftarian, 1997). The model consists of three indicator components based on themes for effective community mobilization, with a network of 17 constructs representing the components. The set of indicator components includes (1) a sense of community, (2) mobilization capacity, and (3) readiness for focused action. Community leaders recognize and activate these resources to become organized components of an effective community mobilization strategy. The 17 constructs derived from their analysis for the framework are listed in sets in Table 1 as sub-indicator components. It is a construct-focused nomological network model that identifies what agreed-upon actions are needed for effective community mobilization.

The second community mobilization model (Table 1) stems from qualitative methods to evaluate factors in community mobilization and other factors that influence “continued involvement” in efforts to change adolescent sexual behavior (Joffres, 2002). It is a participant-focused model in that its focus is a social-ecological perspective on motivational factors for social engagement in community mobilization. The study suggests intrinsic motivating factors that include issue awareness, informants’ feelings of efficacy, sense of community, value congruence, organizational support, valued expectations, and informants’ beliefs in the efficacy of a collaborating partner that make community mobilization successful. The perspective from qualitative research suggests how interaction occurs in intraorganizational, interorganizational, and extra organizational environments.

Table 1
Alignment of Community Mobilization Models

Community Mobilization (Lippman et al. (2014))	Community Mobilization (Joffres et al. 2002)	Community Mobilization (Kraftarian et al. 1997)
Shared Concern Critical (community) Consciousness	Issue Awareness Valued Expectations	
Social Cohesion Collective Action Social Control	Informants’ Sense of Community Value Congruence Informants’ Feelings of Efficacy Feelings of Achievement	Sense of Membership Mutual Importance Shared Worldviews Bonding/Networking Mutual Responsibility
Leadership Organizations / Networks	Organizational Support Organizational Membership Hired Personnel Organizational Leadership Informants’ Beliefs about Organization	Formalization Rewards and Incentives Communications Community Org. Know-How Behind-the-Scenes Support Sustained leadership Clarity of Goals Feasibility of Plan Capabilities and Resources Citizen Participation and Control Passion for Immediate Action Performance Team Functioning

The third community mobilization model (Table 1) draws on multiple theoretical orientations from different disciplines to develop an instrument to measure community mobilization. The result was a discipline-focused model of combined ideas derived from social movements, empowerment, community development, and community capacity studies (Lippman, 2016). The model introduces constructs of collective action that characterize the critical processes and outcomes of social change (Tilly, 2004). The model (Lippman et al., 2016) describes six domains that contribute to community mobilization. Among the domains are additional constructs that include shared concerns (Buechler, 1995; Edelman, 2001; Tilly, 2004) and critical consciousness (Laverack, 2001) to address “power imbalance” and sensitivity issues in a civic environment, respectively (p. 128).

Theoretical Support for Church Mobilization Theory

A theoretical perspective on change through member participation requires understanding the factors contributing to social engagement. Three theories of change in the literature can potentially explain essential elements of human activity, processes related to fostering social engagement, and ecological system dynamics about the nature of what and how church mobilization practices occur in the church context.

Social Cognitive Theory

The first theory of change is the triadic reciprocal determinism social cognitive theory as a model of causation (Bandura, 1986; Bandura, 1992). The theory argues that people possess capabilities that define them as human beings, providing a basis for their behavior. To move beyond the environment versus nature debate, Bandura argues that it is neither an internal disposition nor the environment which is solely responsible for human behavior. Social cognitive theory explains that behavior outcomes involve cognition, other personal factors, and environmental influences in a bidirectional mode between each of these elements with the others. Three parts account for the essential interactional links in Bandura’s triadic model. The causal model summarizes interactional influences between perception, the environment, and behavior. All human activity, therefore, consists of these elements. Each theoretical element is necessary, but insufficient for understanding human capacity for action.

Diffusion Theory

Diffusion theory is a social process involving introducing innovative ideas, practices, or objectives that happen when people learn and respond to them positively (Dearing, 2018; Rogers, 1995). Diffusion is explicable because of three general factors: attributes of the innovative idea or practice, characteristics of the influential adopters, and context (Dearing, 2018). Innovative ideas flow through communication channels over time within a social information exchange system. Two aspects of this theory relate to how community systems function. First, social structures such as norms, leaders, and other change agents make the process a dynamic human social system. Second, it is a social change process that includes knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation as steps for members to adopt or reject change ideas. Rogers’s (1995) findings suggest that there are categories of adopters which refers to those who participate in the collective action, such as innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards, who participate in the process.

METHODS

Theories were selected to understand how constructs may contribute to a church mobilization thought experiment using theoretical triangulation. The theoretical models for community mobilization were empirically based. The constructs were assessed based on their value to explain community mobilization and empowerment elements and define theoretical constructs for a church mobilization theory. Theoretical triangulation methods require researchers to examine existing data

from three different theoretical perspectives and then apply them as explanatory and interpretative frameworks for developing a theory (Denzin, 1970). Three theories assisted in a thought experiment using theoretical triangulation: community mobilization, causation model of reciprocal determinism, and diffusion theory. Hypothetical personal factors or perceptions were conceptualized for the causation model of reciprocal determinism to illustrate the model application.

RESULTS

Table 2
Comparison Chart of Church and Community Mobilization Applications

Dimension	Church Mobilization	Community Mobilization (Lippman et al. (2014))	Community Mobilization (Joffres et al. 2002)	Community Mobilization (Kraftarian et al. 1997)
Mission-Focused	Missional Values Spirit-Led Mission-Centered Distinctive Context Sensitivity	Shared Concern Critical (community) Consciousness	Issue Awareness Valued Expectations	
Cohesiveness	Sense of Community Inclusive Importance Shared Stakeholder Worldviews Relational Bonds Sense of Collective Responsibility	Social Cohesion Collective Action Social Control	Informants' Sense of Community Value Congruence Informants' Feelings of Efficacy Feelings of Achievement	Sense of Membership Mutual Importance Shared Worldviews Bonding/Networking Mutual Responsibility
Capacity for Mission	Leadership Organization and Support Structures Help Members Participate Social Engagement Organizers Dedicated Support Staff	Leadership Organizations / Networks	Organizational Support Organizational Membership Hired Personnel Organizational Leadership	Formalization Rewards and Incentives Communications Community Org. Know-How Behind-the-Scenes Support Sustained leadership
Mission Readiness	Clarity of Church Mission [Change] Goals Belief in the Plan Available Essential Capabilities Stakeholder Involvement Commitment to Action Capable Performance Teams		Informants' Beliefs about Org	Clarity of Goals Feasibility of Plan Capabilities and Resources Citizen's Participation and Control Passion for Immediate Action Performance Team Functioning

The meaning of the constructs in each model was compared to understand how they were similar. An analysis indicated that there was convergence among constructs and independent constructs that conceptually constitute a single model of church mobilization with four dimensions. A synthesis of community mobilization models helped to identify social engagement activities as constructs for church and community mobilization. Accordingly, church and community mobilization comprise four dimensions and twenty constructs based on a synthesis of three models and case study reviews. Four dimensions are mission-focused, cohesiveness, capacity for mission, and mission readiness. Table 2 shows how the explanation of constructs across the other models aligns with the perspective of the four dimensions described for church mobilization. Therefore, the dimensions and their constructs indicated strong consistency across the models—theoretical definitions of constructs present implications for a theoretical framework of 20 constructs for a model of church mobilization.

