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From the Editor's Desk

10th Anniversary Edition: Exegesis, History, and Missiology

Jeffery Nelson, Editor

Introduction

In this edition of the International Journal of Pentecostal Missiology we celebrate 10 years of the journal. We have new articles, missiological reflections, and a few "best of" articles from past issues. The theme includes both exegesis (from Exodus, John, Matthew, Mark, and Timothy) plus mission history (from Egypt, and early Pentecostal missionary wives) and missiology concerning prisons and rural America.

You will read how prisoners on death row are requesting transfer to other death row prisons, so they can plant churches there. You will understand a cup of cold water in scripture is not given by believers, but seekers. You may read the Gospel of John in a new light: seeing not only word but deed as well.

Articles

Ireland (exegetical) looks at the apparent lack of "deeds" in the Gospel of John. Lowenberg (exegetical) does a deep dive into the context of the song Paul included in 1 Timothy 3:14-16. While Trimbur (historical) researched early missionaries in Egypt.

Missiological Reflections

Miller (missiological) challenges Pentecostals to incorporate Spirit-empowerment to planting rural churches. My article on Cup of Cold water (exegetical), encourages reading these words in their context of ministering in dangerous places.

"Best of" Articles from the past decade

Kowalski (historical) remembers six missionary ladies from early Pentecost. Griffin (exegetical and cultural) looks at family through Hindu and scripture. Finally, Cantarero

(missiological) provides a new perspective on death row prisoners being missionaries to other locations where they hope to reach people and plant churches.

Farewell

It has been my joy to edit the IJPM these past five years. The authors and editors I have been privileged to work among have been tremendous. My workload at Africa's Hope and Africa Library Services does not permit me to continue to invest what is needed to continue leading this great journal, so I have asked Dr. Paul Lewis to find a replacement.

Thank you to each of our readers. I pray that this journal has been a blessing to you. I pray for the success and growth of this mouthpiece for Pentecostal missiology until Jesus comes.

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Submissions and Guidelines:
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The ***International Journal of Pentecostal Missiology*** (IJPM) is a peer-reviewed, electronic journal with periodic publication.

The IJPM seeks to facilitate the engagement, research, and investigation of missiology from within a Pentecostal perspective; to encourage thinking and interaction among Pentecostal missionaries and/or Pentecostal missions scholars; and to provide a forum for dialogue and reflection about issues current within Pentecostal Missions. These parameters allow for biblical, theological, historical, and/or missiological articulations, as well as book reviews based on relevant contemporary works.

Articles

Word and Deed in John: An Exploration of Evangelism and Ethics in the Fourth Gospel

Jerry Ireland [*]

Abstract

In this exegetical article, Ireland seeks to demonstrate that although deeds are not the obvious focus of the Gospel of John, Jesus' social concern is a part of His ushering in the messianic age. Rather than reading the fourth Gospel from a concordance perspective, it should be read from a "story authority" hermeneutic. Thus, seeing the transformation Christ makes in a life and in society, as deeds (social concern) that permeate through the book of John. Faith, which is so central to the book, is not simply a mental ascent, but results in works or doing the truth. Understanding this hermeneutic, word and deed are evident in John through new life in Christ.

Introduction

In the last one hundred years, the debate over the proper relationship between word and deed, or between proclamation of the Gospel and engagement in social concern, has been featured prominently in Western Christianity.[1] In this discussion, the central issue has been that of priority concerning the Church's proclamational-evangelistic mandate, and the church's role in social concern. To date, there has been a wide range of opinions and little consensus on the precise relationship between word and deed—or, evangelism and social concern.[2] Advocates for a balanced approach regarding social concern often make use of Luke-Acts to emphasize Jesus' concern for the poor and marginalized.[3] But if social concern is an integral part of the gospel as some have claimed,[4] then Robert Karris raises an important question: "Why doesn't John have

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much, if anything, to say about the theme of rich and poor, which Luke develops in almost every chapter of his Gospel?"[5] In this essay, we shall explore precisely this question. My contention here is that John's Gospel does indeed say much about social concern, but in a way consistent with John's own unique theological agenda, focused as it is on Jesus' ushering in the messianic age. While I have elsewhere argued for the prioritization of evangelism,[6] I want here to argue for the (simultaneous) integration of word and deed in the fourth Gospel. The equation, Word + writings/word(s)/Scripture + belief = life, is used to demonstrate this development.

