

AFRICANUS JOURNAL

Vol. 17 No. 2 | NOVEMBER 2025



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THE AFRICANUS GUILD

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

Quonekuia Day received her Ph.D. from North-West University in 2021.
Mark Shan received his Ph.D. from North-West University in 2025.
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. 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.

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., D.Min., Ed.D., Th.D., S.T.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., *Julius Africanus Chronographiae: The Extant Fragments, Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller* 15 (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007).

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

Other Front Matter

Editorial Team for the issue: Lark Kelsey, Emmanuel Gyamera Yamoah, J. Saemi Kim, Seong Park, Nicole Rim, John Runyon, Aída Besançon Spencer, William David Spencer

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Summary of Content:

This issue concerns topics related to the field of the Bible, theology, history, and concerns over marriage, slavery, relational issues, ministry, the leadership of women, the global church, including Africa, the United States, United Kingdom, Latin America, and China.

The God Who Commits¹ and the Need for One Man and One Woman to Commit Together in Marriage Instead of Just Living Together²

VLADIMIR JEUNE

INTRODUCTION

More and more Americans are losing faith in the institution of marriage and turning to commitment-free alternatives like hookups and cohabitation. According to Louise Perry, “[w]ith hook-up culture established as normative, both men and women are funneled into patterns of behavior that are grimly complementary. Men are encouraged into...pursuing temporary relationships that offer all the pleasures of cheap sex and none of the responsibilities of commitment. Meanwhile, women compete with each other for short-term male sexual attention, and may well win it...”³

Sadly, Christians are not immune to this behavior. Even though various polls have found that evangelical Christians hold to biblical views about sex and marriage,⁴ a 2019 Pew Research Center survey found otherwise. Approximately thirty-six percent of surveyed evangelicals agreed that “casual sex between consenting adults who are not in a committed relationship” is sometimes or always acceptable, with that number climbing to forty-seven percent when the same question was asked about sex between consenting adults in a committed relationship.⁵ More abysmal still is the number of self-identified evangelicals who engage in premarital sex and cohabitation. Citing the General Social Survey, David J. Ayers comments that “...among never-married fundamentalist [i.e., evangelical] adults between 2008 and 2018, 86% of females and 82% of males had at least one opposite-sex sexual partner since age 18, while 57% and 65%, respectively, had three or more. These percentages were even higher for those under 30.”⁶

These findings ring true when considered against the backdrop of widespread anecdotes about promiscuous behaviors in Christian circles and the many studies documenting changing Christian attitudes about sex outside of marriage. In a 2015 blogpost, “Loving Jesus and Hooking Up,” blogger Mary DeMuth relayed how one member of her life group “...described what it was like to be in a singles ministry where many folks (typically post-divorce) felt hooking up was fine. In fact, they thought he was strange for wanting to get married.”⁷ According to DeMuth, other members of her life group agreed that this attitude was consistent with what they had heard, suggesting that

1 Dr. Wilma Mathis in her book, *Jesus Among the Homeless: Successful Strategies of Christian Ministers to the Marginalized* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2023), 26, explains: “*Hesed* has often been translated as ‘mercy’ in English, but the meaning is more like ‘loving kindness,’ ‘faithfulness,’ ‘covenant love.’” She continues, “*Hesed* is a core character trait of God himself, describing his relationship with Israel and humanity (Exod 34:6-7).” Mathis, *Jesus Among the Homeless*, 27. “Strong’s Number H2617 matches the Hebrew *הֶסֶד* (*hesed*), which occurs 251 times in 241 verses in the WLC Hebrew. “H2617 – *hesed* (ESV): Strong’s Greek Lexicon.” Blue Letter Bible. 2024. Accessed 13 Nov. 2024. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h2617/esv/wlc/0-1/>.

2 The first draft of this paper was completed for the Rev. Dr. William David Spencer in Theology Survey I at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary Boston campus, Fall 2024.

3 Louise Perry, *The Case Against the Sexual Revolution: A New Guide to Sex in the 21st Century* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2022), 121.

4 For example, David J. Ayers notes that “Evangelicals...hold to a simple view of sex outside of marriage...*don’t*.” David J. Ayers, “Sex and the Single Evangelical,” *Institute for Family Studies*, August 14, 2019, <https://ifstudies.org/blog/sex-and-the-single-evangelical>.

5 Jeff Diamant, “Half of U.S. Christians Say Casual Sex Between Consenting Adults Is Sometimes or Always Acceptable,” *Pew Research Center*, August 31, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2020/08/31/half-of-u-s-christians-say-casual-sex-between-consenting-adults-is-sometimes-or-always-acceptable/>.

6 Ayers, *Sex and the Single Evangelical*.

7 Mary Demuth, “Loving Jesus & Hooking Up,” *Kingdom Uncaged*, March 19, 2015, <https://www.marydemuth.com/hooks-up/world-changing/>.

such lax attitudes towards marriage and sex outside of marriage are increasingly being normalized in church settings. In his research brief on “Current Sexual Practices of Evangelical Teens and Young Adults,” David Ayers puts it even more bluntly, asserting that “[t]he wholesale abandonment of most of the traditional sex ethic among modern Evangelicals is well-documented.”⁸ According to Ayers, “[T]he sexual practices of professing Christians increasingly reflect their growing compromise or relinquishment of the biblical sexual ethic. Sex outside marriage – up to and including cohabitation and multiple partners over time – is now widely practiced by many who regard themselves as conservative Protestants.”⁹ There is, therefore, an urgent need to teach Christians anew about the importance of marriage.

THESIS STATEMENT

Referencing the Drs. Aída Besançon Spencer and William David Spencer’s *The Global God*, this present Old and New Testament word study of the God who commits will demonstrate why God mandates an exclusive and loving relationship within the context of marriage for men and women. It will discuss current attitudes towards marriage and the factors that have led to this attitude. In conclusion, it will recommend practical ways to inform the church on how to promote godly marriages.

OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES IDENTIFYING THE GOD WHO COMMITS

Here is a set of Scriptures with interpreting principles that provide us a perspective from the Bible’s view:

Scripture: Genesis 1:27-28: “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.’”¹⁰

Principle: Man and woman united together in marriage are called to have children.

Scripture: Genesis 2:18: “The LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.’”

Principles: God created one man to marry one woman.

God created the man to be in a committed relationship with a suitable helper.

Out of all his creation, the one thing that God judges not to be good is man living alone. God institutes marriage as an institution that is good for both man and woman.

Scripture: Genesis 2:23-25: “The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called “woman,” for she was taken out of man.’ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.”

Principles: The intimate union between a man and a woman in a godly marriage images their relationship with a loving relational triune God.

God created men and women to have a loving relationship that reflects God’s character.

8 David J. Ayers, “Research Brief: Current Sexual Practices of Evangelical Teens and Young Adults, *Institute for Family Studies*,” August 2019. <https://ifstudies.org/ifs-admin/resources/final-ifsresearchbrief-ayers-evangelicalsandsex8819.pdf>.

9 David J. Ayers, *After the Revolution: Sex and the Single Evangelical* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2022), 18.

10 Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the New International Version.

When a man finds a suitable helper, he is willing to leave all that he holds dear to cling to her and become one flesh.

Scripture: Hosea 2:19-20: “I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD.”

Principles: God deeply desired to betroth Israel even though she was unfaithful.

God commits to being faithful to Israel forever.

Scripture: Ezekiel 16:8: “Later I passed by, and when I looked at you and saw that you were old enough for love, I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your naked body. I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Sovereign LORD, and you became mine.”

Principles: God’s covenant relationship with Israel is modeled as a marriage relationship.

God swore a solemn oath to Israel and entered into a covenant with her.

Scripture: Isaiah 62:5: “As a young man marries a young woman, so will your Builder marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.”

Principles: God is the bridegroom and Jerusalem is his bride.

Despite Jerusalem’s infidelity, God still plays the part of the new bridegroom delighting and rejoicing in Jerusalem as his bride.

Scripture: Isaiah 54:5: “For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name, and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth, he is called” (ESV).

Principles: God’s loving commitment to Israel is so great that he created a way for Israel to be redeemed and reconciled to him.

Although God in his righteous anger briefly left his people, he did not abandon them. In fact, even though Israel had now become unlovable and the object of shame and disgrace, the God who is creator, Lord of hosts and over the whole earth, honored Israel by calling himself her husband and describing himself as the “Holy One of Israel.”

NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES IDENTIFYING THE GOD WHO COMMITS

Scripture: Matthew 19:4-11: “‘Haven’t you read,’ he replied, ‘that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female.’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.’ ‘Why then,’ they asked, ‘did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?’ Jesus replied, ‘Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.’ The disciples said to him, ‘If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.’ Jesus replied, ‘Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. For there are eunuchs who were born that way, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others—and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.’”

Principles: God created men and women to unite in holy matrimony and become one flesh.

Jesus specified monogamy, so that the two (husband and wife) would become “one flesh.”

Jesus demonstrates clearly that God intended for marriage to be a permanent commitment.

Jesus clearly stated that anyone who divorces a spouse, except for sexual immorality, and marries another commits adultery.

As a result of the above principles, marriage is a serious commitment that should not be undertaken lightly.

Scripture: Ephesians 5:25-29: “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church” (ESV).

Principles: The relationship between husband and wife is modeled after Christ’s relationship with the church.

A husband’s love for his wife ought to mirror Christ’s love for the church. He must love his wife sacrificially like he loves himself because they are one flesh.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 11:2: “I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.”

Principle: The church is a bride promised to one husband, Christ. Just as Paul urges the Corinthians to be true to their husband, Christ, married couples ought to guard their hearts and minds, so that they might not allow anyone or anything to disrupt their relationship.

Scripture: Ephesians 5:1-2: “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (ESV).

Principle: Married couples are to imitate God. Like Christ’s relationship with his bride, their relationship ought to be based on love, sacrifice and purity.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:17: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

Principle: Married Christian couples model God’s covenant relationship available to all humans through Jesus’ redemptive work on the cross at Calvary.

Scripture: John 3:16-17: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him” (NRSV Updated Edition).

Principle: Jesus came to earth to save not to condemn.

Scripture: Revelation 21:2: And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Principle: God's bride, the church, is made ready and adorned for her husband.

SUMMARY OF PRINCIPLES

Although man is the crowning achievement of God's creation, from the beginning God judges that a man alone without a companion is not good (Gen 2:18). Thus, God institutes marriage, and, through their intimate union, man and woman become one flesh (Gen 2:23-25). This mystical one flesh union is first presented as an image of Israel's covenant relationship with God (Isa 62:5; Hos 2:19-20; Ezek 16:8). This covenant is marked by God's steadfast love for his "bride." Even when they are unlovable, God's commitment is so great that he creates a way for Israel to be redeemed and reconciled to him (Isa 54:5). He rejoices over his bride like a new husband, and he commits to being faithful to Israel forever (Isa 62:5). This love finds its fulfillment in Christ's love for his bride, the church. Christ loves his bride so much that he gives his life for her (Eph 5:25). A healthy marriage, therefore, is a serious and permanent undertaking built on an exclusive intimate relationship between a husband and wife (Gen 2:24-25; Matt 19:4-11). A healthy marriage is modeled after Christ's love for the church. The bride of Christ is married to Jesus, a jealous husband, who sacrificed his life for the redemption of humankind (John 3:16-17; Isa 54:5; 2 Cor 11:2). A healthy marriage ought to be based on love, sacrifice and purity (Eph 5:1-2, 25-29). A healthy marriage ultimately reflects the image of God (Gen 1:27), provides man and woman with companionship (Gen 2:18), and provides the appropriate structure for having and rearing children (Gen 1:27-28).¹¹ The Bible story begins with a human wedding and ends with "the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband" (Rev 21:2).

In *The Global God*, Aída Besançon Spencer writes: "God not only reminds people of God's past and potential actions, God also chooses attributes to highlight to remind people of the actions humans should take."¹²

ATTITUDES TOWARD RELATIONSHIPS

In 2015, Jordana Narin, a sophomore at Columbia University, won *The New York Times* Modern Love College Essay Contest with a column titled, "No Labels, No Drama, Right?"¹³ Out of nearly 1,800 essays submitted,¹⁴ Narin's essay hit a particular nerve. As she eloquently described it, although college-educated women of her generation seemed to have no problem engaging in consequence and emotion-free hook ups, inwardly, they were torn. Since they had come to internalize the belief that they were not "supposed to want anything serious," they eschewed labels and feelings. Instead, according to Narin, "We hook up. We sext. We swipe right." Yet, Narin could not help but feel that something was missing. Her on and off relationship with someone she called "Jeremy" had left her wanting more than just sexual intimacy. She wanted to be in an exclusive relationship but could not bring herself to share her feelings with Jeremy. To do so, it appeared, would not only mean becoming vulnerable but giving up her feelings of empowerment. As Narin later explained to her father, "Women today have more power. We don't crave attachment to just one man. We keep our options open. We're in control." Yet, while they retain their power and options, the Jeremys of the world continue to elude them.

11 Chuck Merritt and Lorianne Merritt, "God's Three Purposes for Marriage," *Christian Family Life*, Sept. 9, 2021, <https://www.christianfamilylife.com/gods-three-purposes-for-your-marriage/>.

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

13 Jordana Narin, "No Labels, No Drama, Right?" *New York Times*, April 30, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/03/style/modern-love-college-essay-winner.html>.

14 "Jordana Narin Wins Modern Love College Essay Contest." *New York Times*, accessed November 13, 2024. <https://www.nytimes.com/press/jordana-narin-wins-modern-love-college-essay-contest/>.

The mindset and attitude towards relationship described by Narin is one shared by an increasing number of Americans, including evangelicals. In recent decades, a slew of studies and surveys on marriage, relationships, and family have sounded the alarm as more Americans are losing faith in the institution of marriage. As Mark Regnerus described it in his book *Cheap Sex: The Transformation of Men, Marriage, and Monogamy*, “[T]here was, at the turn of the millennium, a 21-percentage point gap difference between married and never-married 25-to-34-year-olds in the United States. . . .Less than 10 years later, that gap had not only vanished but reversed: by 2014 there was an 11-percentage point gap between never-married and married young Americans, with the former now more numerous than the latter.”¹⁵

“In step with a stumbling marriage rate,”¹⁶ the 2014 “Relationships in America” survey found that “the share of Americans who are cohabiting is rising, leading some to speculate that cohabitation is both normal...and largely poised to replace marriage.”¹⁷ More troubling, however, for the sponsors of the survey was “the share of adults,” including religious Americans, who were “fence-sitters”¹⁸ (i.e., were neutral) with regards to whether “marriage is an outdated institution,”¹⁹ and the acceptability of “cohabitation,”²⁰ “no-strings-attached sex,”²¹ “extramarital sex,”²² and consensual “polyamorous arrangements.”²³ As they explain, “Given time, neutrality in the sphere of family change tends to track in the direction of greater acceptance.”²⁴ Five years later, the statistics had continued to trend downward. Nikki Graff, in her November 6, 2019, article, “Findings on Marriage and Cohabitation in the US,” stated: “Most Americans (69%) say cohabitation is acceptable even if a couple doesn’t plan to get married. Another 16% say it’s acceptable, but only if the couple plans to marry, and 14% say it’s never acceptable for an unmarried couple to live together.”²⁵ Similarly, an analysis of the Annual Social and Economic (ASEC) supplement of the Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey found that “..the overall share of married individuals has trended downward -- from 55.9 percent in 1996 to 46.4 percent in 2023. And the share of cohabiting couples has increased from 3.7 percent in 1996 to 9.1 percent in 2023.”²⁶

Multiple forces have contributed to the decline of marriage as an institution and the rise of commitment-free relationships in the broader culture. These include divorce reform, a global economy, the sexual revolution, the rise of abortion, the pill, as well as changing views on the purpose of marriage.²⁷ Another critical factor, however, may simply be, as Allie Joy Kapus has astutely observed, that, “we live in a world dominated by postmodern sexuality.”²⁸ The term

15 Mark Regnerus, *Cheap Sex: The Transformation of Men, Marriage, and Monogamy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 145.

16 The Austin Institute for the Study of Family and Culture. “Relationships in America” survey, Fall 2014, 47. <https://web.archive.org/web/20240229210954/https://classic.iclrs.org/content/blurbl/files/Relationships%20in%20America%202014-1.pdf>.

17 Ibid, 47.

18 Ibid, 44.

19 Ibid, 44.

20 Ibid, 47.

21 Ibid, 46.

22 Ibid, 49.

23 Ibid, 51.

24 Ibid, 44.

25 Nikki Graf, “Key Findings On Marriage and Cohabitation in the US,” *Pew Research Center*, November 6, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/11/06/key-findings-on-marriage-and-cohabitation-in-the-u-s/>.

26 Mariko Paulson, “Change in American Families: Favoring Cohabitation Over Marriage,” *Penn Wharton Budget Model Newsletter*, February 19, 2025, <https://budgetmodel.wharton.upenn.edu/issues/2025/2/19/change-in-american-families-favoring-cohabitation-over-marriage>.

27 Perry, *The Case Against the Sexual Revolution*, 223-224, 235-236. Aja Gabel, “The Marriage Crisis: How Marriage Has Changed in the Last 50 Years and Why It Continues to Decline,” *Virginia Magazine*, Summer 2012, https://uvamagazine.org/articles/the_marriage_crisis.

28 Allie Joy Kapus, “Sex On My Terms: What Is Postmodern Sexuality?” June 21, 2018, <https://www.provenmen.org/sex-terms-postmodern-sexuality/>

“postmodern,” Kapus explains, “is often associated with a lack of truth and absolutes.”²⁹ Consequently, Kapus warns:

In a postmodern society, the “anything goes” mentality reigns supreme. Your behavior, ideas, views, and morals – whatever you believe is what is true. And this somehow applies to every single person. The individual is sovereign and the only standard is personal preference. Sexuality. God designed sex to bring honor to himself and to serve as a uniting force between husband and wife. Sexuality fosters intimacy, communicates love, and thrives in selflessness. We aren’t able to have sex by ourselves. By its very definition sex goes beyond the individual. These two terms are vastly different. Postmodernity functions by prizing individual rights and perspectives, but sexuality was created to be shared between two people in a lifelong context of love and commitment. When you force these two words to coexist or ignorantly put them side by side, it makes for plenty of pain and confusion.³⁰

Many evangelicals appear to have adopted this postmodern mindset.³¹ As David Ayers observes, “the worldviews of many evangelicals are, in many critical ways, no longer consistent with the historic Christian faith.” After sifting through survey data showing that the beliefs and practices of many evangelicals do not differ from the broader culture, Ayers concludes: “Mutual consent of the ‘victimless’ and ‘harmless’ activities of recreational sex, often justified by considerations such as relational commitment or respect, have replaced the awesome and difficult obligations of marriage as the context in which sexual activity may rightly commence.”³²

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The institution of marriage between one man and one woman permeates every aspect of the Bible and is central to understanding God’s relationship with his people. The Bible begins with God declaring that it is not good for man to be alone. God, therefore, creates a suitable helper for the man and joins them together in a one-flesh union. As the story of the Bible unfolds, we find God’s covenant with Israel portrayed as a marriage relationship, with God showing his steadfast love to Israel despite her unfaithfulness. Even when Israel becomes alienated from God and the object of shame and disgrace, God does not abandon his covenant. God’s commitment to Israel is so great that he creates a way for Israel to be redeemed and reconciled to him. Despite Jerusalem’s infidelity, God continues to play the part of the new bridegroom delighting and rejoicing in Jerusalem as his bride.

Similarly, the God who commits requires that marriage consist of a permanent union between one man and one woman, where they become one flesh. In Genesis 2:23, the first man declares: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.” And the narration adds in Genesis 2:24, “That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Jesus, in Matthew 19:5-6a, restates Genesis 2:23-24, reminding the Pharisees that sexual intercourse makes a husband and wife one flesh: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” As a result of this one flesh union, Jesus concludes with a reminder of the permanence of marriage in Matthew 19:6b “Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

God created sexual intercourse for intimacy and pleasure and procreation in marriage (Gen 1:27-28; 2:23-25). The God who commits mandates that one man and one woman commit to marriage instead of just living together. Such a commitment reflects not only the character of the

29 Kapus, “Sex on My Terms.”

30 Ibid.

31 Ayers, *After the Revolution*, 194.

32 Ibid.

God who refuses to abandon his people (Hos 2:19-20), it also reflects the sacrificial love that Christ shows for his bride the church (Eph 5:25). Christ loved his bride so much that he “gave himself up for her” (Eph 5:25). Married couples are to imitate God. Like Christ’s relationship with his bride, their relationship ought to be based on love, sacrifice and purity (Eph 5:1-2).