Mission-Focused Dimension

For church mobilization, constructs of community mobilization were adopted, augmented, and renamed to reflect the distinctive nature of the mission-focused dimension for the theoretical framework (see Table 2). There were four constructs for the dimension. The theoretical definitions for mission-focused include:

1. Missional values are beliefs about the importance of the church mission being central to the church fulfilling its role for the mission of God.
2. Spirit-led is when members believe that they exist and operate because of the work of the Divine Spirit.
3. Mission-centered distinction describes specific patterns of church norms, values, expectations, and practices defined by the social and cultural context of the church and its ministries.
4. Context sensitivity is church awareness of what drives constituent groups and the church to address social and spiritual needs in the community.

Cohesiveness Dimension

The second dimension's findings indicated five church cohesiveness constructs (Table 2). The Church cohesiveness constructs explain, correspond, and converge with constructs of other models. There were five constructs for the dimension. The theoretical definitions for cohesiveness include:

1. A sense of community is a shared identity among members who share a sense of belonging that cultivates emotional connectedness, collective investment, and a feeling of mutual respect.
2. Inclusive importance is a broad acknowledgment of individual value among members as a basis for mutual care for one another regardless of social status.
3. Shared worldviews refer to common beliefs and vision for Christian practices that align with the church's mission and values.
4. Relational bonds are shared passions with internal and external stakeholders that know and trust church members and support their public ministries.
5. A sense of collective responsibility is a commitment to function as a collective body that cares for people and volunteers in the community to address social issues.

Capacity for Mission Dimension

The third dimension's findings indicated that six church cohesiveness constructs would be appropriate for church mobilization (Table 2). The following six constructs were confirmed and derived from the literature. The theoretical definitions for capacity for mission include:

1. Church leaders refers to leadership that guides church growth and keeps development efforts on track throughout all new or ongoing initiative phases.
2. Organizational support structures refer to norms, structures, and procedures that facilitate change and guide members in ministry activities.
3. Help members participate is the ability to provide members with opportunities to engage in meaningful church ministry.
4. Social engagement organizers are members who possess the ability to organize and build relationships for the public ministry.
5. Dedicated support staff is a church-based staff with logistical and technical skills to assist members in implementing church ministry.

Mission Readiness Dimension

The fourth dimension, mission readiness, was found to align with Kraftarian's mobilization readiness and the constructs of the first column (see Table 2). Modifications to rename constructs were made. The following six constructs were derived from the secondary literature for the mission readiness dimension. The theoretical definition of mission readiness include:

1. Clarity of mission is members who believe in the plan to achieve church mission-related ministry goals.
2. Belief in the plan is members who believe the plan is feasible for the church to achieve its goals with the desired level of impact.
3. Essential capabilities is members who possess core competencies to execute the plan to achieve the target goals.
4. Stakeholder involvement is networking in place that helps members be committed to facilitating public collaboration partnerships for the ministry.
5. Commitment to action members vested in ensuring that their actions benefit those in need.
6. Capable performance teams are members who work together in teams to facilitate broad church participation to achieve project goals.

Theoretical Perspectives

Social Cognitive Theory Triangulation

This study applied and triangulated elements of triadic reciprocal determinism or a causation model (Bandura, 1986) to each construct in church mobilization theory. Behavioral indicators for each construct were generated to produce a hypothetical causation model of reciprocal determinism in the theoretical church mobilization framework. The triangulated results (Table 3) were plausible because the identified behavior for each construct was self-evident in the intraorganizational environmental domain using a hypothetical personal perception based on the literature.

For instance, constructs of Mission-Focused were triangulated for consistency and to explain the reciprocal causation between three points: behavior, personal affect, and the environment. Since mission values were already provided as a construct for Mission-Focused, the task for triangulation was to corroborate the construct according to the theoretical definition of the church mobilization model. Accordingly, a personal factor outcome was needed to complete the causal model. That

is, members with beliefs about God’s redemptive work in the world felt compelled to participate and made it possible for others (in the intraorganizational environment) to participate because of individual needs (see Table 2).

Table 3
Summary of Social Cognitive Theory Application

Theoretical Construct	Behavior Characteristic	Outcome
Missional Values	Members’ belief in the church mission is reflected in what they do.	Sense of impact
Spirit-led	The evidence of a mission orientation is the presence of Christ in the act of ministry.	Sense of impact
Mission-Centered Distinction	Members integrate their faith into their social service programs.	Sense of competence
Context Sensitivity	Members act with a primary focus on meeting needs in the neighborhood.	Sense of impact
Sense of Community	Church provides opportunities for members to share ideas.	Sense of impact
Mutual Inclusiveness	Member contributions are publicly acknowledged.	Sense of belonging
Shared Worldviews	The church shares what members are doing in society.	Sense of morality
Relational Bonds	Church and community members interact to strengthen relations.	Sense of competence
Sense of Collective Responsibility	Members expand public ministry with community support.	Sense of competence
Leadership	Members make themselves available to support the ministry.	Sense of impact
Organizational Support Structures	Members have specific goals that facilitate member participation.	Sense of impact
Help Members Participate	Members post opportunities using social media.	Sense of impact
Social Engagement Organizers	Members use skills needed to organize resources for ministry.	Sense of impact
Dedicated Support Staff	Members specifically serve in roles to support the church mission.	Sense of impact
Clarity of Church Mission Goals	Members train others to improve social ministry practices.	Sense of impact
Belief in the Plan	Members participate in decision-making during the planning.	A sense of purpose
Available Essential Capabilities	Members engage in social issues with clear mission goals.	A sense of purpose
Stakeholder Involvement	Members draw on relationships with stakeholders for ministry.	Sense of community
Commitment to Action	Members participate in ministries that match their passions.	A sense of purpose
Capable Performance Teams	Members work in teams to achieve ministry goals.	Sense of community

A Synthesis

The results showed that diffusion theory could explain the social processes of adopting and adapting new ideas or practices for church mobilization to engage in the broader community to address an issue (Table 4).