Word(s) in John: Revelation of a New Creation

The Word Incarnate

John's Gospel begins with, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Here and in the remaining verses of the prologue (1:1-18), John emphasizes the incarnation of the Word, harkening back to Gen. 1:1 and the original creation. As God Incarnate, Jesus especially comes to reveal God (v. 18) but also to usher in a new creation.[7] This is in part the point of the reference to Genesis 1. Just as the original creation came about through the efficacious Word of God, so too does the Incarnate Word give birth to a new creation. To highlight this connection, John utilizes the familiar creation motifs of "light" and "life."

In addition, the use of "Word" in reference to Jesus carries other connotations as well. Relevant to this study, it refers to "divine self-expression or speech."[8] As such, this Christological designation underscores Jesus' equality with the Father, eternal existence and nature, and revelatory coming.[9] And though much has been written on the meaning of *logos* in John's prologue, it will suffice here to note that at the very least John's use of this term makes an explicit connection between Jesus the Incarnate Word, and between Israel's Scriptures and God's own verbal self-communication. So, while it is true that there is something of contextualization taking place, there is also a more fundamental issue at stake. As Francis J. Moloney observes:

> The choice of the Greek expression *ho logos*, whatever its background, allows the author to hint to the reader that from the intimacy between the Word and God which has been described, "the Word" will be spoken (*legein* or *lalein*). A word is essentially about

> communication. The modality of that communication has not been indicated, but if there is the Word, then it exists to say something.[10]

Beyond the prologue, the concept of "word" features prominently in John's Gospel. John uses two Greek terms in his Gospel for "word"—*logos* and *rhema,* without any apparent difference in meaning. Together these two terms appear 44 times in John's Gospel.[11] In addition, there are numerous references to the fulfillment of Scripture or to the fulfillment of Jesus' own words (cf. 2:17; 18:9, 32; 19:24, 28, 36-37). As just mentioned, *Logos* in the prologue (1:1-1:14) refers exclusively to Christ. But the prologue also introduces the reader to John the Baptist, who appears proclaiming Jesus as Light of the World (1:7-8) and as the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the World (1:29). Thus, the Good News as understood by John bursts forth in verbal proclamation from the very outset of his Gospel.

Elsewhere in this Gospel, *logos* refers to the words of Jesus and is at times equated with Scripture (2:22; 3:34). The word of Jesus frequently engenders belief, and in fact this is the central theme of the Gospel. "These have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name (cf. 2:22; 4:41; 4:50). Thus, closely related to the new creation concept in John's Gospel is the prominent theme of "life." As Beasley-Murray says, "the Gospel is concerned to show how the life of the new creation has become possible for the world through the Son of God."[12] In other words, John presents his audience with the equation: Word + writings/word(s)/Scripture + belief = life. The absence of belief owes to neglect of Jesus' words (5:38; 5:47). Belief in Christ's words, though, leads to life and is the mark of a true disciple. "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life" (5:24; also 4:50; 8:31; 17:8). Elsewhere He says, "the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (6:63).

In summary, the Incarnate Word, the words of Jesus, and the OT Scriptures, inextricably linked one to another form an absolutely necessary means of believing in Jesus in John's Gospel. Just as the spoken word of God brought about the original creation, so to does the Incarnate Word bring about the renewed creation. This Word-centered belief leads inexorably to life, while rejection of the Word leads to death. Thus, there exists among these three forms of the word an inherent and reciprocal connection.

Based on the revelatory nature of the Word Incarnate, and the word or words of Scripture to which Jesus so frequently both refers and fulfills, one might easily get the impression from a cursory reading of John's Gospel that *deeds*—understood as social action—in fact have no place in the Christian life, and that Christianity is defined simply as believing in Jesus, based upon his own self-revelation and the revelation of Scripture. After all, when Jesus was asked directly, "What shall we *do*, so that we may *work* the works of God?" (6:28, NASB), He replied simply, "this is the work of God, that you *believe* in Him whom [H]e has sent." Or, to put the matter more pointedly:

> Johannine Christianity is interested only in whether he believes. "Are you saved, brother?" the Johannine Christian asks the man bleeding to death on the side of the road. "Are you concerned about your soul?" "Do you believe that Jesus is the one who came down from God?" "If you believe, you will have eternal life," promises the Johannine Christian, while the dying man's blood stains the ground.[13]

Deeds in John: A New Creation Ethic of Love

As we have just seen, some have claimed that John's Gospel completely lacks any specific moral vision and is especially vague on the subject of Christian ethics. For example, Köstenberger provides a helpful summary of Wayne Meeks' take on this topic. Meeks claims that, first, the Johannine rule to "love one another" is both vague and limited to those within the Christian community. Second, Meeks states how Jesus is not presented as a model for human behavior but as rather the unique Son of God. Third, Meeks articulates how there is an undertone of subversion in John's Gospel, and this is ill-suited for an ethical foundation. Fourth, Meeks concludes it is not evidence precisely where the line exists between those inside and those outside the faith community, as the precise way in which one becomes an insider is shrouded in mystery. Finally, John's harsh language directed toward Jews fosters sectarianism.[14] For Meeks then, one must look elsewhere in the NT for an ethical imperative.