Given the Bible’s emphasis on God’s steadfast love and commitment to his covenant people, Christ’s sacrifice to purify and to sanctify his “bride,” and Jesus’ insistence on the exclusive and permanent nature of marriage, sex outside of marriage is a travesty. It violates God’s plan for a covenant of marriage, which reflects God’s covenant with his chosen people individually and collectively (Isa 62:5; Hos 2:19-20; Ezek16-8-9). It offers a cheap substitute for the glorious institution that God establishes at creation. Instead of providing a means by which men and women can image their relationship with a loving, relational triune God, sex outside of marriage devalues and corrupts the image of God in men and women. This is so because it caters to baser human instincts by selling the lie that women and men can enjoy the intimacy and pleasures of marriage in a context that celebrates and glorifies self-centeredness, self-gratification, perfidy, and transience over permanence, love, commitment, and sacrifice.

Worse, however, is the fact that sex outside of marriage can and does damage lives, often irreparably so. I have seen its effects on the lives of young adults in the wake of divorces and other broken relationships. Too often young people, especially young women, are left psychologically scarred and unable to cope. Even those that piece their lives back together are often reluctant to marry or struggle with commitment. As a result, some have opted for serial monogamy or cohabitation, on the theory that these alternative lifestyles are better than marriage as they offer the ability to walk away at any time.

My outreach to these young adults and others who choose to cohabit or engage in sex outside of marriage has mainly involved attempting to present a vision of marriage that differs from the ones to which they have become accustomed. The broader culture and even the church frequently present (or unwittingly endorse) unrealistic views of marriage, including depicting marriage as a means of self-fulfillment or as something to look forward to after both parties have attained a measure of financial success.³³ Moreover, as Ayers writes, “To many young people today, marriage is something they want eventually but see as a loss of freedom, self-gratification and autonomy.”³⁴

To counter these views, in a Sunday school class and in small group discussions, I often present my own marriage as an example of how two imperfect people have committed to loving each other sacrificially and faithfully even when we do not feel like it. In addition to talking about my marriage, we often open our home to young adults for book club meetings or informal “hang outs,” allowing them to see and experience the glorious messiness and beauty of what life together looks like as we commit to serving one another in love, meeting each other’s needs, all while raising five children ranging from ages five to nine, managing ministry, and busy schedules.

Being open about our struggles and providing a window into our relationship, has led to multiple opportunities to have serious conversations about God’s intent for marriage, what marriage ought to look like, and the problems with cohabitation, premarital, and extramarital sex. All too often, however, my wife and I find ourselves fighting an uphill battle. For every example of a couple cohabiting that has ended in disaster, we end up conceding that there are many other examples of church members who were once ostracized because of out-of-wedlock pregnancies but who are now happily married and serving in church as members in good standing.

I, therefore, continue to believe that the most effective outreach and the best antidote to the

33 According to David Ayers “[Many young people] ...often . . . have unrealistic, lavish ideas about how ‘financially set’ they need to be to marry, which ironically, they do not see as issues preventing them from cohabiting. Meanwhile, they report pressures from their parents and other authority figures to marry later given all the success they are expected to achieve before ‘settling down.’” Ayers, *After the Revolution*, 225.

34 Ibid..

prevailing cultural mindset is to convince young people of the importance of joining a doctrinally sound congregation and committing to regular church attendance. For the past twelve years, I have taught an annual baptism class, where we explore what it means to be a Christian and the importance of baptism. Most of the young people who join my class are high school juniors and seniors whose parents want to ensure they are baptized before they go to college. Through these classes, I have had the opportunity to reinforce the importance of joining and actively participating in a local church. Ironically, however, many of my students stop attending church regularly after heading off to college.

By keeping in touch with many of these students, I have observed a direct relationship between church attendance and views about marriage and cohabitation. My former students who attend church infrequently or quit church altogether tend to be more liberal in their views on marriage and cohabitation. In contrast, those who belong to a church and attend regularly are more likely to hold to traditional views on marriage. This is consistent with what David Ayers has found: “both church attendance and self-identified importance of religious faith are strongly related to plans to cohabit among younger evangelicals and to having actually done so – among those who are older.”³⁵

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CHURCH

1. Christian leaders must teach congregants about the God who commits and requires a man and woman to commit to marriage instead of just living together. Pastors must teach the principles of this work in reference to marriage (Gen 2:23-25; Matt 19:4-11).
2. Pastors must teach congregants the biblical principles referenced herein, so the congregation understands that, since salvation is based on faith through the substitutionary work of Jesus, forgiveness of sexual sin is available through Jesus’ shed blood on Calvary.
3. Church pastors and congregants must model the love of God who commits in their own marriages to set examples for the congregation (Gen 2:18; 2:24) and the watching world.
4. Church leaders must partner with parents to encourage their children to remain faithful and active church members during and after college and to help parents teach their children these principles in age-appropriate ways.
5. Pastors must pray for and with congregants to avoid the temptation to commit sexual sin and model fidelity for the congregation (Acts 20:28).
6. Pastors and youth ministries can develop a Sunday school class curriculum for young adults teaching the principles of this work so that young Christians will commit to marriage instead of just living together (Matt 19:5-6; Gen 2:23-24). A Sunday school class curriculum to teach these principles should answer the question why the marriage commitment as envisioned by the Bible is always preferable to the alternatives offered by our fallen world. Below, I present a sample curriculum for a six-week course on marriage:
 - **Lessons 1 and 2: What Is Marriage?** Drawing from Genesis 2:23-25; Ezekiel 16:8-9; Matthew 19:4-11; and Ephesians 5:25-29, these first two lessons will begin to lay the foundation for a biblical view of marriage. In these lessons, students will learn that marriage is (a) an institution established by God, (b) between one man and one woman, (c) a covenant, (d) designed to be permanent and exclusive, and (e) involves two (husband and wife) becoming one flesh. Students will be expected to consider each point and discuss relevant implications.
 - **Lessons 3 and 4: What Is the Purpose of Marriage?** This lesson will describe the purpose of marriage and offer a positive vision of marriage as presented by the Bible. Students will learn why marriage is central to the storyline of the Bible and

³⁵ David J. Ayers, “Cohabitation Among Evangelicals: A New Norm?” *Institute for Family Studies*, April 19, 2021, <https://ifstudies.org/blog/cohabitation-among-evangelicals-a-new-norm>.

why the predominant views of marriage fall short. Students will learn that the Bible begins (Gen 2:23-25) and ends (Rev 21:2) with a marriage, and throughout both the Old and New Testaments God's relationship with his people is viewed through a marital lens (Ezek 16:8-9; Isa 62:5; 54:5; Eph 5:25-29). This is because the intimate relationship between husband and wife is designed to reflect God's character, imaging their relationship with the loving relational triune God (Gen 2:23-25). Sex is not just intended for pleasure, but as a way for husband and wife to become one flesh (Matt 19:4-11). Like God with his people, husbands and wives are to model God's covenant relationship. They ought to show to each other, their children, and to the world what steadfast and sacrificial love, commitment, faithfulness, compassion, and purity look like (Isa 62:5; Hos 2:19-20; Eph 5:1-2). Consequently, students will learn that godly marriage (unlike the world's view of marriage) represents a serious commitment that should not be undertaken lightly (Matt 19:4-11). They will also learn that marriage provides the appropriate structure for having and raising children (Gen 1:27-28).

- Although lessons 1-4 will primarily be didactic, students will be given time at the end of lessons 1 and 3 to reflect on the principles they have learned, ask questions, and offer their feedback and opinions on the content. The questions raised and feedback provided will help shape and inform content for lessons 2 and 4. The goal is for students not only to be provided with a thorough understanding of the biblical view of marriage, but for each of them to have an opportunity to be heard and have their concerns addressed.
- **Lesson 5: Cohabitation and Marriage:** At the end of lesson 4, students will be asked to write a brief (no more than 2 pages) paper, critically examining cohabitation and sex outside of marriage. Specifically, using the definition and purpose of marriage presented in Lessons 1-4, students will answer the following question: can cohabitation serve as a substitute for marriage? This paper will form the basis of the discussion in lesson 5. The arguments for and against cohabitation will be shared with the class. Teachers can summarize the arguments presented by both sides or set up the class as a debate between the opposing sides. Sufficient time should be set aside at the end for the teacher to offer an analysis that shows how cohabitation undermines marriage and tarnishes and corrupts our ability to reflect God's character.
- **Lesson 6: Reset – Finding Forgiveness in Christ:** In this lesson, students will learn about God's compassion and forgiveness. The goal will be to teach students that the same God whose character is reflected in godly marriage has always and continues to display his loving commitment to sinners. His loving commitment to Israel is so great that he creates a way for Israel to be redeemed and reconciled to himself (Isa 54:5). In fact, even when Israel becomes unlovable after being unfaithful, God honors Israel by calling himself her husband and describing himself as the "Holy One of Israel" (Isa 54:5). Ultimately, God offers a path to salvation and forgiveness of all sins, including sexual sins, through his son Jesus Christ (John 3:16). Accordingly, there is good news for those caught up in sexual sin. Forgiveness is available through Jesus' shed blood on Calvary. Those who have been forgiven are members of the bride of Christ, and like the new Jerusalem, they too will be made ready and adorned for Christ (Rev 21:2).

FINAL THOUGHTS

This Old and New Testament analysis of the God who commits demonstrates why God commits to Israel as a bridegroom and why Jesus commits to his bride, the Church, as the bridegroom. This godly model of commitment mandates that a husband and wife have an exclusive marriage relationship. In summary: referencing Old and New Testament Scripture, this article derived principles to define matrimony as a godly union between one man and one woman. An analysis of postmodern sexuality demonstrated why the God who commits requires a man and a woman to commit to marriage not just to live together. In its conclusion, this study recommended practical application of scriptural principles to inform the church how to promote godly marriages.

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Preaching with Story, Concept, and Image: Whole-Brain Sermon Preparation

JOHN JEFFERSON DAVIS

This article presents a method for “whole-brain” sermon preparation—a method integrating biblical texts and commentaries; systematic theology; and images from icons, or art history generally. This method integrates three dimensions: stories, concepts, and images—for the purpose of engaging both the left and right hemispheres of the brain—of both preachers and listeners. As a test case, a process for preparing a sermon on the transfiguration of Christ is suggested.

The idea for this article on preaching and teaching with icons was sparked by an earlier research and writing project on the topic of glorification as the ultimate destiny of the redeemed. That earlier project involved study of the synoptic accounts of the transfiguration of Jesus, theological analyses of the concept of glorification, and iconic depictions of the transfiguration in the Orthodox tradition.¹

In an earlier book, I had advocated for a practice of “whole-brain meditation”—a form of *lectio divina* bringing together didactic texts from the epistles with narrative and pictorial texts from the gospels—so as to engage both sides of the brain.² It occurred to me that, if stimulating both sides of the brain could be a fruitful practice for scriptural meditation, then it might also be fruitful for sermon preparation.

The purpose of this article is to offer an experiment in whole-brain sermon preparation. This approach brings together biblical texts and commentaries, systematic theology, and images from icons, or art history generally. As a test case, a process for preparing a sermon on the transfiguration of Christ—a topic often neglected in Protestant preaching—will be suggested.³ First, the synoptic accounts of the Transfiguration⁴ will be considered, together with relevant commentaries, sermons, and journal articles. Second, the Chalcedonian definition on the two natures of Christ will be used as a theological lens to interpret the revelation of Christ’s glory on the mount of the transfiguration. Third, the interpretations of this event in Orthodox icons—together with homiletical comments from the Greek church fathers—will be considered. The method attempts to integrate the narrative, conceptual, and visual representations of a theologically and spiritually rich event in the life of Christ. A closing discussion will offer a summary, general comments, and suggestions for further research and application.

I. THE TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS: TOLD AS A STORY

The synoptic accounts of the transfiguration are found in Matthew 17:1–13, Mark 9:2–13, and Luke 9:28–36.⁵ After Peter’s confession of Jesus as the Messiah in the region of Caesarea Philippi (Matt 16:13), Jesus takes Peter, James, and John with him to a “high mountain” to pray.⁶

1 John Jefferson Davis, “Why We Should Not Start at the Beginning—but Instead Start at the Ending—In Preaching the Biblical Doctrine of Man,” *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletical Society* 23:2 (2023): 49–69.

2 John Jefferson Davis, “Whole-Brain Meditation,” in *Meditation and Communion with God: Contemplating Scripture in an Age of Distraction* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 142–150.

3 After teaching a Bible lesson on the transfiguration, S. Lewis Johnson, Jr. was approached by one of the couples who had attended. They stated that, although they had attended church for many years, they had never heard a sermon on the transfiguration of Jesus—a sentiment, according to Johnson, “that I have heard expressed many times after I have preached on the subject”: S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., “The Transfiguration of Christ,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 124 (1967) 133–143; 133. At the time, Johnson was a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary.

4 Matt 17:1–13; Mark 9:1–13; Luke 9:28–36.

5 The reference to this event in 2 Pet 1:16–18, and a possible allusion in John 1:14 (“We have seen his glory”) will not be considered here.

6 Since the time of Origen, this mountain has traditionally been identified as Mount Tabor in Galilee, but most modern scholars consider Mount Hermon as a more likely setting for this account: Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, *The Holy*

As Jesus is praying, his face is transfigured, and his garments become “bright as a flash of lightning” (Luke 9:29). Moses and Elijah appear, themselves in glorious appearance, and converse with Jesus about the “exodus” (*exodon*) or “departure” that he is about to make in Jerusalem—a likely allusion to his passion and death—a new Exodus bringing redemption to the people. As Moses and Elijah are departing, Peter clumsily offers to build three shelters (*skenas*), or “tents; tabernacles.” While Peter is still speaking, a bright cloud descends and overshadows Jesus and the three disciples.⁷ A voice from the cloud—the voice of God the Father— says, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” After hearing the voice, the disciples see Jesus alone. They are instructed not to speak about what they have witnessed and descend from the mountain the next day.

This striking event in the life of Christ, at the conclusion of the Galilean ministry, forms a turning point in the narrative, after which Jesus “set his face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51)—to suffer and to die. The account is rich in theological themes and allusions to redemptive events in both testaments. The presence of Moses and Elijah, together with Jesus and the disciples, points to the unity of the old and new covenants and to the fulfillment of the former by the latter. The appearance of Moses and Elijah in glorified form foreshadows the future glorification of the redeemed at the final resurrection. It shows that God is indeed the God “not of the dead but of the living” (Matt 22:32), as the righteous dead still live in the presence of God. The manifestation of Jesus’ kingly glory to Peter, James, and John can be seen as a fulfillment of Jesus’s earlier words that some of the disciples would not “taste death before they see the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:27). The transfiguration also foreshadows the return of Christ at the end of the age (*Parousia*, “appearing”), when Christ will return in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels (Luke 9:26). The bright cloud that envelops Jesus and the disciples can be identified with the Shekinah glory cloud that covered the Tabernacle (Exod 40:34), led the Israelites in the wilderness—and was identified by Isaiah as the Holy Spirit (Isa 63:11–14)—and so is seen as a foreshadowing to the descent of the Spirit upon the church at Pentecost. Connected as it is with Jesus’ cross, resurrection, future coming in glory, the kingdom of God, the divine and human natures of Christ, and the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, this event can rightly be called the “Gospel in Microcosm.”⁸

There are no shortages of commentaries and scholarly studies to aid the preacher in studying the biblical texts. Among the many commentaries on the synoptic accounts those of Francois Bovon and Darrell Bock are especially worthy of note.⁹ The article on “Transfiguration” in the *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* is a helpful survey of modern New Testament scholarship on the transfiguration.¹⁰ There is no great abundance of full-length treatments of the transfiguration—a sign, perhaps, of the relative neglect of this dramatic event in Protestant—and especially—evangelical preaching. Issues of history and theology are treated by the Orthodox scholar John Anthony McGuckin in *The Transfiguration of Christ in Scripture and Tradition*.¹¹ From the Anglican tradition, the older studies of George Duncan Barry (1911) and especially Lionel Crawford (1911) provide helpful homiletical insights and pastoral applications from these texts. Perhaps the single best theological treatment of the transfiguration and the related themes of the

Land: An Oxford Archaeological Guide from Earliest Times to 1700, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 412–15.

7 The verb translated here is “overshadowed” (*episkiazo*), which is also the verb used to describe the Shekinah glory-cloud that covered the Tabernacle in the wilderness (Exod 40:34), and the “power of the Most High” and the Holy Spirit that was to come upon and overshadow Mary in the conception of Jesus (Luke 1:35).

8 See Allison A. Trites, “The Transfiguration of Jesus: The Gospel in Microcosm,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 51:2 (1979) 67–79.

9 Francois Bovon, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1—9:50* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2002), esp. 380–81 on the history of interpretation and Darrell L. Bock, *Luke. V.1: 1:1—9:50* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), esp. 871–73, on possible allusions to the Feast of Tabernacles and the cloud as a sign of God’s presence.

10 W. L. Liefeld, “Transfiguration,” in Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight, eds., *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 834–41, with extensive bibliography.

11 Anthony McGuckin, *The Transfiguration of Christ in Scripture and Tradition* (Lewiston, ME: Edwin Mellen, 1986).

glory of God and the final glorification of believers is the 1949 study of Arthur Michael Ramsey, *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ*.¹²

In this first phase of whole-brain sermon preparation—focused on the narrative dimension—the preacher, in studying the texts and commentaries, could try to bring to the texts a meditative, *lectio divina* mindset. This is helpful for internalizing the story line, visualizing the characters, the setting, the conversations, and capturing the emotions. One could imaginatively identify with the disciples, feeling the fatigue they may have experienced from the long ascent, and feeling the fear as they heard God’s voice from the cloud. Imaginative, emotional engagement with the text in the preparatory phase adds color and affect to the preacher’s voice during both the reading of the text and the delivery of the sermon.

II. THE TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS: CONCEPTUALIZED THEOLOGICALLY

Having first studied and rehearsed the transfiguration story line, the preacher, in a second phase of sermon preparation, can select a key truth to serve as an organizing center for the message. Readers may recognize this move as in keeping with Haddon Robinson’s method of “Big Idea” preaching—emphasizing and applying one main point from the text.¹³ This gathering of the narrative details around a “Big Idea” is consistent with Immanuel Kant’s statement regarding how human understanding works: “Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions [from sense experience] without concepts are blind.”¹⁴ The details of the transfiguration story become more meaningful and are more likely to be remembered if they can be related to a significant concept or doctrine of the Christian faith.

For example, in preaching on the transfiguration, the preacher could select theological concepts such as *glorification*, or the divine and human natures of Christ—the first illustrated in the glorious appearance of Moses and Elijah, and the second in the resplendent appearance of Jesus’ face and garments. Glorification—an underrepresented topic in most Protestant preaching—is in fact the completion and perfection of God’s plan of redemption and a source of great hope and resilience in the face of suffering, sickness, and death. Redeemed humanity’s glorification—to occur at the final resurrection—was determined by God from eternity (Rom 8:29), described by Jesus in his high priestly prayer (Jn 17:20–26), and depicted on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt 17, Mark 9, Luke 9).¹⁵

Romans 8:28–30 reveals God’s ultimate purposes for humanity’s creation and redemption: “For those God *foreknew* (intended, designed from eternity) he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brothers . . . those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also *glorified*” (NIV).

Stephen Covey was hardly the first to “begin with the end in mind.” God—from the beginning—created humanity with glorification in mind. In the history of Protestant evangelical theology some of these topics in the *ordo salutis* (“order of salvation”)—foreknowledge, predestination, calling, conversion, and justification—have been given great attention, but glorification has suffered relative neglect. Book-length treatments of glorification have been few and

12 Arthur Ramsey, *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1949). Ramsey was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1961 to 1974. From an evangelical Protestant perspective, the article of S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., “The Transfiguration of Christ,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 124 (1967) 132–43 provides helpful background on the setting, biblical allusions, and theological themes including the kingdom of God, the messianic identity of Jesus, and the final resurrection and glorification of believers.

13 As in Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Sermons*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014). See also Keith Willhite and Scott M. Gibson, eds., *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching: Connecting the Bible to People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998).

14 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A50–51/B74–76; *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-judgment/supplement1.html>, accessed June 2, 2023.

15 For the following section see John Jefferson Davis, “Why We Should Not Start at the Beginning—but Instead Start at the Ending—In Preaching the Biblical Doctrine of Man,” *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletical Society* 23:2 (2023): 49–69.

far between. The works of Arthur Michael Ramsey (1949), Bernard Ramm (1963), Haley Goranson Jacob (2018) and Graham Cole (2022) are notable exceptions.¹⁶

Great attention was focused on justification during the Reformation, and, more recently, during the debates on the so-called New Perspective on Paul.¹⁷ From the seventeenth century down to the present Calvinist–Arminian debates focused attention on the doctrines of predestination. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Great Awakenings and revivalism placed the topics calling and conversion high on theological agendas. From the nineteenth century down to the present, the challenges posed by Darwinism and evolutionary biology forced theologians to rethink human origins. However, glorification—the final condition God intended for the redeemed—was not being integrated into biblical anthropology.