Table 4
Triangulation of Social Processes, Practices, and Construct Applications

Concepts	Social Process Factors	Church Mobilization Application
Attributes of Adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members must feel confident the church can handle the cost, or monetary, time, and other resource demands The alternative is better than current church ministry practices The church must understand and be at ease in adapting to new practices. The practices must align with church tradition and values The church must see and observe change outcomes The church must be able to adjust and change its mind about using church mobilization strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belief in the Plan Missional Values Clarity of Church Mission Goals Mission-Centered Distinctive Spirit-led Mutual Inclusiveness Context Sensitivity
Communication Channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dissemination must occur by proponents informing others Members search for secondary judgments or opinions of leaders Members seek advice and model behaviors for others to learn Social processes using social media and other mass communications must support the innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaders Help Members Participate Capable Performance Teams Dedicated Support Staff Stakeholder Involvement
Diffusion among Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs and motivations vary among members who will adopt the innovation Members depend on calculated appraisals of the strategies Campaigns are used to spread messages about the innovative idea or practice Evidence that the ideas or practices have worked with others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belief in the Plan Context Sensitivity Social Engagement Organizers Organization and Support Structures Shared Worldviews Relational Bonds
Time Dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members who are excited and feel unrestrained by social norms adopt first Members will join early adopters afterward because of social expectations Time of adoption can be a predictor according to the adopter's network positions and relationships Social contagion occurs because of a progression of adoption and what others do 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Available Essential Capabilities Sense of Collective Responsibility Commitment to Action Inclusive Importance Social engagement organizers Sense of community

In some cases, practices may or may not be new because of the church's prior experience with social ministries (Barnes, 2005; Cavendish, 2001; Dudley, 2002; Lee, 2003; Scheie, 1994; Sider, 2002; Unruh, 2005). Practices were enhanced or added to activities to constitute church mobilization. Members are the adopters, where change is based on processes and factors instituted by early adopters. In the application of diffusion theory, the analysis suggests that clergy and the members serve as early adopters and are influential in the adoption process as initiators and planners to

make decisions for adoption, while others follow (Dearing, 2018). The relation of diffusion theory concepts supports diffusion theory's following concepts.

Perceived Attributes

The attributes of church mobilization relate to member readiness for social engagement action. Findings suggest that church identity and sense of mission are attributes that make adopting ideas and practices of church mobilization for immediate action highly likely because of a church's mission orientation (Unruh, 2005). The church may have a sense of its need to make internal organizational changes (McCalla, 2005). New structures, systems, and processes for social engagement would likely be adopted because of the compatibility of these changes with the church achieving its mission (Scheie, 1994; Sider, 2002).

Communication Channels

Several communication channels were used to increase participation (Pattillo-McCoy, 1998). Influential members are the designers or innovators of diffusion who form a critical mass of members who introduce new practices and influence the adoption of ideas in the church context (McCalla, 2005). These members can use the constructs as innovative ideas and practices to begin the adoption process (Cavendish, 2001). Congregations resolve conflict and improve ideas and practices to encourage each other for social engagement. Churches use practices to inform and motivate members to rally them around a cause (Sider, 2002).

Diffusion Among Members

The findings suggest that church mobilization requires multiple new practices or ideas to launch to increase the number of adopters. These initiated processes will activate a "wave of innovations" by diffusion planning and designing that may accelerate change (Dearing, 2018). This suggests that clergy and other leaders may influence the diffusion process, such as knowledge about the issue, the community, and the resources needed to implement change (Sider, 2002). Participation in the church would be a significant factor in the diffusion of innovative ideas about social engagement practices (McCalla, 2005). There may be diffusion accelerators for churches. Churches rich in resources and capacity may acquire and use the innovations (p. 185). Church mobilization involves increasing resources and capacity for social engagement through leaders and team ministry (pp. 194-201). An organized group can serve as the mechanism for launching a new initiative.

A Time Dimension

It was indicated that it takes time for some members to adopt a new idea or practice (Dudley, 2002; Sider, 2002). The time for each member to act varies for churches because norms and the number of church mobilization constructs for people to adopt may be substantial. Churches have been found to help members deal with fears and embrace change (Sider, 2002). In church mobilization, time would likely begin with organizational awareness or critical consciousness (Sider, 2002; Unruh, 2005). The study found that the constructs of church mobilization were corroborated with diffusion theory key concepts. Above is a summary of how the concepts aligned with the church mobilization strategy model.

Discussion

Church mobilization efforts involve social ministries, but not all social ministry efforts involve church mobilization. The study's results suggest aspects that are relevant to church mobilization. First, church mobilization is intentional because it requires the members to become empowered for action with a sense of urgency with the most significant level of participation to effect change. Second, churches have a transcendent reality that defines the church and solidifies a commitment to

being a church. Churches, by nature, are missional with a socio-historical perspective from which to draw to motivate social engagement. Third, these distinct characteristics of church mobilization require church communities to reach a level of readiness for church mobilization to take effect; as indicated by the adoption process outlined in diffusion theory, the members must adopt intentional church mobilization practices to constitute the strategy. Churches may not be fully ready for church mobilization but is may be in the initial stages of building their capacity. Needing the capacity for church mobilization does not preclude a church from social engagement through a social ministry. Nonetheless, the social ministry may serve as a mechanism for building capacity for church mobilization.

Church mobilization theory may help validate that it is a potential mechanism for meaningful and sustainable change when the church seeks to become better equipped for its mission and social engagement. It may be a composite of virtuous activities designed for self-improvement, environmental impact, and more significant influence in the broader cultural context. While a social ministry has inherent mechanisms for change, church mobilization is a comprehensive change strategy that multiplies and leads to other mechanisms for internal and external viability at multiple levels. Mechanisms create mechanisms such as members, issues, the environment, and tasks. Mechanisms may function as initiatives to advance ideas. Bandura's (1992) theory suggests the interconnectedness between human capabilities and efficacy that applies to church mobilization. Church mobilization, therefore, may be a strategy that requires an array of purposeful activities based on the constructs and reactions of members within the church's ecosystem. Each depends on the members' collective buy-in, which requires adoption and adaptation through participation over time. Rogers' (1995) diffusion theory suggests a time element that reminds practitioners that new ideas must take root so that structures, systems, and processes can develop to support church mobilization. These insights suggest defining church mobilization as *empowering internal and external resources to implement strategies to increase member participation through meaningful social engagement to address one or more issues in the broader environment*.