Köstenberger responds to Meeks, and argues to the contrary that John does indeed offer an ethic that can be described under the rubric, "the power of Love."[15] First, "John's moral instruction is sufficiently specific and properly in keeping with the ethical core of the OT and of Jesus' teaching."[16] Second, the foot-washing pericope in John 13 explicitly provides an instance in which Jesus models ethical behavior that is to be emulated (13:15, 17). Furthermore, the cross itself demonstrates God's own love "for the world," not just for the community of his

followers—although the latter were especially loved by Jesus. Third, as to the notion of subversion, "love is the glue that holds the ethic of this gospel together"[17] and those things Meeks deems subversion are merely "literary devices" meant to highlight the many paradoxes surrounding Jesus' life and ministry. Fourth, Meeks overplays his hand on the issue of human free will and predestination or election, as the two are commonly held together.[18] Finally, regarding John's references to "the Jews" this should be taken, as Miroslav Volf has observed, as referencing primarily Jewish authorities and thus those opposed to Jesus and His mission.[19] Therefore, the apparent hostility in this gospel is not toward a race of people, but toward those who exhibit a decisively negative attitude toward Jesus and His mission. Plus, John's Gospel "shows that Jesus died for the very Jews who had him crucified" (Cf. 11:49-50). That said, "it is hard to imagine a more powerful demonstration of an ethic that preaches love for one's enemies."[20]

How We Read the Fourth Gospel

From these stances, Köstenberger goes on to advocate that John's moral vision is to be equated with: "a call to evangelistic mission that is grounded in God's love for the world and undergirded by communal love and unity." As such, Köstenberger believes John's moral vision to be "unique and distinctive," but also complimentary to that found in the synoptics. While Köstenberger's advocating for an ethical component to the Fourth Gospel is commendable, his equation of that mandate with the evangelistic task does not appear to do justice to the full scope of the text itself. And this, I believe, is in part due to some of his hermeneutical assumptions.

To illustrate this point, some scholars have seen in John a very clear moral mandate that extends beyond the evangelistic task. For example, by taking a "story authority" approach to John's Gospel—that is by approaching John as an invitation to see oneself in the story, or by trying to understand how one lives out the story, Hans Boersma claims that the ethical demands of this Gospel become more readily apparent.[21] To support approaching the text in this manner, Boersma cites the work of N. T. Wright, whose similar approach "takes into account the gains of the postmodern critique of the Enlightenment naïve realist epistemology without falling into the trap of relativism."[22] Robert Karris makes a similar argument when he says, "Close scrutiny of John's *stories* will reward us with more contributions to our theme of Jesus and the marginalized than any number of concordance studies."[2324] Boersma, for his part, advocates approaching the

text in a holistic manner in order to discover holistic truth: "An approach that takes its starting point in a dualist separation between theory and practice—between theology and ethics—will indeed look in vain for explicit social or ethical applications of the doctrines set forth in the fourth Gospel."[25]

As Craig Koester says, "the [g]ospel of John is written in a way that invites the reader into the story."[26] In other words, Scripture cannot simply be looked at, as Wright says, "a running commentary" on what God has done, but rather "Scripture is there to be a means of God's action in and through us—which will include, but go far beyond, the mere conveying of information."[27] For Israel, revelation was dynamic owing to the firm belief in God's activity in human history. Wright goes on to say that mining Scripture for mere data or propositions alone is an unfortunate consequence of the Enlightenment. Therefore:

> A fully Christian view of the Bible includes the idea of God's self-revelation but, by setting it in a larger context, transforms it. Precisely because the God who reveals himself is the world's lover and judge, rather than its absentee landlord, that self-revelation is always to be understood within the category of God's mission to the world, God's saving sovereignty let loose through Jesus and the Spirit and aimed at the healing and renewal of all creation.[28]

Or, as Richard Hayes says,

> The ethical significance of the New Testament narratives cannot be restricted to their didactic content. John, even more pointedly than the other [g]ospels, shows that a fuller reading of the story is necessary in order to grasp its implications for shaping the life of the Christian community.[29]