In the twentieth century, Protestant theologians have taken increased interest in the Orthodox doctrine of *theosis* or “divinization.”¹⁸ Protestant theologians often consider the language of “divinization” to be problematic, and the appeals to texts such as 2 Peter 1:4 (“participate in the divine nature”) and Psalm 82:6 (“I say you are gods”) as exegetically weak. Nevertheless, some Protestant theologians¹⁹ have seen that this Orthodox tradition challenges the West to give greater attention to a biblical doctrine—glorification—too often neglected in Protestant theology and preaching. It is, however, beyond the scope of this paper to give focused attention to the Orthodox doctrine of *theosis* as such.

Romans 8 and other texts by Paul point to the personal, corporate, and cosmic dimensions of glorification. All three are connected to the presence and work of the Spirit. Individual glorification occurs at Christ’s return and with our bodily resurrection, when Christ transforms “our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body” (Phil 3:21).²⁰ This glorified resurrection body will be imperishable, filled and transformed with the luminous, life-giving power of the Spirit (I Cor 15:42–48). The glorious, luminous body of Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration prefigured the glorified bodies of the redeemed. The glorification of the believer can begin in the present, as we behold, in meditation and worship, the glory of the ascended Christ in heaven (cf. 2 Cor 3:18).²¹

God’s eternal purpose to share his glory with the redeemed has corporate²² as well as individual

16 Arthur Michael Ramsey, *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ*; Bernard Ramm, *Them He Glorified: A Systematic Study of the Doctrine of Glorification* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1963); Haley Goranson Jacob, *Conformed to the Image of His Son: Reconsidering Paul’s Theology of Glory in Romans* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018); Graham A. Cole, *Glorification: An Introduction* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022). Though not a book-length treatment, also worthy of note is C.S. Lewis’ essay “The Weight of Glory” in C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory And Other Essays* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), 1–15.

17 The so-called New Perspective debate was sparked by E.P. Sanders’ seminal 1977 book, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress), in which he questioned the common Protestant belief that Judaism in the time of Jesus taught works righteousness or salvation by works. In *Justification: God’s Plan & Paul’s Vision* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), N. T. Wright argued that the Reformation emphasis on imputed righteousness was too narrow an understanding of Paul’s teaching on justification. For various criticisms of the New Perspective, see D.A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark Seifrid, eds. *Justification and Variegated Nomism*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004).

18 For a review of this growing interest, see my chapter, “Salvation Reconceptualized: Is Our Western Gospel Big Enough?” in John Jefferson Davis, *Practicing Ministry in the Presence of God* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015), 125–149; Michael J. Christensen and Jeffery A. Wittung, eds., *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005); Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

19 See, for example, Daniel B. Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: A Western Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 117–137; Donald Fairbairn, *Eastern Orthodoxy: Through Western Eyes* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 79–95.

20 On the glorified resurrection body, see Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 1018–29; Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, v.3 [1696], tr. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1997), 617–21.

21 See Davis, *Practicing Ministry in the Presence of God*, 141 n.62 for accounts of Seraphim of Sarov, an Orthodox saint, and the English mystic Evelyn Underhill, whose faces were reported by witnesses to be radiant with a heavenly light.

22 The corporate dimension of glorification is highlighted by John Murray, who notices that final glorification is experienced *simultaneously* by all the redeemed at the time of Christ’s return and the general resurrection: John Murray,

dimensions. Christ loved the church—not just individuals—and gave himself up for her to present her to himself as a *radiant* (*endexos*, “glorious”; “endoxified”) church, holy and blameless (Eph 5:25, 27). Christ’s atoning work had in view both the satisfaction of divine justice and the beautification of the beloved bride. The intended glorification of the church is a reminder that the forensic categories of Western atonement theology need to be complemented by the participationist and aesthetic categories of the East. God values both righteousness and beauty!

The imagery of the beautiful bride in Ephesians 5:27 is rooted in Old Testament scripture. In the royal wedding celebrated in Psalm 45, the king’s bride is gloriously appareled in a gown interwoven with gold, and the king, anointed with the oil of joy, is enthralled with her beauty (Ps 45:7–15). As the bride and her attendants are led into the presence of the king, they are filled with “joy and gladness” (Ps 45:15). This imagery of the gloriously appareled, beautiful bride is also found in the final book of the Bible, in Revelation 21. Here the church, the new Jerusalem, is depicted as a “bride, beautifully dressed (*kekosmēmenēn*, “adorned”)²³ for her husband” (Rev 21:2). The intended purpose of God’s creative and redemptive work is depicted as a gloriously beautiful bride and city (Rev 21:11)—a corporate body luminously resplendent with the holiness and love of God.

Romans 8 and other biblical texts reveal the cosmic scope of glorification: “The creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Rom 8:21). Liberated from the curse and suffused with the Spirit of God that hovered over the waters of the first creation—a *good* material creation (cf. Gen 1:31)—the new creation will be radiant with God’s glory—a glory filling the earth as the waters cover the sea (Hab 2:14). The Old Testament prophets envisioned such a transformation of the material order (Isa 35:6, 7; 51:3; 54:11, 12; 60:19, 20; 65:17–25; 66:22; Ezek 47:7–12), and these images inform Revelation’s description of the Holy City, the new Jerusalem filled with the light of God’s glory, beautified with precious jewels—a new garden of Eden watered from the throne of God (Rev 21:10,11; 22:1–20).

The same Christ who created all things (Col 1:16) in heaven and on earth, and who sustains all things (Col 1:17), in his atonement reconciled to himself all things, making peace through his blood shed on the cross (Col 1:20). Christ’s atoning work centers on redeemed humanity, but in removing the curse, extends its benefits to the material creation. Because of Christ’s atonement, the glory of God can indeed fill creation, “as the waters cover the sea.” The person and work of Christ is the basis for the final glorification of nature, and for Christ’s and the apostles’ hope for the “renewal of all things” (*apokatastaseos panton*: Matt 19:28; Acts 3:21).²⁴

For additional theological analysis of the concept of glorification, the preacher can consult the following resources: Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed.; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 2nd ed.; Haley Goranson Jacob, *Conformed to the Image of His Son: Reconsidering Paul’s Theology of Glory in Romans*, and, especially, Graham A. Cole, *Glorification: An Introduction*.²⁵

Redemption Accomplished and Applied (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1955), 219. Glorification is glorification in union with Christ and bound up with the renewal of creation: 220–21.

23 The verb is a perfect passive participle of *kosmeo* (cf. “cosmetic”) to “adorn, make beautiful or attractive.” “In preparation for the marriage and the arrival of the groom the bride was bathed and oiled, perfumed, her hair fixed, and was adorned with her wedding garment”: Fritz Reinecker, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976), 859.

24 With the rise of modern science and a materialistic world view, the Christian imagination has found it more difficult to see how “the heavens declare the glory of God” (Ps 19:1)—to see, through the eyes of faith—God’s glory in nature. See John Jefferson Davis, “The Spirit and the Glory’s Banishment from the Material World: Reimagining Divine Immanence in the Light of Later Modern Science,” *Science and Christian Belief* 32:2 (2020) 22–37.

25 Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 924–29; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 2nd ed., 1018–29; Haley Goranson Jacob, *Conformed to the Image of His Son: Reconsidering Paul’s Theology of Glory in Romans* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018); Graham A. Cole, *Glorification: An Introduction* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022). For homilies on the transfiguration from Byzantine authors including Origen, Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, John of Damascus, and Gregory of Palamas, see Brian E. Daley, SJ, *Light on the Mountain: Greek Patristic*

Christology is another concept and theological category that the preacher could use to give unity to the sermon. Prior to the ascent to the mountain and the transfiguration, Jesus had asked his disciples the crucial question of his identity. It is a crucial question for everyone in the pews on Sunday morning: “Who do you say that I am?” (Matt 16:15). Peter gave a correct answer: “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (Matt 16:16). However, Peter’s answer was not complete. He did not understand that, as Jesus was soon to explain, the messiah would first have to suffer and be killed before rising from the dead and later return in glory to judge the living and the dead (Matt 16:21–23; 27–28).

The true identity of Jesus is not merely that of a Davidic king who will defeat the Romans, or a great moral teacher like Confucius, Socrates, or the Buddha. The Son of Man is in fact fully God and fully human, and so subject to suffering and death, and yet the eternal Lord of Glory (I Cor 2:8) who will return at the end of history as humanity’s final judge.

The Nicene Creed and the Definition of Chalcedon provide conceptual tools for this integrated understanding of the identity of Jesus. The Nicene Creed²⁶—the most universally accepted statement of historic Christian belief—asserts that the “one Lord Jesus Christ” is to be confessed as the “only begotten Son of God, begotten from the Father before all worlds (*pro panton ton aionon*), light from light (*phos ek photos*), true God from true God (*theon aleithinon ek theou aleithinou*), begotten, not made, of one being with the Father (*homoousion to patri*).” Here the divine nature of Jesus is fully and vigorously asserted. The phrase “light from light” can be fittingly quoted in a sermon on the transfiguration, with reference to the shining face of Jesus and his resplendent garments. This glory is greater than the glory bestowed on Moses and Elijah. The glorious light of Jesus transfigured is not a created light, but the eternal light of his glorious divine nature—the beloved and chosen Son who is also fully and truly God.

The preacher can expound other aspects of Jesus’ identity with the help of the Definition of Chalcedon (451). Here “our Lord Jesus Christ” is confessed to be “perfect in Godhead, and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man . . . in all things like unto us, without sin . . . acknowledged in two natures (*ek duo Phusion*), inconfusedly (*asugkutos*), unchangeably (*atreptos*), indivisibly (*adiairetos*), inseparably (*akoristos*), the distinction of natures by no means being taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved . . .”²⁷

Here the four adjectives describing the union of the divine and human natures of Christ in the incarnation—“without confusion; without change; without division; without separation”—describe what in Orthodox theology was called *perichoresis*. This term describes the intimate union of the two natures of Christ or the three Persons of the Trinity, where the differences of each are preserved.²⁸ The glorious face and garments of Jesus on the mountain were an epiphany of his divine nature, but his body and garments, though suffused with the glory of a divine nature, still remained fully human and fully material. Similarly, when the bodies of the redeemed are glorified at the final resurrection, they will be resplendent with light (cf. Phil 3:21, “like his glorious body”), imperishable (I Cor 15:42)—and yet, as material bodies, not omnipresent, but located in definite, limited volumes of space.

and *Byzantine Homilies on the Transfiguration of the Lord* (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary, 2013).

26 The form of the Nicene Creed cited here is actually the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381, which elaborated the earlier creed of 325, at the second ecumenical council of Constantinople, by clarifying the deity of the Holy Spirit. The citations above are from Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, v.2 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877), 57.

27 Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, v.2, 62.

28 On the history of the concept of *perichoresis* in Christian theology, and its development, see G.L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: S.P.C.K., 1964), 282–302; Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1996), 175–202; Michael Lawler, “*Perichoresis*: New Theological Wine in an Old Theological Wineskin,” *Horizons* 22 (1995): 49–66; and Verna Harrison, “*Perichoresis* in the Greek Fathers,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 35 (1991): 53–65. I have adopted a definition of *perichoresis* proposed by the Orthodox theologian Slobodan Stamatovic: “the mutual permeation and unity of the different, [e.g., of the divine and human natures of Christ; or of the persons of the Trinity] where the difference remains completely preserved despite the communication of one to the other”: Slobodan Stamatovic, “The Meaning of *Perichoresis*,” *Open Theology* 2 (2016): 303–323, 321.

In sum, the Nicene and Chalcedonian creeds provide concise and powerful conceptual tools for the preacher to expound in a sermon on the transfiguration emphasizing both the full deity and humanity of Jesus in the incarnation, and the final glorification of believers at the time of their resurrection.

III. THE TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS: VISUALIZED ICONICALLY

Having first studied the transfiguration narratives with the aid of commentaries and other scholarly resources, and then reflected on its themes through theological lenses such as the Nicene and Chalcedonian creeds, the preacher can now engage a third dimension in whole-brain sermon preparation: the visual and iconic mode. The icons of the transfiguration (or of other works from art history) engage the preacher's right-brain imagination in ways different from the left brain's analytic and conceptual modes. This visual engagement of the imagination is in tune with our contemporary culture's orientation to visual images and consistent with new research in neuroscience and learning psychology.

There is a rich history of iconic representations of the transfiguration.²⁹ During the eighth and ninth centuries, there were bitter controversies in the Eastern churches over the place of icons in Christian worship and piety.³⁰ Icons were banished from the churches in 726 by the Byzantine emperor Leo III and then returned to the churches after being defended theologically by John of Damascus.³¹ They have remained as a prominent feature of Orthodox worship and piety ever since and, in modern times, were discovered and became appreciated by many in the West.³²



Consider the icon to the left, in the Byzantine monastic tradition of Mount Athos in Greece.³³

Unlike a photograph or Western religious art of the Renaissance, an icon is not meant to be a realistic depiction of its subject matter. An icon is made intentionally other-worldly to evoke—through symbolism, color, and religious conventions—spiritual and heavenly realities that are not apparent to our physical senses. Normal depth and perspective are lacking in the icon's flat surface.

Viewing an icon can be something of a cross-cultural experience, since Orthodox spirituality and culture are quite different from what they are in the modern West. Like foreign travel, viewing an icon can help us see our home culture in a newer and fresher light.

29 See especially Andreas Andreopoulos, *Metamorphosis: The Transfiguration in Byzantine Theology and Iconography* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 2005), with color plates and extensive history and commentary, and also Solrunn Nes, *The Uncreated Light: An Iconographical Study of the Transfiguration in the Eastern Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007). Nes is an Orthodox art historian and practicing iconographer.

30 Donald Fairbairn, *The Global Church: The First Eight Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2021), 351–53, “Byzantine Christianity, Islam, and the Iconoclastic Controversy.”

31 See Andrew Louth, tr., *St. John of Damascus: Three Treatises on the Divine Images* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003). John's central argument was based on the incarnation. Since the Son of God was incarnate in a visible human body, and seen as such by the disciples, it was justifiable to make visible depictions of Christ. The icons were to be accorded veneration (*proskynesis*), but worship (*latreia*) was to be given to God alone.

32 See, for example, Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Behold the Beauty of the Lord: Praying with Icons* (Notre Dame, ID: Ave Maria, 1987).

33 Accessed at <https://theholysart.org/products/metamorphosis-jesus-christ-icon-handmade-greek-orthodox-icon-of-the-transfiguration-byzantine-art-wall-hanging-wood-plaque-religious-gift-300173979>, June 7, 2023. This icon is a copy, in the tradition of the Transfiguration icon from the Monastery of Pantokrator, Mount Athos, Greece, dated 1535–45: Andreopoulos, *Metamorphosis*, 226.

An icon, unlike Western art, is not meant to be an expression of the artist's individuality and creative genius. Embedded in ancient theological and spiritual traditions, the iconographer's identity remains hidden. The focus is the heavenly subject matter—Christ, the saints, and the holy events of scripture.

The icon is a window or portal to heaven, so to speak—not just a bare symbol, but a symbolic representation that can usher the believer into the presence of God and the heavenly realities portrayed. Icons have a sacramental quality, in an Augustinian sense, of being “visible signs of an invisible grace.”³⁴ Icons are not examples of “art for art's sake,” or artifacts made to be viewed in museums.³⁵ Icons are meant to be viewed and contemplated in sacred spaces, as aids for prayer, meditation, and religious experience.

The icon of the Transfiguration is rich in biblical and theological symbolism. The gold background evokes the glory of God and heaven. The blue circle surrounding Christ signifies the sacred space he occupies and the uncreated light of his glory that reaches out and touches the disciples and Moses and Elijah. Moses and Elijah, like Christ, appear in glorious splendor, prefiguring the glorification of believers at the time of the final resurrection. Christ, with his shining face and resplendent garments, is an image of the glorious Son of Man who will return at the end of the age in the glory of the Father and the holy angels. The icon as a whole represents the meeting of heaven and earth; the visible world and the invisible; the unity of the Old Testament—the Law (Moses) and the Prophets (Elijah)—and the New (Christ; Peter, James, John); and the Kingdom of God, with the glorified Jesus at its center as the true King and Messiah.

As we ponder a work of art such as this, we can feel some of the wonder and awe that the disciples experienced on the Mount of Transfiguration.

By taking time leisurely and prayerfully to contemplate an icon like this, the preacher's earlier preparation through the study of the words and concepts of the biblical story can be enriched and stimulated visually and imaginatively.³⁶ The Holy Spirit can give insights and applications that otherwise may have been missed.

SUMMARY

This article has presented a method for whole-brain sermon preparation, illustrated with reference to the gospel accounts of the transfiguration of Jesus. This method integrates three dimensions: story, concept, and image for the purpose of engaging in preacher and listeners both left and right hemispheres of the brain.³⁷ In the first phase of preparation, the preacher would study the gospel narratives of the transfiguration (Matt 17, Mark 9, Luke 9), in the usual way, with the aid of commentaries and other textual resources. In this phase, the preacher would also imagine a way into the text, visualize the characters, attempt to feel their emotions, and begin to develop the message. In the second phase, focusing on key theological concepts or the sermon's “big idea,” the preacher could use topics from systematic theology or scholarly books in addressing

34 “Sacrament,” *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, F.L. Cross, ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 1198. Cf. *The Book of Common Prayer* of the Episcopal Church (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 857: “The sacraments are outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace, given by Christ as sure and certain means by which we receive that grace.”

35 A museum visitor hearing a docent's commentary on an icon is probably not having the same experience as a believer lighting a candle, bowing before it, and saying a prayer in an Orthodox church. The context is different. An art history perspective—focusing on historical context, style, form, medium, and so on—may inform the mind, but not touch the heart.

36 The preacher can engage in a *lectio divina* meditation on the icon (or other image or painting from art history). On the theory and practice of *lectio divina*, see Mariano Magrassi, *Praying the Bible: An Introduction to Lectio Divina*, trans. Edward Hagman (Collegetown, MN: Liturgical, 1998). Magrassi was abbot of the Benedictine monastery Santa Maria della Scala, Italy.

37 For further study of the concept of whole-brain preaching, I highly recommend the article by Allen Nauss, “Preaching Sermons That Will Be Remembered: Unleashing the Spirit's Power in the Brain,” *Concordia Journal* 34, no. 4 (2008) 264–91, with extensive bibliography and citations of literature in neuroscience and cognitive psychology.

a biblical theme. In the case of the transfiguration, the concepts of glorification and the Nicene and Chalcedonian statements on the divine and human natures of Christ were proposed as theological big ideas. In the third phase of preparation, the preacher's imagination, emotions, and engagement with the story line and big idea could be stimulated by meditative reflection on an icon or painting from the history of religious art. Finally, in delivering the sermon, the preacher could provide the congregation, either in the Sunday bulletin or in slides projected in the worship space, the biblical text, the big idea, and an icon or art history image illustrating the big idea. While engagement with the image has been presented here as the final step in preparation, in delivery, it could be the first step—in order to engage immediately the congregation's interest and attention.

This whole-brain method of sermon preparation has, I believe, the advantage of both enlarging the creative spaces in which the preacher prepares the message, and the imaginative spaces in which the congregation hears it. The visual component of the method could be extended with the use not only of static images, but dynamic ones—in the form of clips from movie or television or streaming video series such as *The Chosen*. Video clips with musical backgrounds activate additional neural pathways in the brain.

The Great Commandment orders us to love God with all our heart, and soul, and mind. Whole-brain homiletics encourages the preacher to prepare with story, concept, and images and helps the congregation listen with mind, emotion, and imagination. With their whole selves more fully engaged, both the preacher and the congregation are more likely to enjoy, remember, and respond to the word that God has for them.

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FOREWORD BY R. Paul Stevens

A Socio-Scientific Reading of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and the Place of Women in Nigeria's Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA)

MOSES ILIYA OGIDIS AND JULIUS KITHINJI

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians 14:34-35 appears to have one of the most complex and contradictory passages that has been and is still used to silence church women -based on how an individual or denomination should interpret the text. Most of the interpretation appears to be based on literal and patriarchal readings which marginalize, subordinate, discriminate, and oppress women in their God-given ability and even calling into ministry through exclusion. Such interpretations have received a footing within the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), including the seminaries, using the text interpreting gender roles and social construction to exclude women from leadership. This article, therefore, uses a socio-scientific method of reading the text to bring out the socio-cultural situation of the time that Paul wrote the letter to address the issue of the place of women in the church and seminaries within ECWA. Interpreting the text from its socio-cultural and religious background serves a better hermeneutic key on how to deconstruct the patriarchal ideologies found within ECWA churches and their interpretations of Pauline passages. The choice of socio-scientific reading of the text is central to understanding what Paul specifically said in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, and how best an interpreter needs to understand and interpret the text, not outside of the context but within the given context of Paul's time and situation before its application to a given context, in this case, that of conservatives in the ECWA churches in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The reading and interpretation of the Bible is approached from different lenses depending on the social location of the interpreter, gender, status, among others. The Bible, which has been believed to be useful in liberating the oppressed and the marginalized of the society and the church, is now being interpreted from a patriarchal lens, leading to the marginalization, subjugation, and exclusion of women who are relegated to the margins of the church and society. This is well captured by Elizabeth Mburu, who affirms that "the Bible has played a significant role in people's lives throughout the ages and has been read, interpreted, and understood in various ways. While the message might have been clear to the original audience, it is not as clear to us today, in part because we are separated from the world of the Bible by factors such as time, language, and culture."¹ Therefore, when interpreting a biblical text, an interpreter needs to understand the writer's context and not divorce it from the intention of the author before contextualizing to a specific context.