The assumptions for the church mobilization theoretical framework include the following:

1. Church mobilization includes addressing internal and external empowerment issues.
2. Personal and spiritual growth is associated with participation and involvement.
3. Church mobilization involves addressing complex intraorganizational issues.
4. Members are motivated to engage in church mobilization for a variety of reasons.
5. Church mobilization requires preparation and collective efficacy for readiness.

The theoretical framework for church mobilization suggests that the church intentionally engages in a social issue to address a problem. Participation and readiness are two core characteristics of church mobilization that lead to individual and collective benefits and rewards. Church mobilization strategies may serve the dual purpose of increasing participation in the church for community viability and making a difference in the broader community through social engagement.¹

¹ **Limitations:** This research article focuses on intraorganizational church mobilization. Interorganizational, and extra-organization systems which are essential interconnected systems with developmental issues to address. More theorizing will provide a complete picture. There is a need to contextualize the model and validate the constructs. There have been advances in developing measures for community mobilization. However, the measures have limitations concerning church mobilization theory and vice versa because of the implications of the findings in this article. There are methodological questions. The survey response to what and how churches become mobilized will depend on the respondents' understanding of the constructs. The survey items will need latent variables to assess readiness. Moreover, the argument that churches have ongoing practices in church mobilization indicates that interval measures account for pre-church mobilization practices. The question of the response item must consider the concept of time essential in measuring church mobilization to recognize the different readiness levels.

Implications

Church mobilization theory has implications for applied research with the addition and clarification of constructs. Measures need to include indicators of change at the community or organizational level that capture members' perceptions about the activities suggested by the constructs. This means that quantitative researchers will need to develop measures of members' perceptions about the state of the church concerning performance readiness. Unless the research is retrospective, a qualitative inquiry will be complex because churches preparing to engage may not provide a practical window of time for the investigations. The complexity of the framework for conducting research from either methodological perspective requires understanding the dynamics implied by the theoretical perspectives in this study. For instance, a theory of change must recognize the varying degrees within and across churches to which readiness is relative to how each church wants to be socially engaged.

Church mobilization theory also suggests that universal construct variables may constitute the collective efforts in the event. By testing the model's validity, practitioners will need to understand how vital the variables are through questions such as (1) are the constructs or dimensions adequate for explaining the outcome? (2) what is the relationship between the constructs or dimensions? and (3) is church mobilization readiness an intervention or an outcome of what the church does? These questions indicate that the theoretical framework is an instrument for intraorganizational change necessary before a church can cooperate for social engagement.

Mark G. Harden is Dean at Shaw University Divinity School in Raleigh, NC. Dr. Harden has 25 years in theological education and has taught church mobilization, urban church ministry, and community development as a family and child ecologist.

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Review of *Christianity and Critical Race Theory* by Robert Chao Romero and Jeff M. Liou (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023)

JOHN JEFFERSON DAVIS

Written primarily with pastors, teachers, and seminarians in mind, *Christianity and Critical Race Theory* offers a “critical but constructive” (back cover) introduction to the topic that is informed by Scripture and Christian theology. Its irenic tone is a welcome one in light of the polarized and partisan reactions to critical race theory by many in evangelical churches since the killing of George Floyd in May of 2020 and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Robert Chao Romero is an associate professor in the UCLA departments of Chicana/o, Central American, and Asian American Studies, and the author of *Brown Church*. Jeff M. Liou is national director of theological formation for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and teaches Christian ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary. Both are well qualified both academically and existentially to address this topic. Both Romero (“Asian-Latino”) and Liou (“Asian-American”) bring their own personal experiences of racial discrimination to bear on their analysis of critical race theory (CRT).

Readers who have read *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, the standard introduction to the topic, will be best equipped to appreciate Romero and Liou’s book. Following Delgado and Stefancic, they summarize the key tenets of CRT as follows (9, 10): 1) the belief that racism is “ordinary”—the common experience of most people of color in America; 2) “interest convergence”: since persisting racism benefits both elite and working-class whites, there is little incentive to eradicate it; 3) race and races are socially constructed, rather than biologically determined, fixed, and objective; and 4) the “voice of color” thesis: because of their histories and experiences, people of color may be aware of racial realities that whites are less likely to know or appreciate.

The authors make significant attempts to integrate the historical and sociological insights of CRT with biblical and theological teachings from the Christian Scriptures. Because all human beings and cultures are bearers of the image of God (22), all cultures and ethnic groups have “cultural wealth” to contribute to the global community of Christ (42-47). The vision of the book of Revelation depicts redeemed peoples from every tribe and tongue and nation standing before the Lamb (Rev 7:9), and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor and cultural riches into the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:24). The biblical vision of the redeemed community is a vision of a joyous multicultural community, in which each group is valued and respected.

The authors astutely address a weakness in many evangelical discussions of the doctrine of sin, especially in regard to racial sin: the tendency to limit such sins to individual, conscious actions and attitudes. Romero and Liou rightly call attention to the institutional dimensions of racist attitudes and policies (75-83), with effects that can persist in spite of changes in the law, and which can be embedded in unconscious attitudes and implicit biases.

While Romero and Liou affirm the main tenets of CRT, they do not hesitate to point to some of its weaknesses. For example, they criticize what they consider to be an excessive pessimism in CRT: the tendency to see racism so deeply embedded in American society that there would seem to be little hope of making substantial progress in the battle against it. The authors, on the basis of a Christian view of the future and the power of God, have a more hopeful outlook, and duly recognize the significant changes produced by the Civil Rights movement and by the many Christian groups that are working for change (130-34).

This valuable work might have been strengthened by the inclusion of a greater breadth of literature on the history of race and racism in the United States, and by a more detailed discussion of key terms and distinctions, such as *de jure* vs. *de facto* racism; systemic racism (as in the Jim Crow era) vs. the lingering effects of previous *de jure* racism; and implicit vs. explicit racial biases.

For further study of these issues, see my previous articles in the *Africanus Journal*: John Jefferson Davis, “Blindness to the Whiteness? Reflections on Race Awareness among Theologians and Biblical Scholars in American Evangelicalism,” *Africanus Journal* 14:2 (November 2022): 5–18; and John Jefferson Davis, “Systemic Racism and Critical Race Theory: Thoughts and Suggestions for Evangelicals in Predominantly White Institutions,” *Africanus Journal* 15:2 (November 2023): 16–24.

John Jefferson Davis is Senior Professor of Systematic Theology and Christian Ethics at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Hamilton, MA and the author of *Worship and the Reality of God* (IVP Academic) and *Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing the Church Today*, 4th ed. (P & R Publishing).