New Creation and the Moral Implications of John

Beginning then with this hermeneutical axiom of reading Scripture as an invitation to embody the story, Boersma calls for looking to John's sign (Gr. *semeion*) theology. Whereas Kostenberger thinks that John's love ethic lies especially in chapters 13-17, beginning with the foot-washing incident of chapter 13 and culminating in the Farewell Discourse of 15:9-17, Boersma says that one must "look behind" these passages, to the book of signs (chapters 2-12). Otherwise, the reader runs the risk of missing the larger context and the important theological foundation of these latter passages:

> It is the book of signs that describes the arrival of the new age, as well as its rejection by the world.[13] A biblically centered worldview, therefore, is one that bases itself not on a love command erroneously abstracted from the biblical narrative. Instead, it is necessary

> to do justice first to the narrative of the book of signs prior to an exploration of the book of glory. It is important, therefore, to carefully trace the story of the book of signs in order to arrive at a worldview consistent with the Gospel of John.[30]

Far from arguing that the "signs" of Jesus represent model behavior, Boersma instead shows that Jesus' signs in the first half of the Gospel signify the dawning of a new, messianic age. First though, Boersma argues that John's understanding of "signs" derives from the OT, in particular those of the Exodus. Furthermore, signs in the OT functioned in three ways, generally. They performed a redemptive role, a legitimizing role, and a parenetic or hortatory role. Just as the signs performed by Moses had a redemptive function in that they led to the freedom of the Israelites, as well as how they also functioned to authenticate Moses' role and ultimately produce faith in God, Jesus' signs likewise indicate a new exodus and affirm Jesus' as God's chosen deliverer, ultimately meant to produce faith in God as well.

In light of this OT understanding then, Jesus's activities in the beginning of the Fourth Gospel become particularly important. The wedding in Cana (2:1-11) then represents the dawning of the new age, as Jesus "changes the water of the Torah into the wine of the messianic age."[31] Likewise, the so-called temple cleansing (2:12-22) functions as a repudiation of the former sacrificial system, no longer needed because it has been fulfilled in Jesus. Both of these incidents though culminate in Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus, and the promise of new life. In this encounter, Jesus "points out to Nicodemus that the new age has dawned. In order to see or to enter the kingdom of God, one needs to be born from above; one needs to be born of 'water and Spirit' (3:5). Clearly the latter expression evokes prophetic images of the new age."[32] The encounter ultimately issues in a call for faith. However, the faith called for "is not simply intellectual assent. It is trust that involves *works* that can stand the light (3:20); it is a trust that involves *doing* the truth (3:21)."[33] Faith understood in this way proves crucial to discerning a Johannine ethic. Faith is not belief divorced from action, but rather belief that produces action. The entire Nicodemus discourse ends not in a call to an intellectual or ephemeral recognition of right doctrine, but rather in the declaration that coming to the Light means practicing the truth (3:21). Though Jesus is certainly not teaching a works salvation here, He does seem to be saying that one who is in Christ "does deeds" that evidence that relationship. Given the preceding discussions of the new age, new temple and now new birth, this too then reflects the characteristic nature of the dawning messianic age. As Richard Burridge observes, "the

overriding theme [is] the love of God, coming to dwell among human beings in the person of Jesus of Nazareth and to teach his divine truth. The incarnation inaugurates the eschatological age and makes eternal life present in the here and now."[34]

In addition to this point, there are other aspects of John's Gospel that demonstrate the qualities of the dawning new age in which Jesus and his followers participates. Three prominent themes especially help the reader of John's Gospel to formulate a relevant moral ethic, namely the Johannine understanding of the terms *World*, *Work*, and *Life*.

World. For John, the "world" (Gr. *kosmos*) is neither the subject of wholesale denigration nor sufficiently good in its present state. In fact, John uses the term with a variety of meaning. Sometimes the word is used in a negative sense, and other times it refers to simply all people everywhere. Positively, Christ comes not to judge the world but to save it (3:16-17; 10:36; 12:47). But as Jesus' mission progresses, the "world" becomes increasingly hostile to Jesus and His message (12:31; 14:17, 30).[35] Therefore, despite that John has no romantic notions about the realities of the world and its attitude toward Jesus, nonetheless the "world" yet stands primarily as "the object of the mission of God's love."[36]