The passage of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 has received several interpretations, depending on the context of the interpreter. There are debates whether these verses are parts of the original manuscript or not which, later, is discussed in this article. Conservative denominations, such as Church of Christ in Nations [COCIN], Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ [ERCC], and Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), interpret the passage literally and through a patriarchal lens to deny and exclude women from church leadership. Even though there are several scholars in Africa who write on gender from an inclusive perspective, the praxis of the text does not yield much fruit towards the transformation of the place of women in the church and society with reference to ECWA.² When such Pauline texts are interpreted through literal and patriarchal lenses, they are separated from the real meaning of the text which the first audience understood. Contextualizing it to our context can divorce it from its socio-cultural context of the first century. This necessitates the choice of the method adopted in this article, which is the socio-scientific reading of the text from the context of the author,

1 Elizabeth Mburu, *African Hermeneutics* (Hippo Books, an imprint of ACTS and Langham Publishing, 2019), 1

2 Molly Longwe. "Transforming Church Traditions: A Critical Feminist Analysis of Experience of Pastors' Wives in the Baptist Convention of Malawi (BACOMA)," *Journal of Gender & Religion in Africa*, Special Issue, Vol. 18:2 (December 2012): 47.

and how best it can be interpreted within ECWA, as a denomination as well as in its seminaries.

The socio-scientific method of reading 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 seeks to consider the socio-cultural, economic, religious, and political situation of the church in Corinth, where the letter was addressed. This is captured by Stephen Barton as “an exegetical task which analyses the social and cultural dimensions of the text and of its environmental context through the utilization of the perspectives, theory, models, and research of the social science.”³ Socio-scientific analysis in this article aims at examining the social and cultural contexts of biblical texts under consideration, illuminates the patriarchal structures that shaped ancient Israel, and sheds a light on early Christian communities’ mode of interpretation. When merged with feminist hermeneutics, this approach uncovers how these structures often marginalized and oppressed women. This intersection allows for critical assessments of biblical passages that have historically been used to justify gender inequality, while also seeking to recover the voices and experiences of women within those contexts.⁴ By analysing the social roles, economic realities, and power dynamics of the time, this combined approach facilitates a more nuanced and just reading of the Bible, one that acknowledges and challenges the text’s embedded patriarchal assumptions by interpreters or readers today.

Therefore, the aim of the social-scientific method applied in this article seeks to ask a series of questions with regards to the social and cultural context in which Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. In particular, was he referring to a universal silencing of women in church settings and exclusion from interaction in the church or was his concern for a temporary case that he addresses in the church at Corinth? When asking questions in line with the methods or aspects of the text that are hidden from the obvious view by traditional methods that are favourable to patriarchal ideology come under scrutiny to allow those hidden voices to surface. In using this methodology, especially among ECWA conservative Christians, a deepened understanding of the text as it relates to the place of women in church is sought and brought out.

BACKGROUND OF I CORINTHIANS 14 AS IT RELATES TO WOMEN

The place of women in the Graeco-Roman world is influential in gaining the right understanding and interpretation of the biblical text because it gives an interpreter an insight into the social and cultural world of the writers. The choice of social-scientific method is key to the interpretation of the contextual meaning of any given text under consideration (including 1 Cor. 14:34-35) since both a better understanding and interpreting can be achieved for its social and cultural context before determining its application. Roger Nicole describes how women were treated “...Jewish attitude towards women was frequently discriminatory.”⁵ This was evidenced in the fact that even rabbis were not allowed to teach women or even speak to them in public places.⁶ For instance, the writing of Sirach 42:13-14 states that “from garments cometh a moth and from a woman the iniquities of a man. For better is the iniquity of a man than a woman doing a good turn.”⁷ Such is some of the rabbinic literature that discriminates against women within the ancient society which was evidenced in descriptions of male and female relationships among the Jews.

The Greeks and Romans’ ideas of women appear also to be discriminatory even though there are evidences of women that were not discriminated against. Such disparity in treatment could be accounted for due to the status and position of their husbands in the society. For instance, there are some Greek and Roman women who became philosophers⁸; higher education in rhetoric and

3 Stephen C. Barton, “Social-Scientific Criticism,” *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 753.

4 K I. Uwaegbute, D O. Odo, and C I. Ugwu, C.I., “Social-scientific Criticism in Nigerian New Testament Scholarship,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 77:1 (2021), a6394. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i1.6394> (2-3).

5 Roger Nicole, “Biblical Concepts of Women,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd edition, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 1282.

6 Nicole, “Biblical Concepts of Women,” *Evangelical Dictionary*, 1282.

7 Nicole, “Biblical Concepts of Women,” *Evangelical Dictionary*, 1282.

8 Arlene W. Saxonhouse, “The philosopher and the female in the political thought of Plato,” *Political Theory* 4, no. 2

philosophy was usually reserved for men but a few women were among them. In a society where most people were functionally illiterate, teaching roles naturally would fall on those who could read and speak well including women.⁹ It was also noted that Josephus in most of his writings dismissed the trustworthiness of women's witness, and, with the possible exceptions of Beruriah, wife of R. Meir, and the women followers of Jesus in the gospels, women seem not to have been accorded the role or status of teachers or disciples.¹⁰ It is from such a backdrop that most interpreters of the Bible tend to interpret all gender texts that appear to exclude women especially within the church settings and are accustomed to deny their calling into the ministry without critically examining the text in question and its social and cultural reality.

The city of Corinth was one of the advantageous cities in the first century that was industrious and served as a commercial centre. D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo report that "the wealthy and ancient city of Corinth was utterly destroyed by the Romans in 146 BCE and its citizens were killed or sold into slavery... a century later Julius Caesar founded the city afresh, this time as a Roman colony."¹¹ This new city of Corinth was the Corinth that the New Testament alludes to and the one to which Paul is generally accepted as the author of his letters to the Corinthians. The letter is included in the undisputed letters of Paul, and the view is upheld in this article.

Studies of Corinth reveal that it was a complex church with complex issues. These issues Paul addresses. On this note, Robert Gundry observes that "First Corinthians demonstrates that lamentable conditions in the church do not characterize the postapostolic church alone... it is to solve those problems that Paul writes this letter."¹² Thus, 1 Corinthians is a response to many issues such as disunity, immorality, celibacy, marriage and divorce, food dedicated to idols, head-covering, the Lord's Supper and love feast, speaking in tongues, love and the use of spiritual gifts, resurrection, baptism for the dead, the offering, and miscellany.¹³ The church at Corinth was frequently tempted to consider itself a cut above other churches in the region, quite free to act without consideration of what other churches thought was right or not. This church tended to operate not within the teaching of the apostles which prompted Paul to write and address the above issues for orderliness in the church, which also included the places of women.¹⁴

Corinth was a centre of religion. The city also housed many temples which was probably one of the reasons that the city became important in the first century. Gundry notes some of the temples, such as the cult of *Aphrodite* and *Athena*, and the Egyptian cults of *Isis* and *Sarapis*, were present in Corinth and *Cenchreae*. The oldest temple in the city was linked with Apollo, who was regarded as the patron deity of magic, wisdom, and the arts. This cult's activity may shed some light on the issues of women speaking in the church (1 Cor. 14:34-35).¹⁵ The Apollo cult had specific practices or beliefs regarding women speaking. Throughout the city of Corinth, there were other temples, but for the purpose of this study, the emphasis is placed on the women's temples to show how women were portrayed.

Catherine Kroeger observes that there were women prophets in Corinth. Another female prophet was based in Asia Minor, a citizen of Thyatira, but her teachings were regarded as erroneous (Rev.

(1976): 195-212. See also Lianne Patricia Scally, "Breaking the Barrier: Ancient Greek Women Philosophers," *Journal of Pre-Modern Studies*: 11.

9 Craig S. Keener, "Man and Woman," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity, 1993), 589.

10 Keener, "Man and Woman," *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 589.

11 D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 420.

12 Robert H. Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 374.

13 Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament*, 378-385.

14 Keener, "Man and Woman," *Dictionary*, 589-90.

15 David A. De Silva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods, & Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 558.

2:20-25).¹⁶ The role of the women even in Corinth appears to have been limited by discrimination rather than elevated by acceptance since it was within the social and cultural world view of the people in the first century. Women were considered second class citizens as found among the Jewish, Greek, and Roman culture. This attitude was also influenced by the household management that was written by philosophers before the New Testament writers wrote.¹⁷

The text in question has received a lot of interpretation, therefore, this section will consider the background of the text (social and cultural situation) at Corinth as well as its context within the passage. Ray Stedman has observed that “Paul deals with three problem areas at Corinth, including the exercise of the gift of tongues... the matter of prophesying and freedom of women to minister in the church.”¹⁸ Apparently, order was a central concern in determining the extent to which freedom is accorded to women in the church. 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 has caused a lot of debate concerning the place of the women within the church at Corinth, especially among contemporary interpreters. Stedman has further observed that this passage has caused many people to reject the apostle and regard him as a chauvinist or a misogynist, a man who feels threatened by gifted women.¹⁹

In locating the social and cultural context of the passage, DeSilva observes that “it is possible that some women, accustomed formerly to asking questions of the priests of Apollo (the god of prophecy and fortune telling), misunderstood the different nature of Christian prophecy and were making a disturbance in the church’s worship time.”²⁰ Considered from this perspective, the women were believed to have gone too far with the influence of such false teachings of the various pagan gods and ideologies which became a distraction during worship, caused by the women, according to Stedman, “asking questions and entering debates, thereby turning an orderly meeting into a disorderly discussion group. Some, as Paul indicated earlier in this letter, had abandoned the head covering, which in the Corinthian culture signified the order of headship.”²¹

According to DeSilva, therefore, in the city of Corinth there were temples that people frequented for worship apart from the Christian place of worship. Such temples included the temple of *Hera* (the goddess presiding over marriage), where devotees were ritually getting married to the deity. There was also the temple of *Tyche* (the goddess of good fortune, destiny), the temple of *Demeter* and *Kore* (the god of healing), which had private dining rooms and *abaton* (a place of sleeping to receive dream-visions). One can see Paul’s strong warnings against participating in any form of idolatrous feast or ritual in 1 Corinthians 10:14-22 and his cautioning about eating food sacrificed to idols in 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; 10:23-33.²² The church at Corinth was a mixture of people from different cultures, races, class status, and gender among other causes precipitating debates arising in the churches to which Paul was writing.

Paul’s teachings on women in the Corinthian church present a complex and debated picture. His letter reveals a tension between affirming women’s participation in public worship, as seen in his allowance for women to pray and prophesy (1 Cor 11), and his directives for them to remain silent in church gatherings (1 Cor 14). This apparent contradiction has led to various interpretations, with some scholars emphasizing the cultural context of Corinth, a city known for its diverse religious practices and potentially disruptive expressions of spiritual enthusiasm. Others argue that Paul aimed

16 C. C. Kroeger, “Women in the Early Church,” in *The Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity, 1997), 1219.

17 Marian Refat, “The Background of New Testament Household Codes: Towards a Historical Evaluation of the Roots Shaping Present-day African Families and Gender Roles,” *African Multidisciplinary Journal of Research* 9, no. 1 (2024): 42-59.

18 Ray C. Stedman, *Letters to a Troubled Church: 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House, 2007), 209-210.

19 Stedman, *Letters to a Troubled Church*, 213.

20 DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 558.

21 Stedman, *Letters to a Troubled Church*, 214.

22 DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 559-560.

to maintain order and propriety within the church, raising concerns about the potential for social scandal or misinterpretation of Christian freedom. Regardless of the specific interpretation, what is clear is that Paul's instructions reflected the social norms of his time and his pastoral concern for the church's unity and reputation, leaving a legacy of ongoing discussion about the role of women in Christian communities.

WOMEN IN ECWA AND THE INTERPRETATION OF 1 CORINTHIANS 14:34-35

ECWA is one of the fastest growing evangelical churches in Nigeria and has churches in other parts of the world (United States of America, Israel, Gambia, Kenya, etc.). The denomination was founded under the mission agency of Sudan Interior Mission (SIM), currently known as Serving In Missions (SIM), through Walter Gowans, Thomas Kent, and Rowland Bingham, who came and sacrificed their lives for the sake of reaching out to the people in Nigeria. The Evangelical Church of West Africa in 2013 had its name changed to Evangelical Church Winning All, thus still maintaining the acronym ECWA. The change of the meaning of the acronym signified the inclusiveness of everyone created in the image and likeness of God and reaching out to all people in every part of the world.

The roles of women within ECWA, as stated in the *ECWA Women Fellowship Guide* (2012 edition), includes: witnessing, discipleship, Bible study, worship, fellowship, visitation, singing songs, handcrafts, supporting God's work, helping those in need, holding revival meetings, and contributing towards the growth and development of the church.²³ Nigeria, which is the headquarters of the denomination, is a patriarchal society, and it influences the gender roles in the church and especially when it comes to biblical interpretation of passages by Paul that appear to exclude women from leadership positions in the church. Though the roles of women in the church have been pinpointed, the aspect of leadership appears to be silent. The women can do any other things in the church except lead. Such exclusion of women, even in the history of the denomination, is evident when prominence is given to the young men who founded ECWA. For example, less emphasis is given to the role of the mother of Walter Gowans. This is in contravention of the *Women Fellowship Bible Study Manual* that states, "in the history of missions, we note women like Mrs. Gowans who blazed the mission trail for her son, Walter, and his friends, Rowland Bingham and Thomas Kent, to go to the Sudan and eventually found SIM that gave birth to ECWA."²⁴

Consideration of the roles of women within the confines of the church reveals that women are to play the subordinate roles in leadership. Several interpretations of the Bible through traditional norms and cultural values appear to be gender-biased and oppressive in one way or the other, although gradually. This exclusion creeps into the doctrine of the denomination. A. B. Okoli and I. Okwuosa observe that,

Gender-related issues have affected the activities of and the relationship between males and females since biblical times. For a very long time, it has been seen as an acceptable way of life in the Church and in the society at large with biblical backing, even though it seems to be inimical to the teaching of Christ, his person, mission and the Church that evolved after his death and resurrection. It goes against human rights of equal rights and opportunities for all. Unfortunately, those that suffer gender domination are women.²⁵

There are slight differences when it comes to the place of women in the church within ECWA as a denomination and other conservative churches within Nigeria. For instance, the Northern part of Nigeria where Islam dominates reflects how the life and activities of women in the society are governed by religious teachings such as the Qur'an. This is because the Northern parts are dominated by the Muslims rather than the Christians. Even with that, women generally are subjected to similar forms

23 *ECWA Women Fellowship Guide* (Jos: ECWA Christian Education Department, 2012), 13-14.

24 *Bible Study for ECWA Women Fellowship International* (Jos: ECWA Christian Education Department, 2012).

25 A. B. Okoli, I. Okwuosa, 'The role of Christianity in gender issues and development in Nigeria', *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 76:4 (2020), a6007. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v76i4.6007> (p. 1).

of gender prejudices and discriminations due to the societal expectations and religious interpretations of sacred books. In such contexts, the Bible is interpreted to marginalize and exclude women, for instance, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 has been and is still regularly interpreted in such a manner as we see in this popular example:

The principle of women not speaking in church services is universal; this applies to all the churches, not just locally, geographically, or culturally. The context of this verse concerns prophecy, but includes the general theme of the chapter, i.e. tongues... it is not coincidental that many modern churches that have tongues-speaking and claim gifts of healings and miracles also permit women to lead worship, preach, and teach. Women may be gifted teachers, but they are not permitted by God "to speak" in churches. In fact, for them to do so is "shameful", meaning "disgraceful." Apparently, certain women were out of order in disruptively asking questions publicly in the chaotic services.²⁶

Such an interpretation of the text through a patriarchal lens has led to a generalizing of the text without considering other denominations that have incorporated women into the leadership of their churches. A limited hermeneutical approach like this appears to interpret the text based on a leadership model designed to exclude women, on which denominations like ECWA Christians in Nigeria form their basis to silence women in its churches. It is important to note that any patriarchal interpretation of the text cements the marginalization and exclusion of women and upholds male dominance. In such situations, women are silenced in many ways not only in the church but also in the community as well.

That is why Okoli and Okwuosa feel that "a look at the Bible clearly shows that the Bible was written by men, for men and about men."²⁷ For ECWA Christians, when they pick up the Bible and begin to read the accounts of men who dominated women they do not evaluate whether the Bible is approving this behavior, but simply apply it literally to our present time as a standard for marginalization and exclusion of women to have rights and power in church and society. Similarly, M.M. Jacqueline argues that women only appear in the Bible in rather subordinate roles that mainly serve to develop and support men's stories, ignoring women like Deborah or Huldah or the wise women of Israel, or Prisca, Phoebe, Euodia, and Syntyche, and the women Paul honors as leaders in Romans 16.. What the conservatives are missing is that men wrote about women as they actually experience them in the society.²⁸ Today's leaders are conditioned to perpetuate such ancient models as the norm, rather than a report.

Nevertheless, while some mainline churches in Nigeria attempt to include women in leadership, these efforts often are made ineffective. For instance, some Anglican and Methodist denominations are particularly adamant to exclude women in the ordained ministry. In 1993, Bishop Haruna, then head of the Kwara State Diocese of the Anglican Church, ordained three women, but the Anglican House of Bishops annulled the ordinations. Similarly, in 1994, the synod of the Methodist Diocese of Kwara and Kogi States accepted the decision to start the ordination of women, but the headquarters of the church rejected it.²⁹ Others, such as the Baptist Convention, have involved women at the lower level of the hierarchy, giving a woman the title of deaconess, and presently the Baptist church as a denomination is ordaining women as pastors and reverends of churches. Other churches within Nigeria that include women into its leadership roles are the Pentecostals, such as the Cherubim and Seraphim Church (C&S) and also the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), where women were the co-founders of the denomination. Several Neo-Pentecostal churches have included women into the

26 John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 1603-04.

27 Okoli and Okwuosa, "The role of Christianity in gender issues and development in Nigeria."

28 M. M. Jacqueline, *Women Seeking Justice: A life experience and scripture based resource book for Christian women's groups* (Nairobi, Africa: Paulines Publications, 1991).

29 R. Omotoye, "Divine healing in Aladura Churches: A phenomenon of challenge to the mainline churches," *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies* 13 (1996-99): 60-69.

leadership roles and are speaking out because of the influence of their founders and the belief that God can use women in the ministry as same as God does the men.³⁰

Other passages that are used to support the literal interpretation and subordination of women include 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, Ephesians 5:22-33, 1 Timothy 2:8-15 among others which all are attributed to Paul. Accordingly, the *ECWA Ministers' Handbook* states, "It is the policy of ECWA not to licence or ordain women, in conformity with 1 Timothy 2:11-12."³¹ Such misinterpretations of biblical texts are also used to exclude women within other evangelical churches, such as Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC) and Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN). These churches have not yet welcomed the different interpretation of the text to include women in church leadership and ordained ministry. This mode of interpretation Peace Ngozi Ngwoke calls "religious manipulation," the act of subverting individual rationality to control belief, which is a phenomenon associated with the instrumentalization of religious texts for egocentric objectives.³² Such religious manipulation is evident in the misinterpretation of biblical texts when they are interpreted from a patriarchal and literal sense leading to the subordination, marginalization, and exclusion of women's involvement in the church and society.

Such manipulations of biblical texts among the conservative ECWA Christians in Nigeria can be done either intentionally or unintentionally. When done intentionally, it means that such interpreters suspect the truth but are guided by patriarchal tradition in order to maintain the status quo. This is partly why they decide not to interpret the text from its social-cultural background. Or it may appear that these men feel the thread of losing power when women are included in positions of leadership either in church or society. On the other hand, those that interpret the text unintentionally do so because they are only exposed to the literal and patriarchal interpretation of the text. An example is the women who also interpret the text to sustain the hegemony and their own marginalization. Whenever questioned, they respond by citing that the Bible says they are to keep silent in the church.

As a result, the *ECWA Women Fellowship Guide* Bible study manual interprets 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 to mean that women are not allowed in the Bible to speak or assume leadership positions in the church. Men are seen as divinely created to be leaders both in the church, home, and even in the secular society.³³ Such out of context interpretation of the text has led to the assumption that is found in the *ECWA Youth Fellowship Handbook*, which states of the position of the leader: he must receive Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour.³⁴ The use of the personal pronoun for men in the *Youth Fellowship Handbook* clearly signifies the place of the "she" within the church being inferior to the "he" with regards to leadership. When some students at one of the seminaries of ECWA were asked about their understanding and interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, their views revealed socialization through their adherence to the patriarchal and literal interpretation of the passage to exclude women from the church leadership or even the calling into full time ministry.