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Jesus Among the Homeless

Successful Strategies of Christian Ministers to the Marginalized

WILMA FAYE MATHIS
 FOREWORD BY Julia C. Davis
 AFTERWORD BY Olga Soler

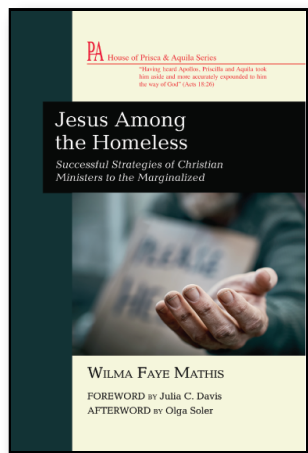
Jesus Among the Homeless identifies the problem of homelessness and applies strategies based on scriptural principles as a solution. It contains testimonies of seasoned teachers, psychologists, and social workers describing effective strategies for outreaching to men and women affected by abuse, mental illness, addictions and homelessness. This go-to manual written in simple and clear layman’s terms is an invaluable asset for anyone ministering to the homeless.

“In this book, Wilma Mathis provides practical steps on how to reach out to women experiencing homelessness. Mathis’ years of experience overseeing groups in a Boston women’s shelter and her extensive biblical study of attitudes toward women who find themselves in poverty, on the margins of society, or cast out from their families form the basis of her approach. The development of transformational relationships with Christians is key to helping women in shelters discover a new life in Christ.”
 —SARA MITCHELL, Boston Community Chaplain Ministry

“As a pastor who serves those in need, I recommend *Jesus Among the Homeless*. From its profiles of marginalized biblical characters to its description of ministries that offer practical ideas for those new to ministry with the homeless, this book is a great resource for pastors and lay people serving at-risk communities!”
 —VALERIE DOERING CRISMAN, co-pastor, Pilgrim Church

“For over thirty years I have successfully applied strategies based on scriptural principles to ministering to at-risk inner-city youth. As an African American Christian leader, I endorse *Jesus Among the Homeless* for modeling strategies that heal the marginalized.”
 —YVONNETTE O’NEAL, founder, Ambassadors Network Ministries

“*Jesus Among the Homeless* details the successful program Mathis and her colleagues have created to help homeless and at-risk women through study of similar women in the Bible like Hagar, Ruth, and others to whom God reached out and whose lives God changed and includes suggestions how these ideas can be applied to anyone who needs their self-esteem raised, so that the hopeless can meet God, find God’s hope, and see their hearts and their situations improve.”
 —WILLIAM DAVID SPENCER, distinguished adjunct professor of theology and the arts, Gordon-Conwell Seminary



WILMA FAYE MATHIS holds an MA and a DMin in urban ministry, and an MDiv. Rev. Mathis has served the church as Christian education director and conducts a ministry to moms and other women (Mom2Mom). She serves as an Athanasian teaching scholar in William David Spencer’s theology survey course at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary Boston Campus (CUME). She is a contributing author to *An Artistic Tribute to Harriet Tubman: The Commission; Finding A Better Way; Black Girl Cry; and When Women Speak*. She is an active conference speaker and preacher.

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Review of *Three in One: Analogies for the Trinity* by William David Spencer (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2022)

LANCE PAN

The Christian doctrine of the Trinity in the unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three Persons in one Godhead has been essential to orthodoxy for nearly two millennia. Various images and analogies have been used to describe this complex, even mysterious, Three-in-One concept, although none seems to capture all the essence due to limitations of human languages and expressions. Some think that we ought to leave the Trinity as a mystery and not bother with illustrations to avoid misguidance and heresy. Rev. Dr. William David Spencer's book *Three In One: Analogies for the Trinity* carefully parses illustrations and images gathered from church history and contemporary Christians to help readers apply them correctly and with appropriate qualifications. The goal of the book is to help readers with illustrations to convey truth about God while avoiding repeating historical errors. The author argues strongly for the merit of using imperfect imagery towards better understanding of God and for effective evangelism.

A renowned biblical scholar and systematic theologian, Dr. Spencer authored or edited more than eighteen books and over 300 published articles, stories, reviews, and poems. His lifelong service as an urban minister and adjunct professor at the urban campus of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary sets his work apart from other scholarly publications, as his intended audience is the several thousand of his urban-campus seminary students who are bi-vocational ministers in practical ministries. He combines survey answers from this group of scholars and theologians of diverse and multicultural backgrounds with valuable primary sources from the historical archives and most importantly Scripture itself.

After an introduction and laying out human language limitations, the book dives into how Jesus uses images to teach about God, followed by the light motif of the Son as the radiance of the Father as recorded in Scripture and compared to images of light as understood by early church theologians including Origen, Clement, and Athanasius. The rest of the book is given to illustrations and images that move and change, static non-human images, stand-still human images, and God as a divine family.

One of the book's strengths is what it does not strive to achieve, which is to reach a verdict on which images or illustrations are better representations of the Trinity. In fact, the verdict is known before the journey starts: many are imagined and none is perfect. The book's unique contribution is that, after tracing historical precedents and flavors of various images and analogies, it affirms the positive attributes of those images in enhancing our understanding of the triune God, but also helps us avoid the errors from ages past. Rather than selecting one form of analogy over another, be it three parts or three modes, either static or fluid, the author includes discussions of competing viewpoints on each and advises readers to test every one against the only final authoritative interpretation, the Scripture.

Another strength of the book is its ability to take readers on a journey of discovery and contemplation. Each analogy serves as a doorway into a new level of understanding of the Triune God, inviting readers to engage with their faith and understanding of relevant Scripture verses. The writing style is accessible to those with limited theological knowledge as the author patiently explains nuanced meanings of important concepts in the original biblical languages from a different time.

The author also chooses analogies skillfully to resonate with a wide readership. Whether it's the dimensions of a cube or carvings of United States presidents on Mount Rushmore, the retelling of the analogies stimulates fresh perspectives for readers to reconsider their perception of the divine.

The complex subject matter poses organizational and content challenges. While the analogies make the concept of the Trinity more approachable, limitations of the human mind make it difficult to grasp fully, potentially leaving some readers struggling to reconcile perceptions discussed in the book with their theological reality. In the interest to make complex theological concepts accessible to a wider readership, some analogies might simplify the concept too much, potentially diluting its theological significance, while others might dive too deeply into abstraction.

Three in One: Analogies for the Trinity is a masterful work that bridges theological depth with accessible insights. It provides a gripping journey to an important yet mysterious realm of the Christian belief for the well-versed theologian as well as a layperson just curious about the Trinity. The book is also a great resource for seminary students to deepen their understanding of the nature of God and bring the complex subject to a diverse population they interact with and serve. It should work well with an introductory seminary theology course to help explain a complex and abstract concept to students new to systematic theology. Or it can be supplementary material in advance level classes such as biblical criticism and patristics.