Work. This dawning new age in John also has much to say about the Sabbath, the Torah, and thereby about works. Jesus himself was frequently criticized for the "works" He performed on the Sabbath (cf. 5:9-10, 16, 18; 9:1-41), and we shall have more to say about this later. But for now, it will suffice to note that in bringing about a new age, Jesus ushered in an eternal Sabbath—"the age in which the lame and blind find wholeness according to Scriptures."[37] From this point, the Torah should be understood as pointing to Jesus as its ultimate fulfillment. While only Jesus as the Divine Son of God could usher in the new age and bring about a new understanding of the Sabbath, the all-encompassing nature of this age surely has implications for Jesus' followers in relation to "work." Namely, "Christians celebrate Sabbath as they do the works of Jesus who sends them into the world" (cf. 9:4 with 17:18).[38]

The point in all of this is that Jesus' works become a vital and essential expression of the new messianic age. "Work" (Gr. *ergon*) featured prominently in Jesus' own ministry. "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work" (John 4:4; cf. 5:17). Jesus also says that his followers will do even greater "works" (14:12). This simply means that Jesus' disciples are to follow in these works that reflect the characteristics of the new age. While the "signs" in John's [g]ospel are unique to Jesus, the "works" of Jesus become the prerogative

of his disciples. “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to the Father” (14:12).

Life. Doing “the works of God” is tantamount to belief in Jesus (6:28-29). However, it is not only “belief” that is the objective of John’s Gospel, but more precisely “belief” leading to new “life.”[39] “Life,” though, must be understood in John’s Gospel in terms of a relationship with God.[40] John’s ethic is a relational ethic that centers on the person of Jesus.[41] Thus “belief” and “works” form an integral whole, whose object is “life.” As van der Watt has said:

> Salvific faith in the [g]ospel of John is therefore a self-sacrificing, intellectual, and existential acceptance of the message and person of Jesus to the extent that it completely transforms a person’s thoughts and deeds in accordance with this message and leads to an obedient life of doing what a child of God should do.[42]

Those who fail to recognize Jesus and believe in Him, engage in “evil works” (7:7; 8:41). Therefore, “belief” in John cannot be simply the acquisition of right beliefs, but rather right belief requires the expression of and embodiment of Jesus’ own life and teachings, especially as they relate to the messianic age He inaugurates. And “life” in John’s Gospel has both physical as well as spiritual elements.[43] Furthermore, the life Jesus promises concerns both the future and the present (5:25). As Boersma explains, “anybody who is of the opinion that to embody the story in ordinary life is not a Johannine concern will have to give a reckoning of the prominence of work terminology in this Gospel.”[44]

So, what does the embodiment of the messianic age look like, specifically? This is of course the crucial question, and one that some believe John leaves unanswered. Not so, however. Several incidents in John’s Gospel highlight Jesus’ concern for the marginalized of society, and thus stand out as “works” of a social nature. Richard Burridge, for example, shows that Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well in chapter four, the woman caught in adultery in chapter eight,[45] the paralyzed man by the pool in chapter five, and the blind man in chapter nine, all constitute examples of Jesus seeking out the marginalized of society and bringing them to the Light and to the Truth. Thus, though differing from the synoptic portrayal of Jesus as “friend of sinners,” John’s “biographical portrait of Jesus, and especially the way he seeks out and helps those in need on the margins, is very consistent with it, as the incarnate divine love reaches out to everyone.”[46]

Conclusion

My aim in this study has been to show that not only is it false to say that John lacks a moral vision, but also to argue that John presents only a thoroughly integrated pictures of word and deed as the proper framework for a Christian moral vision. John's treatment of Christ as the Incarnate Word, Who came to reveal God and speak words of life, that those who believe in Him would pass from death into life, lays the foundation for defining discipleship as *being in intimate relationship with Jesus and thereby participating in life that embodies the messianic age He inaugurates*. That relationship then results in a life that shows forth the same good works that characterized the life of Jesus, in both proclaiming the words of God and demonstrating that word in concrete performances of the new age. Sharing the gospel, therefore, is not about merely sharing information, but about sharing God's love for the world, by making known the truth found in Jesus and the life that comes from the embodiment of that truth.[47] In John's Gospel, then:

> Actions cannot be separated from identity and the one flows naturally into the other, so much so that accepting Jesus in faith becomes the primary ethical action in John. Faith leads to a life encompassing change that determines all facets of a person's present and future life.[48]

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[1] For an excellent and brief history and evaluation of this phenomenon, see David O. Moberg, *The Great Reversal: Evangelism Versus Social Concern* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1972).

[2] For example, Tokunboh Adeyemo identifies nine different models in "A Critical Evaluation of Contemporary Perspectives," in *In Word and Deed: Evangelism and Social Responsibility*, ed. Bruce J. Nichols (Devon, UK: Patternoster Press, 1985), 41-61.