Therefore, an interrogation of the literal and patriarchal interpretation of the text by the conservative ECWA Christians reveals several inconsistencies in application. For instance, if one upholds that women are to keep silent in the church and, if they have questions, they should ask their husbands at home, why then, do ECWA women sing in the church? Why do they teach in adult Sunday school? What if a lady is not married and stays alone, who will she ask at home? What if a husband is not knowledgeable about the Bible or he is not attending church to be able to answer her questions? What about the widows and the single mothers that are in the church? Such questions warrant a socio-scientific reading of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 by ECWA.

30 S.O. Ademiluka, *Issues at stake in the contemporary Nigeria church* (Ilorin: NATHDEX, 2007), 79-80.

31 *ECWA Ministers' Handbook* (Jos: Challenge Press, 2022), 32.

32 Peace Ngozi Ngwoke, "Religious Manipulation and Domestic Violence within Christian Homes in Nigeria," *The International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society*, Volume 11, Issue 1 (2021). <https://onreligion.com> <https://doi.org/10.18848/2154-8633/CGP/v11i01/121-136> (Article), 121.

33 *ECWA Women Fellowship Guide* (Jos: ECWA Christian Education Department, 2012), 13-14.

34 *ECWA Youth Fellowship Handbook* (Jos: ECWA Christian Education Department 2013), 26.

A SOCIO-SCIENTIFIC READING OF 1 CORINTHIANS 14:34-35

Interpreting 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, through a social-scientific lens considers the original situation and background of the passage in question to be able to understand and interpret the text within the context of the genre. The entire genre of 1 Corinthians 14 addresses orderliness in congregational worship in the church at Corinth. It seems that the whole chapter is dedicated to correct various disorders in charismatic congregational practice, including its instructions on women's involvement in specific elements of congregational practice and worship as seen in verses 34-35. To be able to understand what Paul meant in verses 34-35, which is the main focus of this article, there is a need to deconstruct how conservatives in ECWA approach verses 34-35. The ECWA approach violates one of the cardinal rules of exegesis; that of observing the context of the text. When these two verses are viewed as an anomaly, separate from their context and the whole of the letter, it is easy to end up with an incorrect interpretation.³⁵

As noted earlier, this had led several scholars to believe they were not originally written by Paul himself, while others claim that they still belong to Paul. Nevertheless, this article agrees with the fact that the section belongs to Paul, necessitating the choice of the social scientific reading of the text to interpret it correctly. In understanding the social context of the text, Craig Keener observes that in antiquity women were far less trained in the scriptures and in public reasoning than men were. At Corinth probably the women, in their bid to learn, were interrupting during the teaching period of the church service. To be able to address such a situation going on in the church, Paul now writes that women should remain silent and, if they have any questions, they should ask their husbands at home.³⁶

Keener further alludes that an interpreter cannot simply cite the present passage and claim that it applies to all situations without begging the question. The first task of an interpreter or reader of the Bible is the exegetical one: understanding the text on its own terms in its own context. Only when it is understood contextually can the application be done properly, meaning that, when the context of the text remains divorced from its original meaning, the application becomes faulty.³⁷ Ben Witherington points out that the four key terms in 1 Corinthians 14 are all found in vv. 34-35: *laleō* meaning to speak, say, or talk (14:14-32), *sigāō* referring to be silent (14:28, 30, 34), *en ekklēsia* meaning church (14:28, 34, 35), and *hupotassō* which means to submit, subject (14:32, 34), which are also the main key words this article has been using since they are the central focus for either inclusion or exclusion of women.³⁸

The Greek verb *lalein* (from *laleō*) refers to making vocal utterance; to babble, to talk; ... to exercise the faculty of speech, or to chatter in classical Greek, but in the New Testament it is mostly used as to speak or say.³⁹ The word can further mean to use words in order to declare one's mind and disclose one's thought; to speak.⁴⁰ Similarly, W.E. Vine notes that the Greek verb *laleō* is used several times in 1 Corinthians 14; the command prohibiting women from speaking in a church gathering, verses 34-35, and is regarded by some as an injunction against chattering, a meaning which is absent from the use of the verb everywhere else in the New Testament but should be understood in the verses of chapter 14.⁴¹ Paul's usage of the word (*laleō*) is protesting against the disturbance of services by

35 Waldemar Kowalski, "Does Paul Really Want All Women to Be Silent? 1 Corinthians 14:34-35," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, 201:2 (2017): 171-181.

36 Craig S Keener, "Learning in the Assemblies: 1 Corinthians 14:34-35," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, edited by Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon Fee, first edition (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 164.

37 Keener, "Learning in the Assemblies," *Discovering*, 164.

38 Ben Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 91.

39 William D. Mounce, *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993), 296.

40 Joseph Henry Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books House, 1977), 368.

41 W. E. Vine, *Vines Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 1070.

feminine chatter, the meaning of “speak” in verses 34-35. This is probably because some women in the gathering were calling out questions, and, perhaps commenting unknowingly on things said in the service, causing distraction and disorder in worship. Paul was not totally prohibiting women from speaking in the worship and to be silent. There are also instances where Paul also told men to be silent in 1 Corinthians 14:28, 30.⁴² Catherine Kroeger argues for the possibility of the mystic teachings affecting the women in some of the temples in Corinth prompting them to cause disturbance in the worship:

The word that is used in the prohibition for women is *laleō*, a term used by Aristophanes for the frivolous chatter of women. Differentiation is made in the text between nonintelligible speech, frequently designatSed in this chapter by the verb *laleō*, and communication that conveys meaning to its hearers (*legō*)... the mystery cults in where there was a jangling of musical instruments along with confused outcries, a phenomenon known as *clamor*... women in particular were swept along into an altered state of consciousness. Dionysos was known as “the lord of the loud cry, the mad exciter of women.” Their abandoned state of mind led to raving and uncontrolled actions, as well as ceremonial cries known as ululation.⁴³

Two issues arise regarding what women were restricted to do when Paul uses *laleō* in the passage. The first, there is no hint to whether *laleō* could mean teach or preach or usurp authority over someone. The context of the text suggests that women were being restricted from discussions that arose as a result of evaluating prophecies.⁴⁴ Further, since *laleō* means any use of sound, what is interesting to observe is that many interpreters single out preaching, ordination, or leadership, which hardly appears in this passage. Perhaps it is good to question how the issue of ordination and leadership, which several interpreters prefer, comes into this passage.

Various scholars center the issue primarily on women asking questions. Anthony Thiselton states that “the speaking in question denotes the activity of sifting or weighing the words of prophets, especially by asking probing questions about the prophet’s theology or even the prophet’s lifestyle in public.”⁴⁵ This is also echoed by Craig Keener who states that, “... asking questions is at least the primary example of the sort of speech he seeks to forbid. In fact, Paul explicitly bases his injunction to ask questions privately on his demand for silence (1 Cor. 14:35, ‘for’).”⁴⁶ This became especially sensitive and problematic when “wives were cross-examining their husbands about the speech and conduct which supported or undermined the authenticity of a claim to utter a prophetic message...”⁴⁷ This is complicated by what Dorothy Patterson and Rhonda Kelley note about the temple prostitutes, and the oracle of Apollo at Delphi. “They had a practice of talking in gibberish or an unintelligible language... women speaking out of turn and critically evaluating teaching or interpretations would show obvious lack of submission and a rebellion against God’s order.”⁴⁸ Such was probably the condition that prompted Paul to respond on the issue of orderliness in the worship and instructing that the women be silent and talk to their husbands at home.

The Greek verb *sigāō*, meaning “to be silent,” “to hold one’s peace,”⁴⁹ can be interpreted also to mean “say nothing” as seen in 1 Corinthians 14:28; “stop speaking” or “become silent” (present

42 *The New Bible Commentary: Revised*, edited by D. Guthrie & J.A. Motyer (London: InterVarsity, 1973), 1070.

43 Catherine Clank Kroeger, “1 Corinthians,” in *The IVP Women’s Bible Commentary*, edited by Catherine Clark Kroeger and Mary J. Evans (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002), 662.

44 Gerson Mgaya, *Spiritual Gifts: A Sociorhetorical Interpretation of 1 Cor 12–14* (Joensuu: Kopijyvä Oy, 2017), 139.

45 Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 1158.

46 Keener, “Learning in the Assemblies,” *Discovering*, 165.

47 Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1158.

48 *Women’s Evangelical Commentary: New Testament*, edited by Dorothy Kelley Patterson and Rhonda Harrington Kelley (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 456-57.

49 Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 574.

imperative active) as seen in 1 Corinthians 14:30, 34.⁵⁰ There are several examples where the Greek verb *sigāō* is not used for permanent or universal silencing as many interpreters are alluding. For instance, Luke uses the verb for the disciples who witnessed Jesus' transfiguration, kept the experience to themselves and told no one about it (Luke 9:36). The word is also used of Jesus silencing his enemies after answering the question on paying taxes to Caesar (Luke 20:26). Peter motioned for the believers "to be quiet" so that he could tell them about his miraculous escape from prison (Acts 12:17). These usages among others show that the verb is not used in the New Testament to indicate a universal command.

Similarly, Paul's particular usage of the verb is central to this article. Paul uses *sigāō* regarding proper church order in 1 Corinthians 14 when dealing with speaking in tongues; thus, if no interpreter is present then the speaker "should be quiet or silent" (14:28). On prophecy, if an individual is prophesying and a revelation comes to someone else, the first speaker should stop (14:30).⁵¹ How should we interpret this? If the third use of "keep silent" is a continuation of the other two, then it is best to understand it as an attempt to facilitate the clear communication of God's revelation to the church and to maintain the orderliness among worship. The first two injunctions to silence are for the purpose of the church accurately hearing the Word of God. It makes sense that the third "keep silent" should be for the same reason.

The Greek verb *eperōtaō* (present imperative active) means "to ask" a question, as seen in 1 Corinthians 14:35, or of a judge questioning while making investigation as seen in Matthew 27:11, or with regards to questioning the God (gods) as in Romans 10:20.⁵² Thiselton avers that the Greek word *eperōtaō* (to inquire) is used in verse 35: "Let [the women] ask their husbands at home." The verb has the distinctive interrogative meaning, suggesting that the women's behaviour was disruptive, creating disorder in the worship.⁵³ This act is further inferred by Keener as "Paul explicitly ties the women's speech in this case to shame. And since honor and shame are areas in which cultures differ considerably, it is worth our while to determine the source of shame in this particular instance."⁵⁴

Ben Witherington argues that inappropriate questions posed by married women likely sparked Paul's command in verses 34-35, which was an attempt to respond to the issue. Paul's directive in verse 34 addresses the perceived disruption of Christian worship by female congregants, possibly married, who were raising questions of potentially inappropriate content. The apostle urges against the transformation of liturgical practice into an unstructured question-and-answer session.⁵⁵ Witherington contends that, like their pagan neighbours, Christian women may have thought of prophets in a similar vein to the Delphic Oracle which prophesied in response to particular questions about the personal life of the seeker.⁵⁶ Keener also observes that in both the Greek and Roman cultures women speaking to their husbands in public and in an unintelligible way could be regarded as shameful because she was disrespecting her husband. Therefore, a wife's attitude is reflected in the husband's status in the society and certainly neither spouse should risk shaming the other (1 Cor. 11:3-9).⁵⁷

The interpretation of *hupotassō* in this passage necessitates differentiation from its usage in Genesis in the LXX, as many interpreters have problematically ascribed a meaning of female subordination to

50 William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 749.

51 Moises Silva, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 291.

52 Arndt and Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 285.

53 Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1158.

54 Keener, "Learning in the Assemblies," *Discovering*, 165.

55 Ben Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 287.

56 Ibid.

57 Keener, "Learning in the Assemblies," *Discovering*, 167.

male authority based on the latter context. This suggests the use of respect over “headship” within the context of the passage. In line with this, Thiselton observes, “It is extremely important to distinguish this (*hupotassō*) from submission based on Gen. 3:16, since this then confuses the Christian believer’s role within the created order with a role still unresolved within fallen creation, which then appears to conflict with Gal. 3:28.”⁵⁸ If Paul’s aim was the silencing of women totally in the place of worship, that could have contradicted other passages and letters he wrote, such as Galatians 3:28, stating that all humans are equal before God with no gender distinction. Still, Paul’s goal appears to be to maintain Pentateuchal order, not to place women under men’s authority; in other words, “women are not being commanded to submit to their husbands but to the principle of order.”⁵⁹

Thiselton observes that *hupotassesthōsan* should be “keep their ordered place,” instead of “be subordinated,” since “the Pentateuch declares the ordered character of creation and human life and the regulative character (especially Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Numbers) of boundaries or differentiations. The patterns of order demonstrated in divine actions of creation through differentiation and order in the Levitical and Deuteronomic codes are integral to the Pentateuch. The prior state of “the earth” was “without form and void.” “God then ‘divides’ or ‘separates’ light from darkness and heaven from earth to give each ‘form’.”⁶⁰ When Paul instructs women to be “in submission” in verse 34, he was referring back to this rule of orderly worship, not to male headship. The principle behind Paul’s command is that “God is a God not of disorder but of peace”.

Concerning the phrase “for it is shameful (*aischron gar estin*) for a woman to speak in the church” in verse 35, David Garland argues that shame, in this context, pertains to what society views as inappropriate behaviour and is relative to a given culture.⁶¹ Honor and shame function as socially constructed categories that define culturally appropriate and inappropriate behaviors across both secular and religious domains. Drawing on the work of Daniel Smith, we note that the pursuit of honor and the avoidance of shame constituted a central dynamic in Greco-Roman society, especially in public interactions, underscoring a prevalent Mediterranean cultural value system that prioritized public honor and the avoidance of shame.⁶² This aspect of the Mediterranean culture at that time explains the usage of the phrase *aischron gar estin* (shameful) in 14:35 and why Paul said that it was disgraceful for a woman to speak in church. This does not mean that Paul was a prisoner of culture, but that he was cognizant of the socio-cultural realities of Corinth. Yet, he advised that it was proper for wives to seek clarifications from their men at home (possibly when they are alone together) to avoid any instance of public embarrassment through their questions and interruptions.

That Paul never meant a universal prohibition of women in worship is seen in other passages where he acknowledged women who served as leaders in the early household churches. For instance, he recognizes the authority of Junia as an apostle or overseer (*apostolos* Rom. 16:7) and Phoebe as a “sister” (*adelphē*), “deacon or minister” (*diakonos*), and “female guardian, protector, patroness” (*prostatis*) (Romans 16:1-2).⁶³ Conceivably, Paul’s argument directly in the Bible for gender equality is in Galatians 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” The understanding of this text from its socio-scientific context gives a better understanding of the main focus of Paul, which was not for a universal silence but a temporary one. If not, he could have maintained the restriction on women all through his letters. This misunderstanding by Christian women in Corinth called for Paul to turn “from a more

58 Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1155.

59 Ben Witherington III, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, No. 59 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 102-103.

60 Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1153-54.

61 David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 668.

62 Daniel Lynwood Smith, *Into the World of the New Testament: Greco-Roman and Jewish Texts and Contexts* (New York: T&T Clark, 2015), 154.

63 Margaret Y. MacDonald, “Reading Real Women in the Undisputed Letters of Paul,” in *Women & Christian Origins*, eds., Ross Shephard Kraemer and Mary Rose D’Angelo (New York: Oxford, 1999), 207-211.

general exhortation to orderly procedure in regard to weighing prophecy (vv. 32-33) to the more specific case of women weighing or questioning prophecy.”⁶⁴

IMPLICATION FOR TRANSFORMING GENDER-BASED CONSERVATISM IN ECWA

For a long time, the Bible has been used to justify patriarchal and gender discrimination among the church communities, especially among conservative ECWA members. More often Christianity has been used to remind the woman of her subordinate role, especially with conservatives in ECWA. The Church in Nigeria (ECWA) is full of male paternalism and hierarchy,⁶⁵ which perpetuate this misunderstanding, leading to the undermining of women’s confidence, self-esteem, and spiritual development in the church. More often than not, gender biased or gender discriminative biblical interpretation is more *eisegesis* (reading into the text one’s own meaning) than *exegesis* (reading and drawing meaning from the text).⁶⁶ Similarly, Craig Keener affirms that, if the passage (1 Cor. 14:34-35) is to be interpreted on its face value (literal interpretation) to mean women are not to speak in the church, then it contradicts the majority of practices in churches where women are allowed to sing, speak, and also participate in church programs.⁶⁷ It should be understood that Paul was addressing a specific problem at that time: women were disrupting the order of worship in the assembly. The solution was for them to keep silent and learn or go ask their husbands at home.

Conservative Christians within the ECWA tradition should adopt a more dynamic and gender-sensitive approach to biblical interpretation, inspiration, and revelation. This shift is crucial for gaining new insights that address the injustices experienced by women, which have often stemmed from the misinterpretation and misapplication of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 (and passages in Paul’s writings similar to it). The fact that several conservative churches justify oppression of women based upon this and other wrong interpretations and applications of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 does not make the judgment right nor exonerate the oppression against women based upon the wrong, patriarchal, and literal (face value) conclusion.⁶⁸ Stedman affirms that “Paul does not say that women are forbidden to minister in the church; he does not say women are forbidden to prophesy, pray, or teach. Women are forbidden, he says, to speak in a controversial way. They are not permitted to interrupt the proceedings with conversation or questions.”⁶⁹

Considering the context of the passage (1 Cor. 14:34-35), Keener is of the opinion that “unless Paul changes the subject from women’s universal silence (v. 34) to asking questions (v. 35a) and back to universal silence again (v. 35b), his general statement about women’s silence in church addresses only the specific issue of their challenges in verse 34a. Paul has already noted that, under normal conditions, women may pray and prophesy in church (11:5).”⁷⁰

God could not have sanctioned injustice and used the Bible as sources of its oppressive support for the subordination and marginalization of the women that are created in his image and likeness. The error is therefore traceable to the failings and prejudices of human interpretation and the selfish interests of male chauvinists who hide under canonical and biblical canons of interpretation to disguise their fear of or hatred for women as seen among some conservatives in Nigeria. One cannot underestimate the role of culture and the social construction of the members within ECWA that drive the misinterpretation and misapplication of the text to the context. Instead, conservative interpreters

64 Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 102.

65 D. Chinchon, “Does the Woman Have a Soul? The Plight of Women in Africa and the Responsibility of Christian Men,” *Journal of Constructive Theology*, 5, 1 (1999): 117-128.

66 Thulani Ndlazi, “Men in church institutions and religious organisations: The role of Christian men in transforming gender relations and ensuring gender equality,” *Agenda*, 18 (2004): 61, 62-65, DOI: 10.1080/10130950.2004.9676043.

67 Keener, “Learning in the Assemblies,” *Discovering*, 164.

68 A. Casimir, et al., “The Church and Gender Equality in Africa: Questioning Culture and the Theological Paradigm on Women Oppression,” *Open Journal of Philosophy*, 4 (2014): 166-173. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/ojpp.2014.42024> (171).

69 Stedman, *Letters to a Troubled Church*, 214.

70 Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 419.

must learn to interpret every Bible text within its original setting to understand the author's meaning. Failing to consider each context results in misinterpreting and misapplying the scripture. This is clearly seen in the wrong idea that women should not lead in church. This idea is a heresy that contradicts God's love and his view of men and women as equal, as is evident in such passages as Romans 16, where so many ministering women are commended by Paul. God calls and created both female and male in his image, showing their equal worth.

CONCLUSION

The letter of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 has been approached by many conservatives in ECWA as a medium to exclude women from the church. This article argues that patriarchal, literal interpretations of the text, informed by cultural and social gender constructs, are the root cause of its misapplication among ECWA members. However, when the text is approached from a socio-scientific mode of interpretation, a different interpretation that does not silence women is revealed. Therefore, ECWA institutions and churches need to engage in the reinterpretation of biblical scriptures with the deliberate objective of revising their documents and beliefs in ways that promote and ensure gender equity. By taking responsibility upon themselves, religious men will not only enhance the empowerment of women, but also obtain their own liberation. For as long as women are oppressed, men are not liberated in the conservative churches in Nigeria.

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Gazing Inward Towards One's Own Self with the Eyes of the Heart and Mind: The Self-Conscious Understanding of Augustine's Own Will and Its Powerlessness in *Confessions*

MARK CHUANHANG SHAN

INTRODUCTION: A PIONEER WORK OF EPISTEMOLOGY ON HUMAN WILL

In his historic work, the *Confessions*, St. Augustine of Hippo touches on almost every theme of theology and philosophy while also exploring human will and its power, acts, and relation to the heart, mind, soul, even flesh. As Augustine notes, the will can simultaneously move in two opposing directions, towards good or evil, thus causing the heart, mental, spiritual, and biological torment. According to Augustine, the only cure for the torment caused by sinful nature is the subjection of the human will to the will of God through Jesus Christ, the Truth.