Lance Pan is an investment research professional and Master of Divinity candidate at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Boston Campus



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.

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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 *The Christian World Liberation Front: The Jesus Movement's Model of Revival and Social Reform for the Postmodern Church*
by Jeanne C. DeFazio (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2022)**

LAUREN MULFORD

The Christian World Liberation Front (CWLF) by Jeanne DeFazio is presented as a model for the postmodern church on how revival and reform once happened in America in the 1960s and 1970s as seen in its subtitle *The Jesus Movement's Model of Revival and Social Reform for the Postmodern Church*. It is suitable for anyone wishing to understand the Berkeley branch of the Jesus Movement whether out of curiosity or to study evangelizing methods for use today.

DeFazio offers many first-hand accounts from the leaders and members of CWLF headquartered in Berkeley, CA. While there is one cohesive story being told, the reader will hear from many different contributors about their individual experiences which led them to CWLF and what happened while participating in CWLF's community.

DeFazio's book whets one's appetite for the story of Christ in the late twentieth century. It will stir your imagination and challenge you to hope that maybe the country is not too lost to be saved in the twenty-first century. Sprinkled throughout the book are hints of how the revival began. Each testimony shares peoples' thoughts on taking Jesus truly at his word and not allowing tradition or fear of "those" people to stand in the way of sharing Christ's love. The church can be made of anyone anywhere.

The book starts with a memorial chapter dedicated to Jack Sparks, the CWLF Founder. The two components of this chapter emphasize Sparks' desire to be "fully, radically, and simply present in the culture as a disciple of Jesus" (2) and his method of loving outreach via various channels. CWLF was not an "angle" or trick to get people to come to church. It was born out of a genuine concern for those in poverty, the homeless, and other injustices such as racism and sexism. It did not lead Sparks to strategize how to manipulate people into giving him power but rather led him to concrete actions both politically and socially.

What made the Jesus Movement of the 1960s and 1970s so impactful and special was that its members saw what the Bible taught about Jesus and not just what one side of a political aisle claimed it taught about Jesus. As DeFazio says, "the Jesus Movement drew from both camps" (8), meaning those in evangelicalism who emphasize sin and repentance and those in the mainstream who emphasize Christ's love and care for marginalized people.

DeFazio interviewed many people for this project and, even with so many testimonies, the book is a short 121 pages. It is easily read in one sitting except that the stories may make you sit back and imagine if this is possible today as it did with me. DeFazio never emphasized one superstar in the group except Jesus himself. Certainly, we see this in the sense that there is not one person or church or even location where the Jesus Movement was prominent (9). The CWLF in Berkeley was just one branch of what Jesus was doing last century. He was moving in the Northeast as well and throughout the Catholic Church. Even in writing for newsletters such as *Right On* people were not trying to make money or gain influence. They were trying to share the love of Jesus, sometimes not even mentioning their own names in their publications.

DeFazio shows that the Kingdom of Heaven is truly for everyone as business people, drug addicts, theater groupies, and anyone tired of the "establishment" was welcomed at CWLF. Anyone who wanted to join, could join. There was no quiz, no monetary investment required, no church affiliation needed. Could this idea be plausible today? DeFazio thinks so. In one interview, she

quotes Greg Brunet saying that the Jesus Movement is still relevant because it shows that Jesus is the answer to our morality issues (81).

DeFazio mentions that CWLF members seemed uniquely gifted for their time and place (33). She quotes Peggy Vanek-Titus saying that CWLF made Christianity palatable (37). She writes that “each member’s memories of the time and place are not just nostalgic, but embrace all the wonders and beauty of living out the gospel with the love of Jesus, knowing Jesus and one another in Christian community” (40).

DeFazio does a fantastic job at laying the foundation of historical context with anecdotes. She writes that CWLF was not a random historical incident, and that it is part of a “continuum of historical awakenings within the American church” (43). DeFazio quotes Larry Hatfield saying that CWLF was more a “federation of ministries” where every gift was valued and leadership was not oppressive (44). How can this description do anything other than excite a reader? DeFazio’s interviews describe periodicals, hospitality houses, a free university, and other exciting enterprises all done for Christ, not for fame, notoriety, influence, brand, or any other trivial motivation we find in Christian celebrities of the twenty-first century. Instead, DeFazio writes that “sharing the love of God with people who had nothing and whom nobody wanted anything to do with was the essence of the gospel message” (57). This is the type of message we need today as I feel like we have forgotten that in recent years.

DeFazio writes that “CWLF worked to revive souls and reform society into alignment with the kingdom of God” (68) and that she hopes her book will be a retrospective to learn from the past and empower the future (77). I hope more people will read her book and feel the need to embrace the ideals that are written. I hope that those who were once part of such a powerful movement would go back to their first love and re-embrace what they once had. I am grateful to have been able to read DeFazio’s book as well as William Spencer’s *Afterword* chapter.

Spencer offers a different experience with the Jesus Movement on the opposite northeast coast. It is amazing to read how Jesus swept the nation without use of social media or human-powered control structures. Perhaps humility is what we need in the twenty-first century. Perhaps, if more Christians were willing to be “nobodies” for Jesus and not compete for attention, book deals, or prime time TV shows, we could instead focus on Christ in “committed, submitted communities” (117). If such a thing is possible, I want to be in it.

Lauren Mulford lives in Michigan with her husband and eight children. She is a student at Union Theological College and works remotely for The Kirby Laing Centre for Public Theology in Cambridge, UK.

Otto & The White Dove

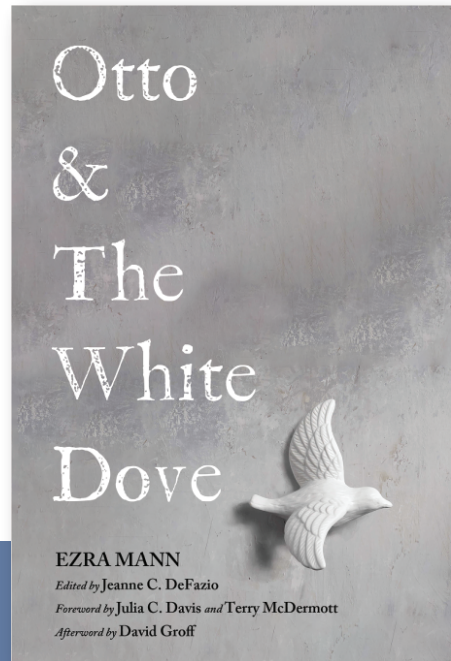
EZRA MANN

Edited by Jeanne C. DeFazio

Foreword by Julia C. Davis and Terry McDermott

Afterword by David Groff

Otto & The White Dove chronicles the life of Otto Kruger an engineering professor at the University in Leipzig, Germany. A Holocaust survivor, he's tormented by flashbacks of the brutal deaths of his wife, children and parents at the hands of the Nazis. When WWII ends, Otto's released from concentration camp and stays in Germany opening a machine shop. Eventually he travels to the United States to pursue the American dream, but instead ends up with a sad and lonely life as the owner of a thrift shop in New York City. By God's miracle grace, a white dove appears at the front door of the shop. The bird *explains* to Otto the true purpose of his life and experiences a spiritual encounter with the living God. Otto becomes transformed and with a new lease on life; shares his personal knowledge of God's love to others.