[3] Perhaps the most thorough treatment of the social-ethical role of the Spirit in Luke-Acts is found in Matthias Wenk, *Community Forming Power: The Socio-Ethical Role of the Spirit in Luke-Acts* (London: T&T Clark International, 2000). The Lukan basis for Jesus' social ethic is usually founded on Luke 4:18-19, and thereby Jesus' citation of Isa. 61:1-2 and the reference there to Israel's Jubilee. See Sharon H. Ringe, *Jesus, Liberation, and the Biblical Jubilee: Images for Ethics and Christology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1985).

[4] For example, Ron Sider argues that while evangelism has a logical priority in that Christian social concern presupposes the existence of Christians, this point does not automatically lead to a practical priority. See Ron Sider, *Good News and Good Works*, Kindle ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011); *Making Christ Known: Historic Missions Documents from the Lausanne Movement, 1974-1989*, ed. John R. W. Stott (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

[5] Robert J. Karris, *Jesus and the Marginalized in John's Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 9.

[6] See Jerry M. Ireland, *The Missionary Spirit: Evangelism and Social Action in Pentecostal Missiology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2021).

[7] Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, Biblical Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 338.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid. Also, as Köstenberger observes, though not particularly important to this study, the *Logos* concept contextualizes Jesus for a Hellenistic audience.

[10] Francis J. Moloney, *Belief in the Word: Reading John 1-4* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 30. Also Craig Koester: "A word is a form of address, a means of engagement. To say, 'In the beginning was the Word' is to say that in the beginning is God's act of communication. Without communication God remains unknown and unknowable. For the [g]ospel to say anything about God means that God must first disclose something of himself."

Craig R. Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel*, Kindle ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 25-26.

[11] Though in two of these instances (4:39; 11:3), "word" refers to merely human words.

[12] G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Gospel of Life: Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 4.

[13] Jack T. Sanders, *Ethics in the New Testament: Change and Development* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 100. Cited in Hans Boersma, "A New Age Love Story: Worldview and Ethics in the Gospel of John,"*Calvin Theological Journal* 38, no. 1 (2003): 104.

[14] Köstenberger, 510-511.

[15] Ibid., 514.

[16] Ibid., 511.

[17] Ibid., 512.

[18] Ibid. Here Köstenberger mentions as one example, Carson's *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibilit*y, and the argument for 'compatibilism." See D. A. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981).

[19] Kostenberger, 513, citing Miroslav Volf, "Johannine Dualism and Contemporary Pluralism,"*Modern Theology* 21, no. 2 (2005): 198-200.

[20] Köstenberger, 513. In his citing of Volf, Köstenberger summarizes five points that Volf makes in his rebuttal to Meeks. For the sake of brevity, I have only included here what I think are the most salient points of the argument as they relate to this present study.

[21] Boersma, "A New Age Love Story: Worldview and Ethics in the Gospel of John," 105. The question this raises is, do the writer's of Scripture ever present such an approach? The answer is "yes," and this point is well made by Graham Twelftree in relation to the open-endedness of Luke-Acts. Twelftree, citing several ancient writers, including Herodotus and Lucretius, points out that open-ended narratives in the ancient world were often employed as in an invitation for the reader to see their own story as a continuation of the literary narrative, and that this is precisely the point of the open ending of Luke-Acts. See Graham H. Twelftree, *People of the Spirit: Exploring Luke's View of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic 2009), 43. See also Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004).

[22] Ibid. N12. N. T. Wright, "How Can the Bible Be Authoritative,"*Vox Evangelica* 21, (1991). Also, Köstenberger, though without making any reference to Boersma's article, does seem to have something similar in mind when he argues against an "incarnational approach" to Jesus' ethical teachings. Köstenberger, for example, proposes that one should primarily "discern doctrine on the basis of didactic passages … rather than narrative passages," Köstenberger, 518. But such an approach fosters a canon within the canon, elevating certain genres of the biblical text above others, and seems to directly contradict the "explicit" teaching of 1 Tim. 3:16, and the emphasis there on "all" Scripture. As William Klein et. al. observes, this realization is precisely what has led Gordon Fee and Douglas Steward to amend their warning against seeking normative demands from narrative portions of Scripture. They have altered that warning in later editions of their book*, How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth,* to include the phrase, "unless it can be demonstrated on other grounds that the author intended it to function in this way." Klein, et. al. also points out by way of example, surely parables, which are always found in narrative passages, though not directly didactic, function primarily to either foster or forbid certain types of behavior; Cited in William W. Klein et al., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, Rev. & expanded. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 424. See also

Gordon D. Fee and Douglas K. Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993). In addition, I would add that Evangelicals derive doctrine from narrative portions of Scripture quite frequently but tend to employ this argument against conclusions that the group do not particularly like. For example, the Evangelical doctrine of Scripture in its most famous defenses has depended heavily on Jesus' teachings in narrative portions of Scripture (i.e. the Gospels), for example, consider Robert P. Lightner, *The Savior and the Scriptures: A Case for Scriptural Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1966). And Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1948). Finally, we might add that Jesus Himself used narrative portions of the OT for didactic purposes (see Mt. 12:1-8).