I. THE STRUCTURE AND GENRE OF THE CONFESSIONS: KNOWING BY HEART-FAITH AND MIND-REASON

Confessions was written around AD 397¹ and finished in 400,² “review[ing] and re-interpret[ing]”³ Augustine’s life from his birth in 354, to his final confession (or spiritual conversion versus his former intellect conversion) in the “garden scene in Milan” in July 386,⁴ to his baptism in Milan by St. Ambrose on the eve of Easter, April 25th in 387,⁵ and finally to the death of his mother later that same year when he was 33 years old.⁶ The grand monologue contained in the book is comprised of two parts. The first part is a narrative of Christian faith, and the second part is a statement of Christian faith.

The first part (chs. 1-9) focuses on how Augustine establishes a personal relationship with God by praying and calling to Him. At that point, Augustine has not yet understood God by reason and knowledge, instead, seeking to understand himself first by examining his own heart before God who “made us for [Himself], and our hearts find no peace until they rest in [Him].”⁷ Augustine wonders, as he writes at the outset of the book, whether a person “must know you [God] before he can call you to his aid.”⁸ He engages diligently and carefully with his self-examination of inward soul searching to understand his real self, or what he calls his “inner self,”⁹ and “secret heart.”¹⁰ He concludes that “[t]hese books served to remind me to return to my own self. Under your guidance I entered into the depths of my soul...”¹¹

The second part begins with Chapter Ten (Book X) and consists of about forty percent of the book’s content. It contributes comprehensive and intensive theological reflections and “speculative” meditations, primarily on the book of Genesis in the Bible. These ruminations are oriented towards seeking knowledge about God. After calling and praying to God in the first part of the book, Augustine inquires in the first sentence of Chapter Ten: “Let me know you, for you are the God

1 Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 148.

2 Roy W. Battenhouse, ed., *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 2.

3 Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 148.

4 Gary Wills, *Augustine's Confessions: A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 58.

5 Vernon J. Bourke, ed., *The Essential Augustine*, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1974), 12.

6 Augustine, *Saint Augustine Confessions*, translated with an Introduction by R. S. Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin Classics, 1961), 198-99.

7 Augustine, *Confessions*, 21.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., 170.

10 Ibid., 175.

11 Ibid., 146.

who knows me; let me recognize you as you have recognized me.”¹² This indicates that Augustine has finally decided to follow the order of calling to God with his heart and knowing God in his mind. For Augustine, the heart is the eyes of the soul, oriented towards the truth, while the mind makes sense and reason of the truth.

As Vernon Bourke points out: “...the Augustinian reason is (in the psychological usage) the gaze of the mind (*aspectus mentis*). The culmination of such ‘gazing’ is a vision, a clear seeing of the object of knowledge... Faith, on the other hand, is an acceptance of, or assent to, something that is not clearly seen.”¹³ For Augustine, “[U]nless you will have believed, you will not understand.”¹⁴ Augustine’s structure of epistemology begins with human thoughts formed from the perception of the body’s senses to the soul, eventually reaching reason with the never-changing “true eternity of truth” above his changeable mind, the meta-mind as the point of reference.¹⁵

Augustine’s approach of developing an epistemology through anthropology was followed by Western thinkers centuries later: first by Descartes, with his deep inward reasoning based on perception in his First Philosophy; then Kierkegaard, with his Christian “hidden inwardness” and psychological crisis of his passive existence; then Schleiermacher, with his sub-consciousness of the absolute need for feeling dependence; and finally Freud, in his subconscious exposing of the human’s deepest self (including sexual desires and behavior with which Augustine was well familiar). These thinkers approached the seeking of truth and answers with an inward examination of the human inner being. Kant, following the theories of earlier scientists Albert of Saxony and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz,¹⁶ presented a similar but clearer model of *Confessions* with “a priori knowledge” and innate conscience of heart-mind.¹⁷ From that starting point, Kant further viewed one’s reason as a sensory perception of reality by the mind’s empirical use (experience), thus gaining “a posteriori knowledge.”¹⁸ Humanity achieved Enlightenment with the self-consciousness it gained by looking backward into its subjective inner world, rather than observing outward objective nature and society, finally forming its modern philosophical school of human voluntarism¹⁹ more fundamental than reason (intellect, a tool to present a mental image), represented by Schopenhauer,²⁰ and his philosophical followers.

II. ON THE PROBLEMS OF AUGUSTINE’S CORRUPTED WILL BY SINFUL NATURE: THE ENLIGHTENMENT AFTER “ENTERING GOD’S PRESENCE”²¹

With his faith in Christ and facing of God through unreserved confessions, Augustine begins

12 Ibid., 207.

13 Bourke, *Augustine*, 19.

14 Ibid. “Actually the source of Augustine’s views on faith and reason is a text from Isaiah (7:9 Septuagint), which simply says: “Unless you will have believed, you will not understand” (*nisi credideritis non intelletis*).”

15 Augustine, *Confessions*, 151. “...and I realized that above my own mind, which was liable to change, there was the never changing, true eternity of truth. So, step by step, my thoughts moved on from the consideration of material things to the soul, which perceives things through the senses of the body, and then to the soul’s inner power, to which the bodily senses communicate external facts. Beyond this dumb animals cannot go. The next stage is the power of reason, to which the facts communicated by the bodily senses are submitted for judgement.”

16 See “Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy Archive* (Spring 2020 ed.), Brandon C. Look (2013), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/leibniz/>.

17 See “a priori knowledge,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, by the editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, last modified on April 2, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/a-priori-knowledge>.

18 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (New York: London G. Bell, 1881), 439. “The former — *a priori cognition* — is rational-mathematical cognition by means of the construction of the conception ; the latter — *a posteriori cognition* — is purely empirical cognition, which does not possess the attributes of necessity and universality.”

19 Voluntarism evolved from theological voluntarism by Scotus and Ockham, which attributes human will as the inner dominate force (energy), a thing-in-itself, an ultimate inner being.

20 See “Arthur Schopenhauer,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Robert Wick (2021), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/schopenhauer/#4>. “3. Schopenhauer’s Critique of Kant”; “4. The World as Will”

21 Augustine, *Confessions*, 173. “Enter God’s presence, and find there enlightenment; *here is no room for downcast looks*.”

to reason and understand his “deepest self”²² by “[his] mind’s eye,”²³ experiencing enlightenment through gazing and examining his own will in the “deepest depths of [his] soul”²⁴ as the root of his sinful nature and mental sickness. In Chapter Eight, which is the climax of the first part of the book, Augustine finally diagnosed, located, and hunted down the problem of his corrupted will.

Augustine mentioned his sinful “wish” without directly using the word “will.” In Chapter Two, he recalls that he and other children stole pears from a tree in a vineyard to throw at pigs. Looking into his heart and examining the mischief, Augustine confessed to God that the real pleasure in this activity consisted not in the pears, but in the fact that he was doing something wrong. In other words, the pleasure came from “not the things for which I committed wrong, but the wrong itself.”²⁵ Here, he and the other children exercised their “will” to enjoy “the theft itself,” “the evil” and “the sin” in it, naturally and plainly.

Augustine further stated that “we do evil because we choose to do so of our own free will,”²⁶ though later he cast doubts on the theory. Nevertheless, he knew with certainty that he had a will and made acts of will by choosing to do or not. He notes, however, “[if] I did anything against my will, it seemed to me to be something which happened to me rather than something which I did..”²⁷ The paradox here implies that his act of will against his will is something passively added to him from nowhere but himself. This is his first realization that he can choose to act against his will. Without a clear point of reference, it’s easy to understand why he might have been confused by this strange situation, a crisis of existentialism.

As Augustine continues to gaze inside his heart on his will, things become clearer to him. He points out that his will sets “iron chains” on himself, and saying the “enemy [the devil] held my will in his power and from it he had made a chain and shackled me.”²⁸ At this point, Augustine accurately locates an outside influence that invades his heart like a trojan horse and controls his will. From here, he points out that a new will comes to life “in [him] and made [him] wish to serve you [God] freely”, although the new “was not yet strong enough to overcome the old.”²⁹ Augustine then concludes, “these two wills within me, one old, one new, one the servant of the flesh, the other of the spirit, were in conflict and between them they tore my soul apart.”³⁰ This echoes the teaching of Apostle Paul on the human experience of two laws struggling for dominance in the same person, not only as Augustine notes but also “in the way he uses his own words.”³¹

How could one have two wills in himself? This would entail one has two minds of good and evil. As a Christian convert from Manichaeism, Augustine was alerted to the fact that this was an assertion from Manichean teaching which he excoriates with bitterness throughout the book. He further thinks that his full will has two parts, which, in regard to good, “I neither willed to do it nor refused to do it with my full will. So I was at odds with myself.”³² He admits that he “was throwing” himself “into confusion” again, though he later would learn that at this moment he was halfway along his heart-mind, soul-searching pilgrimage in seeking the truth (enlightenment) to know himself by entering “God’s presence.”³³ The Manichean assertion that “this dilemma of two opposing wills” from one’s good nature and bad nature is “utterly wrong,”³⁴ Augustine reaffirms and reminds himself again without hesitation.

22 Wills, *Augustine’s Confessions*, 9.

23 Augustine, *Confessions*, 138

24 *Ibid.*, 139.

25 *Ibid.*, 47.

26 *Ibid.*, 136

27 *Ibid.*, 136

28 *Ibid.*, 164

29 *Ibid.*

30 *Ibid.*

31 Wills, *Augustine’s Confessions*, 9.

32 Augustine, *Confessions*, 173.

33 *Ibid.*

34 *Ibid.*, 173-74.

While busy criticizing the Manicheans, Augustine gained a clear understanding that his will is torn apart by two opposite desires, even though there may be more than two good desires, creating a dilemma of choice in the mind and thus confusing the act of will. He concludes: “It is the same soul that wills both, but it wills neither of them with the full force of the will.”³⁵ In other words, one soul with one will deals with the opposite desires from “the higher part of our nature” and “our lower self.” “This was the nature of my sickness!”³⁶ Augustine decided with great relief, arriving at a resting place in the epistemological pilgrimage in his soul.

III. DENY YOUR WILL WITH JESUS CHRIST TO OVERCOME A SINFUL HABIT (AN ADDICTION): AUGUSTINE IS SET FREE BY TRUTH

In the Garden of Milan under a fig tree, while his close friend Alypius watched an historic scene that shaped Christianity for the coming generations unfold, Augustine came to his final battle between the desires of the spirit and the flesh, and between his mind and heart in his soul and his general “will.” As Augustine himself explained, “I probed the hidden depths of my soul and wrung its pitiful secrets from it, and when I mustered them all before the eyes of my heart, a great storm broke within me...”³⁷ Augustine realized his will did not have enough power to do good on its own, but God’s will was different: “your will is not greater than your power...for the will and power of God are God himself.”³⁸ Augustine’s discovery that his inner workings were fragmented and disharmonious greatly discouraged and humiliated him.

In his tremendous misery, Augustine had run away from his friend and hidden under the fig tree in solitude. His tears “streamed from [his] eyes” and he had “the most bitter sorrow in [his] heart.”³⁹ Augustine’s cry reflected the Apostle Paul’s famous theological cry regarding the struggle in our “inner being”⁴⁰ for liberation from the captivity of our sin, from the sickness of heart-mind division and disharmony, and from the powerful restriction on our will from doing good. At this historic moment, Augustine heard a child singing, “Take it, read, take it, read,” realizing that this could be a divine command.⁴¹ He ran back to his bench and picked up his Bible, the words of Romans 13:13-14 right in front of his eyes.⁴² In reading the verses, Augustine noted, “it was as though the light of confidence flooded into my heart and all the darkness of doubt was dispelled.”⁴³

As Eve in the Garden did not initiate her and Adam’s sin on her own, but was pushed or tempted by Satan, Augustine was not able to initiate the good act of his will over his sinful bodily desires without help from God’s divine intervention. A miracle of Immanuel empowered Augustine to be liberated from his desperate situation, which was reflected by his prayer to God, “Give me chastity and continence, but not yet.”⁴⁴ As Gary Wills has pointed out, this is not actually the scene of conversion for Augustine because he had already confessed his faith in Jesus Christ and decided to be baptized after the intellectual journey (quest) of his mind had been accomplished.⁴⁵ Rather, the event in the Milan garden was a “new birth” for Augustine after he wanted to die a good “death

35 Ibid., 175.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid., 177.

38 Ibid., 137. “And you are never compelled, my God, to do or suffer anything against your will, because your will is not greater than your power. It would be greater only if you were greater than yourself, for the will and power of God are God himself.”

39 Ibid., 177.

40 In Romans 7:23-24 Paul writes his historic cry: “For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?” (NIV)

41 Ibid. “I stemmed my flood of tears and stood up, telling myself that this could only be a divine command to open my book of Scripture and read the first passage on which my eyes should fall.”

42 Ibid., 178.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid., 169.

45 Wills, *Augustine’s Confessions*, 58-59.

that would bring [him] life” or “become alive to life,”⁴⁶ which was a new spiritual (soul) life for him after the miraculous transformation.

What was the sin that caused Augustine so much pain he had to give up control of his will? What was so powerful that his great mind became insane? It was the sin of sexual lust⁴⁷ manifested in his immoral relationship with women (mistresses). His ruminations about how the lower parts of his body conflicted with the upper, mental parts of his body, “[m]y lower instincts, which has taken firm hold for me, were stronger than the higher, which were untried,”⁴⁸ like a dark horse dragging down a white horse from Plato’s theory on the soul, detail the core issue of his helpless struggle. In addition, the verses cited in the Book of Romans clearly emphasize key phrases such as “not in lust” and “spend no more thought on nature and nature’s appetites.”⁴⁹ This reflects what Augustine described as the powerful “my old attachments...plucked at my garment of flesh,”⁵⁰ which he referred to as “the disease of lust”⁵¹ or, in modern clinical psychological terms, what could be understood as a “sexual addiction.” “For my will was perverse and lust had grown from it, and when I gave in to lust habit was born, and when I did not resist the habit it became a necessity.”⁵² “For the rule of sin is the force of habit, by which the mind is swept along and held fast even against its will, yet deservedly, because it fell into the habit of its own accord.”⁵³

What is the cure that Augustine received from his experience in the garden? He points it out in the first paragraph of Chapter Nine after praising how the good Lord’s power “drained dry the well of corruption in the depths of my heart.” He said to the Lord that “all that you asked of me was to deny my own will and accept yours.”⁵⁴ The outcome was dramatic that Augustine, right after being born-again in the garden, submitted his will to “the rule of faith,” telling his mother he “no longer desired a wife.”⁵⁵ Thus Gary Wills observed: “The garden scene is about giving up sex.”⁵⁶

Such a human responsibility, as Augustine discovered, might certainly please the ears of his defeated contemporary theological enemy, Pelagius. Nevertheless, in demonstrating how the peak of triumph comes out of this soul-death moment, Augustine does not believe in free will any more, questioning, “during all those years, where was my free will?”⁵⁷ Such a change, as pointed out by Peter Brown, reflects that “previously, he had taken up his stand on the freedom of will” against the determinism of Manichaeism, as evidenced in his writings between 392 and 394. However, what he “could not explain so easily, was the fact that in practice, the human will did not enjoy complete freedom.”⁵⁸ In his *Confessions*, Augustine “opens up a new approach” in “purely psychological terms” explaining it was “the compulsive force of habit, *consuetudo*,” which inflicted pleasure on the memory by the past evil.⁵⁹

Finally, Augustine appreciates and enjoys the true sweet joy from God after getting “rid of

46 Augustine, *Confessions*, 171. “I was dying a death that would bring me life. I knew the evil that was in me, but the good that was soon to be born in me I did not know.”

Ibid., 175. “I could not reach out to it or grasp it, because I held back from the step by which I should die to death and become alive to life.”

47 Wills, *Augustine’s Confessions*, 59. “The garden scene is about giving up sex.”

48 Augustine, *Confessions*, 175. “My lower instincts, which had taken firm hold of me, were stronger than the higher, which were untried. And the closer I came to the moment which was to mark the great change in me, the more I shrank from it in horror. But it did not drive me back or turn me from my purpose: it merely left me hanging in suspense.”

49 Direct quote from Ibid., 178.

50 Ibid., 175.

51 Ibid., 169.

52 Ibid., 164.

53 Ibid., 165.

54 Ibid., 181.

55 Ibid., 178.

56 Wills, *Augustine’s Confessions*, 59.

57 Augustine, *Confessions*, 181.

58 Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 148-49.

59 Ibid., 149.

those fruitless joys which I had once feared to lose and was now glad to reject.”⁶⁰ What a born-again experience!

One thousand years later, Martin Luther admitted that, since he was not able to act out of his will to do good sometimes, he had no free will but rather a handcuffed will causing anxiety. Similarly, Schopenhauer in the eighteenth century decodes the paradox by defining human will as being part of the “blind irrational independent Will” which characterizes the ultimate being from an atheistic (or deist) perspective: that the King of the world and humanity resides inside people and everywhere. By subtly equating the two variables of “desire” and “will”⁶¹ as being crucially distinctive in Augustine’s will formula—one will versus two desires, Schopenhauer famously concludes that “man can do what he wills but he cannot will what he wills,” indicating one cannot will what he desires, or one cannot choose/design what he wants to will.⁶²

CONCLUSION AND REFLECTION: REDEMPTION FOR ONLY AUGUSTINE

One can also view the dual part-structure of the *Confessions*, or the spiritual and psychological journey of Augustine, as consisting of salvation and sanctification, conversion and transformation, or repentance and being born-again from “dying a good death” in the garden in Augustine’s interpretation. His journey culminates in the scene and the moment, an experience marked by dramatic spiritual awakening and strong moral enlightenment.⁶³ The book covers the two stages of his spiritual journey: “I was lost but now I am found; I was blind but now I can see.” The inward examination of the will represents one of the earliest studies of self-awareness and subjective understanding, laying the foundation for modern thought on the power and essence of the will. This approach contrasts sharply with classical Greek philosophy, which looked outward, using speculation to seek natural truths and understand objective reality beyond the individual.

The *Confessions* outlines Augustine’s process of spiritual formation from heart to mind, which combines one’s soul. Through confessions, his process involves searching inward to understand our innermost problem—the corruption of our will by our sinful nature, which often kidnaps our mind and reason. Standing inside and outside of our being, gazing at our heart, hunting the powerful will

60 Augustine, *Confessions*, 181.

61 Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, 6th ed., vol. iii, translated by R. B. Haldane and J. Kemp (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1909), 243. “Thus, in general, music consists of a constant succession of more or less disquieting chords, *i.e.*, chords which excite longing, and more or less quieting and satisfying chords; just as the life of the heart (the will) is a constant succession of greater or less disquietude through desire and aversion, and just as various degrees of relief.”

62 Recent AI systems, powered by deep learning algorithms and artificial neural networks, exhibit a form of “blind rational will,” yet fundamentally lack self-aware desire. Can AI gain self-consciousness (self-awareness) like a human being? Can AI become spiritually religious vs. mentally religious? Ontologically, is a human being God’s AI agent created with self-consciousness? (Proofread by Dr. Russ Tuck, Computer Science professor in www.Gordon.edu)

63 Some readers question Augustine’s apparent lack of provision for his common law wife and son. While *Confessions* does not provide enough information, it appears Augustine suffered a forced separation from his common-law wife but retained custody of their son Adeodatus, as he says:

“Meanwhile I was sinning more and more. The woman with whom I had been living was torn from my side as an obstacle to my marriage and this was a blow which crushed my heart to bleeding, because I loved her dearly. She went back to Africa, vowing never to give herself to any other man, and left with me the son whom she had borne me. But I was too unhappy and too weak to imitate this example set me by a woman. I was impatient at the delay of two years which had to pass before the girl whom I had asked to marry became my wife, and because I was more a slave of lust than a true lover of marriage, I took another mistress, without the sanction of wedlock. This meant that the disease of my soul would continue unabated, in fact it would be aggravated, and under the watch and ward of uninterrupted habit it would persist into the state of marriage. Furthermore the wound that I had received when my first mistress was wrenched away showed no signs of healing. At first the pain was sharp and searing, but then the wound began to fester, and though the pain was duller there was all the less hope of a cure.” Augustine, *Confessions*, 131.

After the event of the garden, Augustine and his close friend Alypius went to tell his mother about his born-again experience. *Ibid.*, 178-179. “You converted me to yourself, so that I no longer desired a wife or placed any hope in this world but stood firmly upon the rule of faith, where you had shown me to her in a dream so many years before.” *Ibid.*, 19, 190. Augustine brought his son Adeodatus back to Milan with him and his disciple Alypius and got baptized together on April 24, Holy Saturday, in 387 when the son was almost 15 years old.

in us, with God as the point of reference, Augustine leads us to deconstruct what we understand ourselves to be psychologically, mentally, and spiritually for the purpose of reconstructing or even transforming our souls, minds, hearts, and even flesh through the power, truth, and grace of God through Jesus Christ the Savior. People are created to have essential needs and purposes in life that are only found in Christ, the God, and the Logos. The work can also be viewed as a masterpiece of Christian anthropology and psychology.