Ezra Mann, German-born American producer, writer, and director, is best known for coproducing *In the Region of Ice*. This motion picture won an Academy Award (Oscar) for the best short live-action drama of 1977. Ezra is a former member of The Writers Guild of America West (WGA West) and Director's Guild of America (DGA) and a current member of Dramatist Guild of America in New York City.

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"Unsettling but also ultimately comforting, Academy Award winner Ezra Mann's powerful play *Otto & The White Dove* is about redemption and the healing of memories past and still forming. This play is an unforgettable experience. It will haunt you with its horrors but comfort you with its offer of deliverance. Its messages are impossible to ignore."

—**WILLIAM DAVID SPENCER**, distinguished adjunct professor of theology and the arts, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

"I am standing with Israel and my wonderful friend Ezra Mann. His timely and brilliant play *Otto & The White Dove* reminds us of the horror of the Holocaust so that we do everything possible to prevent history from repeating itself."

—**CHARLENE EBER**, contributing author to *Redeeming the Screens*

"Despite constant racial attacks, Otto, a Holocaust survivor, treats his customers with kindness and good humor each day. As an African American church leader, I wholeheartedly endorse *Otto & The White Dove* to stand for respect and inclusion against discrimination of any kind."

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

"Ezra Mann's play *Otto & The White Dove* exposes the horror of his parents' experience in German concentration camps. I identify with this play because my Japanese American mother was forced into US internment camps during World War II. I am endorsing *Otto & The White Dove* to oppose discrimination of any kind and stand for respect and inclusion."

—**MIDORI ARIMOTO**, Japanese American actress

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**Review of *Jesus Among the Homeless. Successful Strategies of Christian Ministers to the Marginalized* by Wilma Faye Mathis
(Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2023)**

TIFFANY L. KERSHNER

Our current news is replete with stories about people experiencing homelessness. Daily, Americans are faced with images of tents, urban decay, and despair touching every city and town throughout the United States. However, these stories often neglect the measures used to reach these marginalized populations. Instead, we place blame, or we hopelessly turn away in frustration. Therefore, reading an edited volume where the homeless are recognized, heard, and loved is refreshing and critical to living as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

In this edited volume, Rev. Dr. Wilma Faye Mathis, preacher, speaker, homeless advocate, and scholar, along with other Christian disciples, provides scriptural evidence that there is a biblical obligation to demonstrate compassion and care for the marginalized in our communities. What stands out about this book is a genuine reconciliation of faith and practice, using our heads, hearts, and hands to address the poor and disadvantaged in our communities. As stated in the Foreword, authored by Julia C. Davis, a chaplain and expert in community-based programs supporting underrepresented populations, “God’s word mandates believers to help the poor (Jas 1:27) and promises we are blessed when we do” (xv). This book, then, which builds on Dr. Mathis’ dissertation, will resonate with those interested in serving the disadvantaged in our communities. Moreover, the book provides us with hope, as reflected in the narratives written by those with first-hand experience.

The book is organized into two parts that emphasize a particular theme, each containing several chapters for nine chapters total, plus a conclusion and afterword. The chapters in Part 1 (Identifying the Problem of Homelessness and Applying Strategies Based on Scriptural Principles as a Solution), all written by Mathis, are arranged intentionally first to provide detailed scriptural evidence that often challenges our preconceived notions or stereotypes of marginalized populations and how we should care for them. These chapters provide an overview of the homeless situation in the United States before taking a scriptural deep dive, covering specific cases of well-known marginalized characters in the Old and New Testaments. The second half of the book, Part 2 (Successful Strategies of Christian Ministers to the Marginalized), brings three case studies of successful strategies of clergy and disciples ministering to the marginalized. Following the concluding chapter and afterword, the reader will be delighted to find detailed biographies of the contributing authors, plus a comprehensive bibliography. In addition to the scripturally sound content, one of the significant strengths of this volume is, in fact, its first-person narratives from both the Christian ministers and the marginalized women they serve. Therefore, this book gives marginalized people suffering from oppression and homelessness a voice, making it even more timely and influential.

Chapter 1 introduces readers to the author’s objectives and the necessary statistics, which frame the discussions in Chapters 2-6 and the case studies in Chapters 7-9. Citing government statistics, Mathis begins her discussion in Chapter 1 by presenting the grim numbers of homeless populations in the United States and comparing these statistics with the low number of emergency shelters available to them. Mathis then turns her attention to the statistics on homeless families and women, in particular; this population is the main focus of the rest of the book. Here, Mathis lays out her two main objectives for reconciling the statistics on women experiencing homelessness and what the scriptural witness provides. First, according to Mathis, “a close examination of both the Old and New Testament speaks to women experiencing homelessness and can help

guide them to have the ability to exercise their God-given purpose in every aspect of their lives: spiritually, mentally, and physically” (9). Second, and most critically, Mathis encourages churches to revisit our “hermeneutical (interpretation) and exegetical (explanation) paradigm for engaging homelessness, specifically of women” (9). Chapters 2-5 provide scriptural teachings about the poor and marginalized populations while guiding us through this hermeneutical process.

In Chapter 2, starting with a quote by artist Timothy Schmalz, who references Matthew 25, Mathis provides a contemporary context for the current debate, focusing on the daily challenges the homeless face. By interweaving her interactions and observations of the homeless she has served with scriptural evidence, Mathis paints a clear picture that poverty and oppression are not recent phenomena. At the end of Chapter 2, she includes a word study, tracing the Old and New Testament use of the Hebrew and Greek words for poor, widow, and homeless, which provides the reader with a solid understanding of these terms, beneficial for future discussion. These word studies afford us the foundation for the hermeneutical journey through the Old and New Testaments, starting with an explanation of words such as “widow” and “kinsman-redeemer” from the Book of Ruth (Chapter 3), followed by a thoughtful analysis and interpretation of Hagar’s encounter with God in the Abrahamic narrative spanning Genesis 16-21 (Chapter 4). According to Mathis, Hagar’s position as an outcast resonates closely with homeless women in our current society. As she succinctly states in this chapter, when referring to Genesis 16:13-14, “Hagar waited hopelessly in the desert, and when she thought her life was over, she was seen by God” (40). Here, we are reminded of our duties as Christians to help “lift the homeless out of their desert” (40).