In the garden event in Milan, crying under the fig tree, Augustine heard the child sing, and afterwards told “[himself] that this could only be a divine command to open [his] book of Scripture and read the first passage on which [his] eyes should fall.”⁶⁴ He did just that, thus winning the battle in his internal being. Reading this part, his former Manichean fellows would smile because of its gnostic feature,⁶⁵ but Augustine firmly views it as a pure Christian experience in following his model St. Anthony.⁶⁶ For Christian readers (particularly those like me with a Chinese traditional gnostic religious background before conversion) who appreciate the theological and faith traditions established by *The Confessions*, the “superstitious” method or thinking habit of discerning divine will—whether influenced by Manichaeism⁶⁷ as being gnostic—were redeemed for St. Augustine personally by the very fact that he was spiritually liberated and born again in Christ through the truth he found in the Bible, specifically the Book of Romans.

When many Chinese in China, myself included, converted to Christianity after the 1980s, we passionately sought a tangible relationship with God, desiring His aid and to know Him. This was primarily achieved through prayer, supported by praise in the name of Jesus Christ. A deeper theological understanding and systematic knowledge about God typically developed after this personal relationship was established. Consequently, for many Chinese Christians, the answer to Augustine’s question—whether one can pray to God by heart and faith for His aid before knowing Him by mind and reason—is empirically positive, aligning well with Augustine’s own answer.⁶⁸ The answer is even more clearly expressed in his sermon *On What is Written in Isaiah: Unless You Believe, You Shall Not Understand* (43:4)—likely preached after *Confessions*—through the epistemological statement: “Believe in order to understand.”⁶⁹

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64 Augustine, *Confessions*, 177. “I was asking myself these questions, weeping all the while with the most bitter sorrow in my heart, when all at once I heard the singsong voice of a child in a nearby house. Whether it was the voice of a boy or a girl I cannot say, but again and again it repeated the refrain ‘Take it and read, take it and read’... I stemmed my flood of tears and stood up, telling myself that this could only be a divine command to open my book of Scripture and read the first passage on which my eyes should fall. For I had heard the story of Antony, and I remembered how he had happened to go into a church while the Gospel was being read and had taken it as a counsel addressed to himself when he heard the words *Go home...*”

65 Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 56. “The Manichee, therefore, was entirely embedded in the visible world. Every physical process around him was happening for his salvation.” Augustine, *Confessions*, 14.

66 Augustine, *Confessions*, 177.

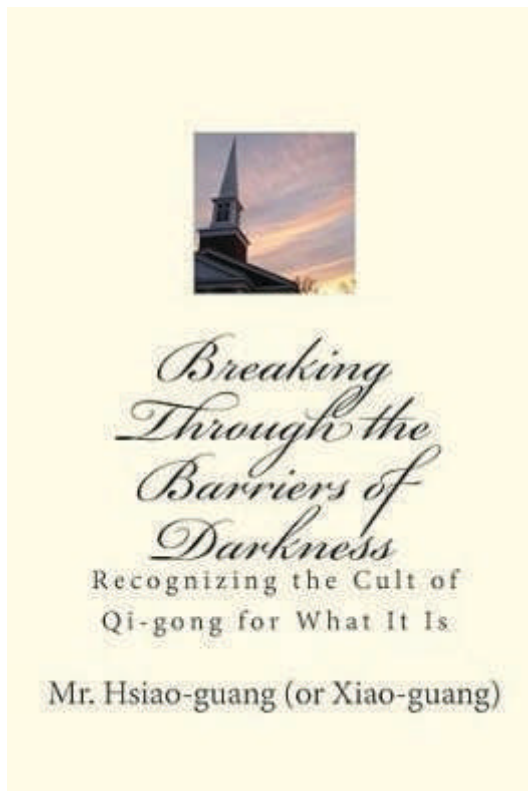
67 Note: An ancient gnostic religion that evolved from a Christian heresy and incorporated esoteric elements from Eastern models which are similar to Buddhism and Daoism.

68 Augustine, *Confessions*, 21. “Grant me, Lord, to know and understand whether a man is first to pray to you for help or to praise you, and whether he must know you before he can call you to his aid... It is my faith that calls to you, Lord, the faith which you gave me and made to live in me through the merits of your Son...”

69 Augustine, *Sermons II (20-50) on the Old Testament*, translated and with notes by Edmund Hill, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, edited by John E. Rotelle, O.S.A. (New York: New City Press, 1990), 240. Appreciation is given to Dr. Charles Copp of Gordon College for his guidance and recommendation of secondary sources.

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.

Currently he runs the Boston Chinese Academic Institute and its YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/@beaBoston), where the channel supports Christian faith in the form of academics to a growing Chinese audience.



Unmasking the Secrets of the Qigong Movement in China: A Spiritual Parallel to the Western New Age Movement

A former Qigong master provides an unparalleled view into the mystery, spiritual core, and social-religious movement of Qigong, which gained prominence in China in the early 1980s through the 1990s. The movement subsequently subsided into a subtle, hidden form following the Chinese government's 1999 crack-down on Falun Gong, a related branch.

Written from the perspective of a Chinese Christian—and former practitioner—this book uncovers the secrets of this contemporary discipline for spiritual formation, which often incorporates martial arts, mystical meditation, and healing. The text combines the author's first-hand experiences with a thorough analysis of Qigong's background, theory, and cultural-religious roots.

The author reveals the hidden spiritual links to Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, demonstrating that Qigong shares a spiritual foundation that ultimately results in psychological agony and spiritual death for its followers. The

Chinese version of this compelling book saw seven reprintings between 1998 and 2005 in Taiwan, making it a bestseller among Chinese Christian literature.

Breaking Through the Barriers of Darkness: Recognizing the Cult of Qi-gong for What It Is

(Paperback – January 2, 2008)

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**Review of *The Rush for Black Diamonds, Volume One: From John Locke to Thomas Jefferson – The Transatlantic Slave Trade to Chattel Slavery in the UK and the US*, by George Walters-Sleyon
(Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2024)**

RODNEY PETERSEN

INTRODUCTION

In his 1943 play *No Exit*, Jean-Paul Sartre famously wrote, “Hell is other people.” In the play, Sartre uses three dead characters who are trapped in a room together for eternity. The room symbolizes hell, and the characters’ imprisonment represents the real world. Sartre believed that the presence of others can cause pain, suffering, and depression.

This is the world of racism, the industrial revolution, and colonialism as they are interlaced by George Walters-Sleyon in *The Rush for Black Diamonds, Volume One*, the first of two volumes that dare to make real the racism which has “dogged” the transatlantic slave trade, and its mutation into chattel slavery. It does this by doing what Walters-Sleyon does well, making the intangible, tangible.

RACISM

The story Walters-Sleyon focuses on begins with the involvement of two prominent Enlightenment philosophers whom, he argues, are the architects of the political, economic, and philosophical justifications for the human slave trade in the United Kingdom and the United States: John Locke (1632-1704), a British philosopher and “Father of Liberalism”; and Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), the third president of the United States. Called America’s “original sin” by Justice Thurgood Marshall, it is not only America’s sin, but it is apparently the sin of the Western world as Walters-Sleyon explores the emergence of the transatlantic slave trade by Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, Britain (England, Wales, and Scotland), France, and subsequently the United States. Drawing upon the research of W. E. B. Du Bois, Walters-Sleyon provides data on the innumerable Africans dragged out of Africa and bred for the slave markets of the colonial slave powers. Included are demonstrations of the involvement of the British governing class and of the American colonies before and after the American political settlement with the decision to perpetuate the socio-political claims of the inferiority of Black Africans.¹

With irony, Walters-Sleyon charts the “necessary background” of the Enlightenment “pioneers,” preeminently John Locke’s contribution to toleration and liberal politics but also to racial slavery. Lockean slavery is connected to race and its perpetuation into the twenty-first century. Both Locke and Jefferson were slave traders and slave masters. Referred to as Lockean Slavery and Jeffersonian Slavery, *The Rush for Black Diamonds*, contends that Locke and Jefferson were responsible for the justification and sustainability of the transatlantic slave trade, chattel slavery, colonialism, and penal slavery, that these forms of slavery would not have been successful without the injection of the Enlightenment Fathers’ philosophical justifications for race-based theories. Going beyond John Locke and Thomas Jefferson, this included philosophers David Hume, G. F. W. Hegel, and Immanuel Kant, with reference to others. Following Hegel, Locke defined Africans as a race in three streams: 1) Africa proper as Black Africa; 2) North Africa as European Blacks; and 3) Egypt with its own Asian Blacks – with the first stream being most susceptible to becoming slaves.

It is vital to see the European “other” in the fifteenth century as defined by the Age of Exploration (c.1418-c.1620) or Discovery. This was a transformative period in world history when explorers from several European countries explored, colonized, and conquered regions across the

¹ William E. B. Du Bois, ed., *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870*, Oxford W.E.B. Du Bois (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

globe, laying the groundwork for contemporary globalization. Edmundo O’Gorman argues that the physical encounter with new territories was less important than the Europeans’ effort to integrate this new knowledge into their worldview, what he calls “the invention of America.”² As a part of this process, we create “others” who may appear different from ourselves. “Others” are what I am not or imagine what I am not but are parts of the same planet that creates and sustains us.³ From the fifteenth century to the present, being white, male, and part of the ruling class has had its narcissistic privileges as the era saw widespread enslavement, exploitation, and military conquest of African and native populations, concurrent with the growing economic influence and spread of Western and European culture, science, and technology.

Many indigenous peoples have fundamentally challenged the concept of the colonial other, the claiming of “discovery” over their lands and people, as forced and negating indigenous presence. As author Toni Morrison explains in her book *The Origin of Others*, when we say “race,” we are referring to the natural world in its genetic diversity, and this world seems peaceful and acceptable. But when we invent racism, we are in the realm of social relations in which we identify others not only by the different color of their skin but by the social place they occupy and our relations with that place. When we talk about racism, we are in the register of exclusion.

CAPITALISM AND THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

The story of the complicity of racism is made real in the description of the industrial revolution, in driving Britain and North American economic development, often debated but seldom given a central place in analysis. Maxine Berg and Pat Hudson “follow the money” to document in revealing detail the role of slavery in the making of Britain’s industrial revolution. Slavery was not just a source of wealth for a narrow circle of slave owners who built grand country houses and filled them with luxuries.

Walters-Sleyon takes up the forces set in motion by the slave and plantation trades as they seeped into almost every aspect of the economy and society. In textile mills, iron and copper smelting, steam power, and financial institutions, slavery played a crucial part. Things we might think far removed from the taint of slavery, such as eighteenth-century fashions for indigo-patterned cloth or sweet tea, or mahogany furniture were intimately connected. Even London’s role as a center for global finance was partly determined by the slave trade as insurance, financial trading, and mortgage markets were developed in the City. Acknowledging Britain’s role – or that of the United States – in slavery is not just about toppling statues and renaming streets. Walters-Sleyon shows the urgent need to come to terms with slavery’s inextricable links with Western capitalism, and the ways in which many of us continue to benefit from slavery to this day.⁴ Grounded in racist slavery, Walters-Sleyon asserts the economic, technical, and philosophical achievements as well as the success of the industrial revolution as predicated on the success of the transatlantic slave trade, the chattel enslavement of Black people, and colonialism.

W. E. B. Du Bois used a term, “*Black Diamonds*,” as a metaphor to capture the Western nations’ rush for Black people to fuel the success of the Western industrial machine. Enslaved, they were to be used as economic units, chattel property. With impunity, it was the most disruptive act of human institutions, cultures, and socioeconomic and political stability, with substantial financial, social, political, and racial implications for centuries in human history. Given the success of the industrial revolution, the wealth generated from the human trade intersected with the development of capitalism and the industrial revolution, seen in such burgeoning cities as Liverpool, London,

2 Edmundo O’Gorman, *The Invention of America: An Inquiry into the Historical Nature of the New World and the Meaning of Its History* (Westport, 1972), 9–47.

3 Toni Morrison, *The Origin of Others*, The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, 2016 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017). See especially chapter 2, “Being or Becoming the Stranger.”

4 Maxine Berg and Pat Hudson, *Slavery, Capitalism and the Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2023). See Chapter 1: “Slavery and the British economy: how the slave and plantation trades worked and how they changed.”

Bristol, Glasgow, Manchester, and others. That exploration also created colonial empires and marked an increased adoption of colonialism as government and economic policy, such colonization reshaped power dynamics, causing geopolitical shifts in Europe and creating new centers of power beyond Europe.

COLONIALISM

Having set human history on a global common course, the legacy of the age still shapes the world today. Three contradictions in Locke's thought, as pointed out by Robert Bernasconi and Anika Maaza Mann, underscore colonialism and its link to race, capitalism, and the industrial revolution.⁵ Respecting colonialism, 1) Locke was not ignorant of the argument that the colonization of North America was not possible without slave labor. 2) Locke's involvement and defense of the slave trade was judged to be indispensable to the profitability of the new American colonies. 3) Third was Locke's argument about "just war." Oddly, Locke provided an argument for abolitionist thinkers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries while also participating in the slave trade.

Chattel slavery was a racialized system that treated people as chattel, or property. While taking on an explicit form in its American setting, chattel slavery defined human beings as no different than any other piece of property. States and churches were stained and divided by vicious battles seen in the American Civil War. In addition, the 13th – 15th Amendments, the civil rights acts of 1866 and 1964 and civil and legal cases are all topics taken up by Walters-Sleyon in Volume Two, as they attacked the measures which provided the structures of legitimacy framing colonial structures and the foreign policies of the Western establishments particularly in the transatlantic slave trade of 1400-1860s. Before reviewing the treatment of these issues, it is important to appreciate "The Making of John Locke" and "The Slave Trader and the British Slave Trade" (chapters three and four). Here Walters-Sleyon describes Locke's political career in the development of colonial policy and the transatlantic slave trade to which Locke was appointed as Secretary to the Lords Proprietors of Carolina, the managers of Carolina and profiteers of the slave trade. As a member of Lord Ashley's household, later the first Earl of Shaftsbury, Ashley made Locke Secretary of the Lords Proprietors. Locke and his new employers turned to crafting a constitution, the first edition dated July 21, 1669. He supported Lord Ashley and seven other noblemen in the settlement of the colonies. The Lords Proprietors were also slave traders, and they bestowed on Locke the rank of Landgrave, a title to be his and his heirs'.

The legal justification of slavery in Britain was based on common and commercial legal concepts based on local laws. The *Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina*, the colony's founding document, were drafted by Locke (March 1, 1669), based on political theory and colonial interests. The colony of Virginia was also passing similar laws at the time of the Fundamental Constitutions of chattel slavery. These were areas of blatant white supremacist brutality against black humanity. Denying Enlightenment principles of justice and fairness, so too did colonial Virginia law deny biblical equity: "Virginia established the legal foundation by which Black people were legally defined as slaves, property, and real estate" (67-68).

Locke's role in crafting colonial policy was seen in 1676 when he was elevated to the position of Secretary to the "Council of Trade and Plantation Life," and he became one of the most sought-after architects of the slave trade in the British Empire. In 1696, Locke became Commissioner of King William's New Board of Trade with a focus on crisis management on the colonies of England, including North America. Locke was not a bystander but an active participant as slave trader, master, and colonial master. Locke invested in the Royal African Company (1673-77): "No doubt

⁵ Robert Bernasconi and Anika Maaza Mann, "The Contradictions of Racism: Locke, Slavery and the Two Treatises," in *Race and Racism in Modern Philosophy*, edited by Andrew Valls (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005): 88-107.

Locke and Lord Ashley looked carefully both at the company's charter which granted a monopoly for the trade of gold, silver, negroes, and other West African goods" (34-35).

In a series of chapters (five through seven), Walters-Sleyon outlines (5) Lockean *Politics*, which devolved around the dictum, "Once a Slave, Always a Slave." Next, while Locke condemns slavery in the state of nature and civil society as antithetical to the preservation of natural rights, he makes provisions for slavery in the civil society, established on reason. (6) Contending *Religion* did not offer freedom from slavery, in *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1685), Locke claims that the only business of the Church is the salvation of souls – not a concern of the commonwealth or any member of it. The marginalization of the Church from capitalist ventures and matters of state fit his separation of religion and the state. He advocated religious individualism from a Deist perspective, arguing that the Church should deal with care of souls – not be a civil magistrate. The care of souls involving the mind, intellect, emotions, and religion is no basis for ethics since religion is superstitious and irrational.⁶

In chapter seven, Walters-Sleyon finds the grounding of Lockean *Philosophy* in Empiricism. He contends that Locke's empiricist philosophy provided justification for his racism against people of African descent. By 1650, rationalism was replaced by empiricism in European philosophical circles which focused now on the senses and perception. The Lockean *tabula rasa* saw two sources for the search for truth in a troubled century, unreflective adherence to tradition and the other as enthusiasm or a reliance on emotions as basis of truth in Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), where he posits the basis of knowledge is intuitive, based on experience, and the pleasure and pain principles. Thus, Lockean ethics, grounded in Lockean empiricism, provided the basis for Lockean personalism. To an empiricist, this guided a materialist notion of the person which failed to offer a philosophical exit from the civil status of life.

The second division in this volume (chapters 8-10) draws attention to the second of Walters-Sleyon's two prominent Enlightenment philosophers, Thomas Jefferson. Walters-Sleyon draws out the difference between slavery defined by the transatlantic slave experience and that of chattel slavery (1779-1865), defined less by the experience of transit and more as simply an economic unit. In Chapter 8, the distinction is made between Lockean Slavery and Jeffersonian Slavery and to the Lockean influence on the Presidency in the United States, including Locke's concepts of religious tolerance, natural theology/deism and the separation of church and state, slavery, and the Declaration of Independence, in which the U. S. began as a "slave holders' republic, the political compromise between a slave valued as "three-fifths" of a human being subject not to biblical norms but, in Jefferson, to Lockean Deism.

Particularly, this "three-fifths" of a human being finds special ignominy in chapters nine and ten in which the nature of person is connected to slave master and slave in Jefferson's view. Topics racially tinged become common usage, such as "Jefferson: The Avowed White Supremacist"; "Slave Breeding in the Slave Trade and Chattel Slavery"; "Jefferson's 'Congo Harem'; and "Frederick Douglass: Oppression is Maddening."

And so, is the "Emancipation: Toward the End of Chattel Slavery in the UK and the US" to be celebrated or "Independence Day," on the Fourth of July? It should not be surprising that, as we are more conscious of our racial heritage, that we are more conflicted about what we celebrate, the Fourth of July or Juneteenth?

A SOCIAL GOSPEL

And so, in our contemporary era the question of how we define sin is as important today as it was in the period of history surveyed by Walters-Sleyon. And so, it should come as no surprise to see this study conclude with a reference to American theologian and Baptist pastor, Walter

⁶ John Witte, *The Blessings of Liberty: Human Rights and Religious Freedom in the Western Legal Tradition*, Law and Christianity (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 79.

Rauschenbusch (1861-1918), a key figure in the Social Gospel movement that emphasized sin in the contemporary sociopolitical, economic, and racial exploitation. Historian and Ethicist Dorien writes: “Rauschenbusch was an idealist with a strong awareness of the pervasive reality of personal and social evil; he was a moralist who understood that moralism alone will never gain social justice; he was both religiously devout and deeply politicized.” The Church had forsaken its social mandate: “For Rauschenbusch, there is a collective interpretation of sin and redemption. Sin is social, and redemption is social. Collective sin requires collective repentance.”⁷

How do we look back at this volume? Walters-Sleyon asks the question, “Is Locke a Racist?” He raises five points which can stand as a summary to the book and a preface to our historical era:

- 1) “There is no evidence that Locke associated with slaves or Africans in a friendly fashion other than owning them as property.
- 2) We have no evidence that Locke freed his slaves, which would have been a courageous act in light of his political and philosophical assertions.
- 3) Locke saw Africans as subhuman beings and crafted his political and economic theories to perpetuate the claims that Blacks are inferior human beings.
- 4) As the architect of the *Fundamental Constitutions*, Locke stipulated the perpetual enslavement of Africans and the absolute power of master over slave.
- 5) Locke made it clear that “a slave’s conversion to Christianity does not change their social status as a slave in the broader civil society.”

The poems written by Walters-Sleyon which accompany each chapter help to answer the question of whether Locke was a racist or not.⁸ The furtherance of the transatlantic slave trade brought the promise of the Kingdom of God to some, but hell to the existence of others. Both were susceptible to the “other” theme in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For those inspired by the preaching and urban ministry of Rauschenbusch or as seen in the Moravian Church which constantly sent missionaries to areas of the Caribbean islands and places suffering from plague, poverty, and spiritual darkness. They were the men and women who sold themselves into “slavery” in order to share the Gospel with slaves, while others saw slavery as the way to “wealth” and the development of capitalism and the industrial revolution.