Part 1 culminates with a close look at Jesus’ ministry with the homeless, poor, and widows, followed by a summary of what we have learned in these hermeneutical exercises. With a particular focus on passages in Luke (4:18-19; 8:43-48), we are reminded that women were a focus of Jesus’ compassion and teachings. Moreover, in Chapter 6, Mathis reminds us that “suffering will either drive people to God or away from God” (53). In our ministry to the homeless and disadvantaged, we should use these scriptural teachings as a model for how to respond to suffering and oppression in our communities.

Part 2 of this volume introduces us to case studies of ministering to the homeless. Here, we witness the gospel in action through three experts in the field. First, in Chapter 7, Jeanne DeFazio beautifully weaves in personal narratives from those ministering to the homeless and those who have been homeless themselves. DeFazio’s goal in this chapter is to provide a model of the Christian community as an effective strategy for serving this population. Prayer, scriptural guidance, and love, coupled with necessities such as food and fellowship, were keys to the success of these programs. In Chapter 8, Martha Reyes provides examples through her work with the Hosanna Foundation, a nonprofit in California that addresses the “social, emotional, and psychological needs” of minority individuals in need of mental health services. In addition, the chapter concludes with specific recommendations on how to minister to street children, reminding us that homelessness is not restricted to adults.

Finally, in Chapter 9, Wilma Mathis presents her testimony of her long-term work ministering to homeless women in Boston, Massachusetts. In this chapter, we witness the power of the gospel as reflected in transformational journaling exercises in women’s shelters. According to Mathis, transformational journaling can “help to equip homeless women... to recognize and exercise their God-given purpose in every aspect of their lives: spiritually, mentally, and physically, while engaging the journaling process in a profound way with the biblical text at its foundation” (81-82). Towards the end of this chapter, she provides detailed guidelines for churches, parachurch ministries, and shelters who desire to launch a similar program in their ministries. Part 2 concludes with a summary chapter by Mathis and an afterword written by Olga Soler, a director, writer, and performer for Estuary Ministries, a performing arts ministry. In the afterword, Soler brings us full circle by reminding us of the many challenges the homeless face in our communities and the

obstacles that often prevent them from receiving proper care. While a sobering conclusion to this thoughtful book, it also reminds us of our Christian obligations and how churches can fill in the gaps left behind by inadequate governmental and social services.

Jesus Among the Homeless thoroughly explains Christian discipleship through a scriptural and ministering lens. The book's strengths include the multiple citations of Old and New Testament Scripture, numerous statistics on homeless numbers in the United States, the seamless transition from one chapter to the next, and the addition of personal narratives highlighting the voices of the marginalized and those disciples who care for them. For this reason, I highly recommend that faculty assign this book in classes for seminary and Bible college students. It will give them a rich resource to understand the urban populations they might preach or minister to, whether in a church, mission, or shelter. Finally, I recommend this volume to anyone interested in understanding better the intersection of social injustices and Scripture, as this book will serve as an excellent resource to learn more about this topic from hands-on experts in the field. This book will tug at your heartstrings and, at the same time, hopefully, move us toward using our heads, hearts, and hands, as Jesus calls us to do, in addressing fundamental problems in our communities.

Tiffany L. Kershner, Ph.D., is an Instructor and Director of the Office of Fellowships in Hicks Honors College at the University of North Florida. Recently, she completed her Graduate Certificate in Christian Studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Boston, MA. She holds a Ph.D. in Linguistics from Indiana University and an M.A. in Anthropology from the University at Albany-SUNY. She is a linguistic anthropologist specializing in documenting undersubscribed languages spoken in sub-Saharan Africa and has conducted fieldwork in Malawi and Comoros. In 1999-2000, she represented the United States as a Fulbright recipient in Malawi. Outside academia, she is active in her local Methodist church, serving as a lay leader and small group facilitator.



Letting Go

Jeanne C. DeFazio & Terry McDermott
foreword by Julia C. Davis

In this small collection of poetry by Terry McDermott and collected by Jeanne C. DeFazio, McDermott's poems tenderly speak to the hearts of women who suffer from post-abortion grief, encouraging them to let go of fear, regret, and anger and to thank God for covering the past, present, and future. Further reflection on Nelson Mandela's poem, "Letting Go," reminds us all of the importance of forgiveness and release.

"As a Personal Ministry Leader, I help women to let go of fear, regret, and anger and to thank God for covering their past, present, and future. This book is an excellent resource!"

—VIKA RAMALASOU, personal ministry leader, Sacramento Fijian Adventist Church

"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. Terry McDermott's poetry encourages us all to use our creativity to let go of the past and to move forward by God's grace."

—LINDA LOCKHART, former supervisor, Anchorage Boys Home

"My personal ministry Mom2Mom provides a weekly support system for moms from all walks of life, and women. I will recommend this wonderful book to my moms and women because it advocates letting go of fear, pain, and anger to be free to grow and live for the future."

—WILMA FAYE MATHIS, author of *Jesus among the Homeless*

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Jeanne DeFazio is the author of *Keeping the Dream Alive: A Reflection on the Art of Harriet Lorence Nesbit*; coauthor of *How to Have an Attitude of Gratitude on the Night Shift* with Teresa Flowers and *Letting Go*; and editor of *Berkeley Street Theatre: How Improvisation and Street Theater Emerged as a Christian Outreach to the Culture of the Time*. She also edited *Specialist Fourth Class John Joseph DeFazio: Advocating for Disabled American Veterans, The Commission, Finding a Better Way, Otto & The White Dove*, and was the coeditor of *Creative Ways to Build Christian Community, Redeeming the Screens, Empowering English Language Learners, and An Artistic Tribute to Harriet Tubman*. She is a contributing author to *Christian Egalitarian Leadership* and to *Jesus Among the Homeless*.

Terry McDermott holds a BA from Santa Clara University; a JD from the University of California (Davis) School of Law; and an LL.M from the University of California (Berkeley) School of Law. He is a retired lecturer in law, emeritus, Sacramento State University, and the author of *Trail of Tears* (2017) and a contributing author to *Otto & The White Dove* (2023).

Media, Examination, and Review Copies:

Contact: Shanalea Forrest
(541) 344-1528, ext 151 or shanalea@wipfandstock.com

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