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⁷ Gary J. Dorrien, *Soul in Society: The Making and Renewal of Social Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 6.

⁸ George Walters-Sleyon, *Nuggets From the Night: An Anthology of Poetic Expressions*. (Independent, 2020).

Review of *La Mesa Campesina: A Congregational Resource for Ministry with Migrant and Agricultural Farmworkers* by Thelma Herrera Flores
(Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2024)

YOUNG PARK

No llores! This is how Hector, a worker at Haymarket, welcomes me when I go to Haymarket, located in downtown Boston. Every Saturday morning, Hector greets me “*No llores*” with a loud voice and smile. I knew the meaning in Spanish, “do not cry” from the first week. But I was not sure, and am still not sure if the greeting, “do not cry” is for me, for himself, for those who work there or for someone else. I just imagined “*no llores*” as sort of a secret code among people who belong to the same group and considered “*no llores*” as an invitation to a certain privileged group. “*No llores*” can be translated as “*Do not cry*” or “*You do not cry*” in English, depending on the context. What makes you cry? Sorrow, pain, or anger might let you cry out. But a very positive emotion may make you cry too. When you are moved by an inexpressible beautiful moment or amazing grace, you might want to cry.

I found the different depth of “*no llores*” while reading Thelma Flores’ book, *La Mesa Campesina*. It is Flores’ debut book consisting of the research work drawn from her doctoral dissertation. This book focuses on the agricultural migrants who travel for farm work. This book’s subtitle, *A Congregational Resource for Ministry with Migrant and Agricultural Farmworkers* tells many things about the book already. This book targets individuals who are responsible for a pastoral and outreach ministry of a local church. An individual can be a pastor, a seminary professor, an elder, a lay pastor, or any person who has an interest in those people.

Flores clearly states that the main purpose of the book is to develop an ecumenical ministry with Hispanic migrant and seasonal agricultural farmworkers who have been otherwise invisible.¹ Many people like me have not known them nor how the blueberries or tomatoes have been picked up from a big farm and delivered to our daily dining table. The second purpose of the book is to draw the attention of the organizations that may be willing to support those agricultural workers, their life, and their family. As the subtitle says, Thelma Flores desires to have this book utilized as a practical guide for a local church ministry. A target organization may be a local church who can embrace the burden for those migrant workers’ lives. But Flores developed and laid out the curriculum keeping a pastoral ministry in mind.

In the year 2013, there were about 50,000 migrant workers in Michigan alone (p. 8). It is a substantial number, especially when we consider that the migrant workers do not travel only to Michigan. It is a noteworthy number since there are other non-farm workers too. Those migrant agricultural workers travel back and forth typically from the southern states like Texas to the northern states like Michigan for farm work. They may not be called a harvester but even a seasonal worker working for a daily wage.

In an ironic way though, the word, *piscas*, meaning “to harvest” in Spanish, appears often throughout the book. *Piscas* reminds readers like me why those people were hired. *Piscas* reminds me of the image of abundance and prosperity. Such abundance does not apply to those workers. *Piscas* represents the labor outcomes of those workers while it accentuates their life on the opposite side. In this context, they are simply seasonal and temporary labor-intensive workers continuing to travel to wherever a farm needs extra hands. Many of them are also parents whose children are traveling with them without attending a school. While reading the book, a reader would be easily able to sense the struggles facing agricultural migrants and the barriers that they must overcome.

1 Thelma Herrera Flores, “La Mesa Campesina,” *exfonte* (February 2025), 28.

The book does not offer lots of heavy hermeneutical theological interpretations. But it offers concrete theological and biblical resources related to agricultural and spiritual themes. It does not discuss contemporary Christian thoughts on social justice or moral ethics either. But it offers an awakening truth and what is happening around us that we Christians very often forget and ignore. It does not include any advanced counseling theories or the most practical mental health-related guidelines either. But the book carries one person, the author, Thelma Flores' voice for those people. The book witnesses her genuine heart and the efforts to provide the most appropriate resources for them. Her knowledge and expertise within her capacity were all included. One can grasp her theological grounds and interpretations on the current sociological issues that she attempts to tackle through the perspective of pastoral ministry. This book seems to be placed somewhere between a personal essay and an academic book. As a personal essay, the view of Thelma Flores on those workers seems shaped through her life experiences. As a daughter and granddaughter of migrant farmworkers, Flores candidly talks about her family's endurance of the seasonal struggle of packing up their households to journey to unfamiliar and sometimes inhospitable places. Flores contemplates what it means to be fair, what it means to be generous, and what it means to care for someone. Ultimately, Flores calls for the church's heart for them. If a local church does not care about those seasonal workers who are not permanent residents in a town or state, who would care for them, Flores asks the question with a gentle but firm voice.

As an academic book, Flores' interpretations on different literature and appreciation for different influential figures are described. William Langland's *Piers Plowman*, Shepherd of Hermas, Flores' father's lifelong friend, Tomas Rivera's *Y No Se Lo Trago La Tierra*, and Eldin Villafañe's *Beyond Cheap Grace* are also mentioned. The works and lives of Cesar Chavez, Oscar Romero, and Michael Gorman are referred to as impacting on Thelma Flores' social and spiritual work for the Campesinas.

Flores develops *Campesino* theology expressing the gospel in the language of *cotidiana*, that is, the everyday messiness or struggles of life. It uses the historical and biblical language of sowing, cultivating, and harvesting to explain the spiritual rhythms of death, rebirth, growth, harvest, and consummation in the kingdom of God.²

In this specific case study, Flores ran six weekly sessions for a two months' period with 10-15 participants who were once those agricultural migrant workers. Each session had its own topic, a group discussion, an imagine-action activity, and homework. The stories from biblical figures like Moses or Amos were embedded in the study sessions. Each session meant to help each participant reflect on his or her life either past or present on the given biblical theme. Each session aimed to offer each participant a meaning-making process coming from his or her life and work experience. I understand that reflection is a critical learning opportunity allowing individuals to get through a valuable meaning making process. While the book does not fully elaborate how every participant learned and reconstructed every one's previous years' experiences into new meaning and hope, the book still manages to demonstrate how they were transformed after two months of sessions.

I had my own bias when I conducted an interview with the author, Thelma Flores, for this book review. I simply wanted to know more about her research project that did not appear to be fully described in the book. I wanted to know more about the participants. I also wanted to review what theories framed her research work. And I wanted to clarify the "new findings" in terms of a "scientific methodology" and a "systematic approach." But the interview with Thelma did not go as I expected. All she talked about was those campesinos' harsh experiences and poor working environments. She identified herself with them.

Do not get me wrong. I am one who appreciates and advocates for numbers, scientific measurements, and well-grounded theories that can support one's arguments. Nonetheless, I know

² Flores, "La Mesa Campesina," *exfonte*, 28.

enough that it is not up to me to judge what method and approach are the most appropriate for a certain topic.

While this book's research works may not be entitled to be "perfect," as no human beings are perfect, this book shares lots of goodness that one will miss once one tastes its goodness.

Further, the contents may lack a certain quality as scholarly academic work. For example, there is no detailed explanation of the participants' learned reflections, lesson outcomes, and experiences as the study results. Strictly speaking, the research study manuscript should be able to elaborate the study fully enough that the study could yield the same results if other researchers duplicate it. Even if there should be some differences in the results depending on the factors such as participants and circumstances, the overarching findings should be able to indicate the same. That is how a study finding, a new approach, or a new experiment becomes generalized and shapes a theory. On the contrary, this book shows how much one person can struggle and do for other people. A reader will sense Thelma Flores' own kicking, jumping, punching, being punched, and being kicked in her ministry on behalf of the migrant workers, which are the strength and beauty of the book. The book makes a reader touched and moved to the point of crying. Yes, crying, not due to witnessing Campesinos' hardship but due to the grace that campesinos/as are demonstrating through Flores' work. Flores displays through herself so much about what it means to do a pastoral ministry, what it means to be a pastor, and what it means to be in a mission.

That is right. I wanted to cry because I started to see the hope given to them and the beauty given to someone like Thelma Flores. Flores said, "As Christians, it is our responsibility to offer the Campesinos hope and God's grace. Hope is born from our human experience and interrupted by the inspiration of God's presence in our lives. As painful as that reality may be, we should not give up on our outreach" (p. 46).

An individual's resilience and strength become more confident in the face of difficult situations, where one rather not allow oneself to cry but instead insists to learn from one's uphill battles. We already know that, out of afflicted circumstances, true grace and hope start to be seen, revealed, and shone. Overall, the goal of Thelma Flores' book is for the church to open her eyes to the plight of her neighbor and to be sensitive to God's call to action to advocate for those being oppressed. In Flores' case, the Campesinos are those and this book exhibits her response to the call.

For those who want to conduct a study for their ministry or to write a book or an article for people whom they care about, I recommend them to read this book that includes lots of works and insights that came from up and down rocky roads.

Upon my request to be able to see some laughs and joy in her next book, Flores replied, "the valuable human senses such as laughs and joy can come when the church takes strides wholly in ministering to the vulnerable, the poor, and the afflicted that are these Campesinos in this context. It is then the body of Christ who can rejoice and celebrate the victories won by God's grace."

Let it be.

Young Park is currently working for Goddard Library, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary as a librarian for Acquisitions and Technical Services. She has four academic degrees, Ed.M. Ed.D, M.Div., and Th.M. and the record of over twenty peer-reviewed and highly indexed scholarly publications. She serves as a unit chair (a consulting stage) for the unit of Pedagogy, Epistemology, and Pedagogy in Biblical Exegesis for the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) International meeting and serves as an associate editor for the academic journal, *International Journal for Web-Based Learning Teaching Technology* (IJWLTT).

Review of *Redemptive Service: Loving Our Neighbors Well* by Lisa P. Stephenson and Ruthie Wienk (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2024)

LAUREN MULFORD

Redemptive Service by Lisa P. Stephenson and Ruthie Wienk is written for an academic audience looking for a thorough introduction on the topics of redemptive service, benevolence, and the pursuit of justice. The first half of the book, written by Stephenson, focuses on truly seeing the “least of these” as “neighbor.” The second half, written by Wienk, discusses principles and practices for service. However, there is overlap as each author treats her topic holistically.

The authors share research from theology and sociology with the understanding that service to others is required and central to Christians. The first half covers *why* we should love our neighbors by sharing “biblical and theological understandings of Christian benevolent activity,” while the second half covers the *how* by practical discussions of service (4). Each chapter ends with further reading suggestions and discussion questions.

Lisa Stephenson has her PhD from Marquette University and is a systematic theology professor at Lee University. Ruthie Wienk has her PhD from South Dakota State University and is an associate professor of sociology at Lee University. Both are involved with the Benevolence Program at Lee University, which connects students to service projects.

Part 1 discusses how a Christian worldview establishes not only how one sees the world but how one acts in the world (19). It explains that the Bible determines how people should be viewed and how others should behave toward those less fortunate. God is redemptive and therefore calls his people to be redemptive (49). As the people of God become less benevolent, God sees that as movement away from him (53). Moving into the New Testament, the call to love one’s neighbor as oneself (Matt 22:39), and the understanding of “who is my neighbor” (Luke 10:29) are well established through Jesus’s teaching. Finally, part 1 discusses how the call to modern Christians was established in the Old Testament, with Christ through the Gospels, and in the early church—all propelled by the Holy Spirit.

Part 2 continues the vision of Part 1 with practical responses to the Christian worldview established in Part 1. Part 2 emphasizes how well churches often discuss poverty as a hypothetical problem but fail to help people specifically, often because they deem the poor as unworthy (126). Instead of justifying oneself for not helping (as the inquirer of Luke 10 wanted to do), Christians should sacrificially serve those in need. While we should offer spiritual care, physical needs should never be ignored (139). Part 2 discusses sociological options of short-term and long-term solutions. As immediate needs are established, more home-grown development should be encouraged (ch 8). Finally, part 2 discusses advocacy solutions.

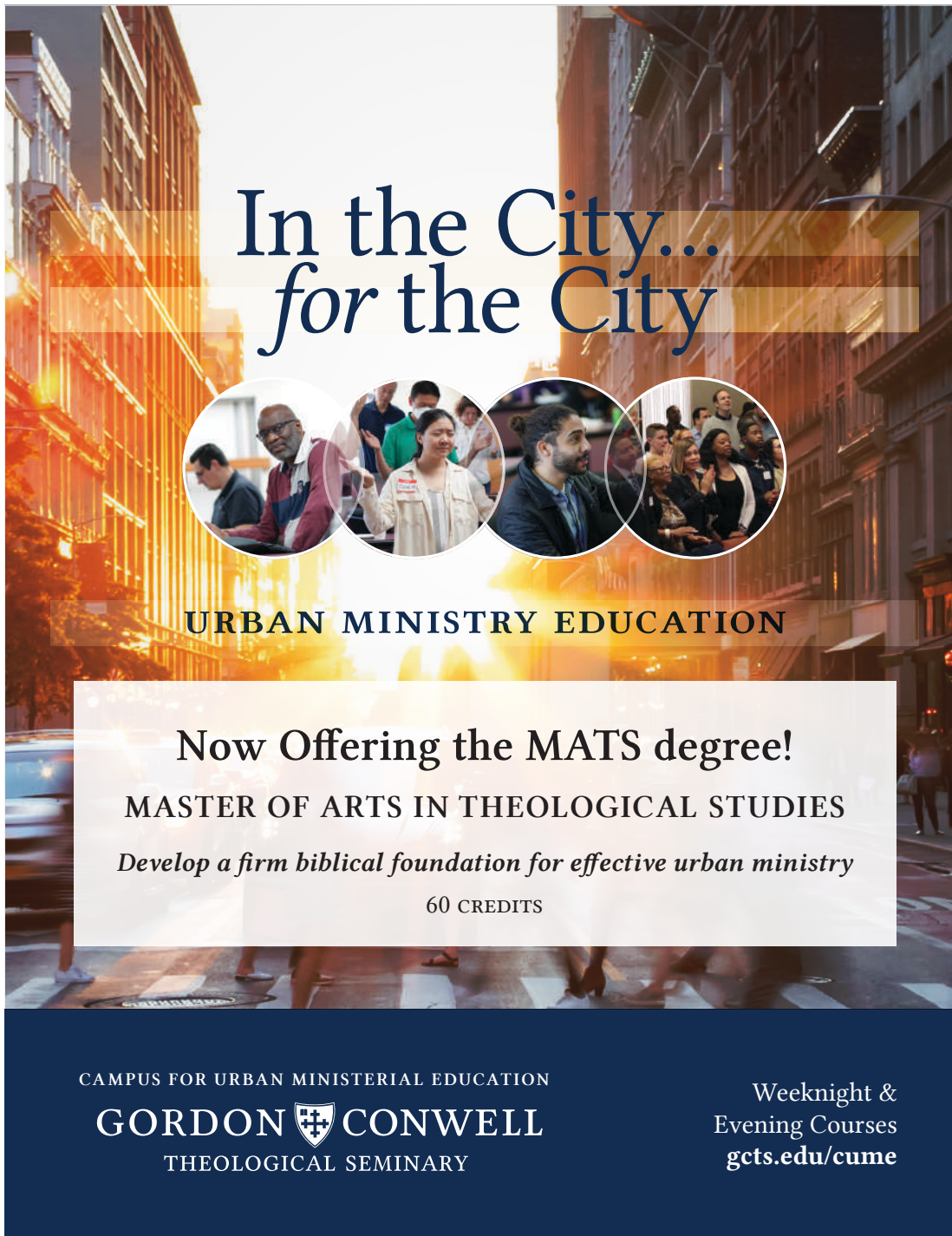
This text will work well as a textbook for an undergraduate class focussed on Christian service. This book is for professors looking for an evangelical, multicultural, multiracial, urban-oriented, biblically-based textbook. While individuals may find it helpful, I cannot see Sunday school classes preferring this text because of how robust and in-depth it is.

Included are many great suggestions for further reading from excellent sources like Abraham Joshua Heschel and Jeannine K. Brown. Other works cited include N. T. Wright, J. Richard Middleton, Donald E. Gowan, Patricia Homan, Lauren Valentino, and Emi Weed. This text is thoroughly researched and cited, which is useful for undergraduates to experience.

While it may initially be discouraging that such a text is necessary, the authors embolden the readers to take action, knowing that the Holy Spirit is empowering service movements. The authors

encourage the readers to see themselves as their brother's keepers. Just as our burdens became Christ's burdens, so our neighbors' burdens become ours.


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Review of *Exegetical Journeys in Biblical Hebrew: 90 days of Guided Reading* by H. H. Hardy II (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2025)

LARK KELSEY

For students in language courses, avoiding a poor grade is generally enough to motivate diligent study during the first few weeks of language learning. However, when students get bogged down distinguishing Hiphils from Hophals, they may question why they are undertaking this task in the first place. Especially for those who are self-taught, sustaining the resolve to persevere in language study is difficult. One way to help students keep up their motivation is to stay connected to the scriptures. During my first Hebrew class, the teacher asked us to read a word aloud from scripture, and I felt like a kindergartener sounding it out ever so slowly, “Shh-ehh-maa-ahh, Shehh-mahh...Shema! Oh! It’s the Shema!” Tears rolled down my face as I realized these foreign letters were the beautiful text of an ancient prayer I knew and loved. The joy of discovering precious scripture reminds students of why they are undertaking this grueling task. Yet once Hebrew I and II are completed, many books of the Old Testament remain beyond the natural grasp of students. If they do not continue into interpretation and exegesis, their language skills will atrophy like unused muscles. Even when the basic course requirements are completed, establishing habits that keep them connected to the original languages can be difficult for students.

To fill this gap, Baker Academic contracted with scholars to develop resources for Greek and Hebrew learners beyond the first year of language study. Benjamin Merkle’s *Exegetical Gems from Biblical Greek* (2019) and H.H. Hardy II’s *Exegetical Gems from Biblical Hebrew* (2019) offer insights to help students see the value in their language studies. More recently, Merkle developed *Exegetical Journeys in Biblical Greek* (2023), and the companion book for Hebrew is available this year. *Exegetical Journeys in Biblical Hebrew: 90 days of Guided Reading* (2025) rounds out these tools and provides more than exegetical insights but takes students directly to the scripture in a workbook form.

As an associate professor of Old Testament and co-author of an intermediate Hebrew grammar (*Going Deeper with Biblical Hebrew*), H.H. Hardy II is an excellent choice to guide Hebrew students further in their exploration of the text. After a brief introduction, his book offers 90 passages of scripture that guide the reader through a 10–15-minute exploration of the Hebrew text. Each day focuses on a few verses, beginning with Genesis 1:1 and drawing from Deuteronomy, Exodus, 2 Samuel, Joshua, Isaiah, Ruth, Proverbs, and Psalms. One day’s exercise includes reading the verse(s) aloud, parsing the verbs, answering a few grammatical questions, and writing out a translation. The author provides some notes of exegesis, explains pertinent syntactical issues, and provides a short devotional commentary. Knowledge of the Hebrew gives the reader a deeper appreciation for the scripture. The book acts as a guide to remind them how their study has given them the tools necessary to interact with the text in such a deep way. After a few days, the reader covers a complete literary unit and moves on to a new set of verses.

The book is divided into three 30-day “Journeys” (Easy, Intermediate, Difficult); however, it is not suitable for a first semester Hebrew student. The reader starts with parsing Piel participles on the first page. Whereas Merkle’s Greek version is appropriate to begin after Greek I, the Hebrew version would be more fit for use after Hebrew II. If traditional students take a break over the summer before beginning interpretation or exegesis courses in the fall, they could work through all three journeys in the 90 days over the summer to keep the language fresh. Professors could suggest Hardy’s book at the end of Hebrew II concurrent with an interpretation course as a helpful devotional resource. Academic advisors could recommend this to students who need to brush up their language skills after an extended break. Because it is so well-rounded, it would be especially helpful for students preparing for proficiency exams.

Although there are many websites and tools available to those who want to continue in their studies, students can feel overwhelmed by the sheer number of options. *Exegetical Journeys in Biblical Hebrew* offers an easy-to-follow pathway to developing a consistent routine in engagement with Hebrew post-coursework. Like the Greek version, it is printed as a traditional paperback book, so it is somewhat awkward to utilize as a workbook. Additionally, the small size of text could prove frustrating to those with vision impairments since missing a small dot in Hebrew can entirely change a word.

This book would make a perfect gift for graduating Master of Divinity students. Since they have already done the work of language study, this allows them to reap the benefit of the investment of their time and money. Each lesson is short and encourages a daily habit of interaction in the original languages. Cultivating that practice allows a deep appreciation for the Hebrew scriptures throughout one's life after seminary.

Lark Kelsey is a graduate of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (MATS '24, ThM '25) and a current PhD student at Baylor University's Truett Seminary. She lives in Gainesville, Florida and her articles and video tutorials can be found at www.LarkTheoSis.com.

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