[24] Karris, 19. *Emphasis added*.

[25] Boersma, "A New Age Love Story: Worldview and Ethics in the Gospel of John," 105. Köstenberger, again without reference to Boersma's work, issues a fairly strong warning against attempts that derive moral imperatives from Jesus' "signs." But Köstenberger's aversion to this sort of incarnational understanding of a Johannine moral ethic does not apply here, since this is clearly not what Boersma has in mind. See ibid., 106ff; Köstenberger, 516.

[26] Koester, *The Word of Life,* 2.

[27] N. T. Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today*, Kindle ed. (Harper Collins E-Books, n.d.), 28.

[28] Ibid., 29.

[29] Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 140.

[30] Boersma, "A New Age Love Story: Worldview and Ethics in the Gospel of John," 106.

[31] Ibid., 107.

[32] Ibid., 109.

[33] Ibid., 110. *Emphasis added*.

[34] Richard A. Burridge, *Imitating Jesus: An Inclusive Approach to New Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2007), 335.

[35] Ibid., 332.

[36] Ibid., 334.

[37] Boersma, "A New Age Love Story: Worldview and Ethics in the Gospel of John," 112.

[38] Ibid., 112-113.

[39] Koester, 54.

[40] Ibid., 31.

[41] J. G. van der Watt, “The Gospel of John's Perception of Ethical Behavior,”*In die Skriflig* 45, no. 2 & 3 (2011): 443.

[42] Ibid., 436.

[43] See Koester, 31.

[44] Boersma, "A New Age Love Story: Worldview and Ethics in the Gospel of John," 115.

[45] Burridge is not arguing here for the authenticity of this pericope, only that it is consistent with other material in John. Burridge, 337.

[46] Ibid., 339.

[47] Sider, 123. This argument differs from my argument in Missionary Spirit in that there I am focusing on precisely the priority of evangelism as a cross-cultural enterprise. Here the argument refers more broadly to the life of the believer and the essence of discipleship.

[48] van der Watt, "The Gospel of John's Perception of Ethical Behavior," 444.

"Pay Attention to the Words of the Song:" 1 Timothy 3:16

Douglas P. Lowenberg*

Abstract

Songs, hymns, and creeds are occasionally inserted into Scripture by the author as a sub-genre to emphasize some aspect of the message. This study focuses on the Christ hymn found in 1 Timothy 3:14-16. Some interpreters take such songs and interpret them as an independent Christological statement, but this approach seems to miss the author's intentions for the words of the song. This article attempts to analyze the 6 lines of the majestic song to determine the meaning of its words and phrases that speak specifically to the historical context in Ephesus at the time of the writing.

Key Words:

commissive language, stanzas, dative, genitive, parallelism

Introduction

When the Spirit-inspired apostle Paul selected an existent hymn[1] or composed a song or poetic, credal statement to insert in the text of one of his epistles, he must have believed this artistic piece of literature with its distinct lyrics, assonance, and commissive language[2] would contribute significantly to the thrust of his written communication supplementing his normal narrative prose style. One of his best-known songs is the Christ hymn[3] of Philippians 2:6-11, which elaborated his message to the believers in Philippi appealing to them to emulate the love and humility of Christ so that they would preserve unity among the believers and maintain a dynamic gospel witness in their pagan environment. He considered that the poetic form and content of the hymn were the most effective ways to convey his intentions.

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There is another song Paul[4] employed, found in 1 Timothy 3:16, which can be properly understood only by carefully examining its content within the literary and historical context of the epistle. To isolate the content of the song from the historical context of the first recipients, examining its lyrics and poetic form as an abstract Christological statement, is to miss Paul's purpose for the song in this ad hoc epistle.[5] Jeannine Brown observes, "Meaning is always contextually situated."[6] As the hymn is studied, one must look to see if there are direct references in the song to the historical context described in the epistle. This essay will attempt to discover the meaning of the Christ hymn and its relevance for the church in Ephesus.[7]

The Text[8]

The complete thought unit leading up to and including the song reads:

Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the[9] pillar and foundation of the truth. Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great:

> He[10] appeared in a body,
> was vindicated by the Spirit,
> was seen by angels,
> was preached among the nations,
> was believed on in the world,
> was taken up in glory.[11]
> (1 Timothy 3:14-16 NIV)

The Historical Context of the Epistle

An essential consideration for understanding the song is an examination of the church's historical context in Ephesus with special attention given to the false teachers.[12] The heterodox instruction[13] that was destroying the faith of some and blemishing the public witness of the gospel was being propagated by insiders, Ephesian elders, who had defected from the faith, a fact prophesied earlier by Paul (Acts 20:29-30). It is generally assumed that the false teachers were

converted Jews[14] who were syncretizing Christian doctrine, Hellenistic Judaism, Mosaic Law, Greek dualism and asceticism, local magic,[15] and materialism[16]—a strange amalgamation of beliefs and practices that seems to be self-contradictory in some cases when blended together. Paul described their doctrine as "falsely called knowledge" (1 Tim. 6:20) which was spreading like "gangrene" (2 Tim. 2:17). Clearly, all the features of their teaching cannot be explained from a traditional Jewish perspective. And certain aspects of their distortions had manifest themselves previously in other regions of the Mediterranean which Paul confronted in his epistles to Corinth,[17] Colosse,[18] and Ephesus.[19]

Like "savage wolves" (Acts 20:29), these men were destroying the faith of some who were disciples of a ministry Paul himself led and expanded during his three years of residence in Ephesus (Acts 20:31). And while Paul was building up the Ephesian church, he strategically sent missional ambassadors to declare the gospel to "all the Jews and Gentiles who lived in the province of Asia" (19:10). Now, years later when revisiting the city, Paul was confronted with the poisonous influence of false teachers who were not only "distorting the truth in order to draw away disciples after them" (20:31), but also these opponents practiced and condoned lifestyles that undermined the gospel witness before a vast pagan audience in the city and region.[20]

Paul was so provoked by the presence and destructive content of these teachers that he commissioned Timothy to remain in Ephesus. Timothy was to serve as his apostolic representative, silence their teachings while countering it with a powerful proclamation of the truth of the gospel, appoint godly leaders to pastor and safeguard the churches,[21] set an example for all the saints to follow, and instruct the believers in how they were to conduct themselves in the church of the living God, while at home and at work in the marketplace.[22] Leaving Timothy in Ephesus and moving onward to Macedonia (1 Tim. 1:3), Paul remained deeply concerned over the situation in the Ephesian churches. His irritation is evident as he writes Timothy leaving out his normal greeting section in the letter to immediately address the critical concerns at hand.

While Paul did not elaborate explicitly regarding the identity[23] of the opponents nor expose all the errors of their teachings and immoral conduct, there is enough information in his exhortations to Timothy to summarize the general content of their attractive deception (2 Tim. 4:3). Having "wandered from" and "rejected" the truth (1 Tim. 1:6; 6:10, 21; 1:19), "abandoned the faith" (4:1), and "been robbed of the truth" (6:5), Paul's opponents were following deceiving spirits and embracing concepts taught by demons (4:1).[24] Their calloused hearts and seared

consciences allowed them to confidently proclaim false doctrine as hypocritical liars (4:2; 1:7; 6:4). Based on what Paul prophesied earlier, the false teachers were bent on “drawing away disciples after them.” They did not hesitate to “distort the truth” to gain a following (Acts 20:30). Apparently, they were successful in their efforts which depleted the church of Christ’s faithful followers.

To establish their preeminence among church leaders, they pursued “endless genealogies” (1 Tim. 1:4), which exalted and defended their status as authentic, historical leaders in the community.[25] Andrew E. Hill observes, “The purpose of genealogies generally is to … legitimize an individual or familial claim to some position of leadership or service.”[26] Paul provided no details on their genealogical explorations, but there seem to be two possible reasons for this ceaseless investigation depending on their ethnic identity. The false teachers may have been Hellenistic Christian Jews,[27] whose families had lived in the diaspora for decades. After coming to faith in Christ, they had wandered from Paul’s gospel and determined to impose Mosaic Law and Jewish cultural practices on the Christian community.[28] Their distance, in terms of time and geography from Israel and from orthodox Jewish teaching, resulted in their ineptitude in explaining the content of and purpose for the Law. As self-professed teachers, they were trying to fabricate a familial connection with one of the tribes of Israel based on genealogical records to secure their status as qualified instructors of the Law.

On the other hand, the false teachers may have been Hellenistic Gentiles[29] who converted to Christianity but then succumbed to the teachings of Judaizers, which then led to their mélange of Greek dualism, Christian doctrine, Mosaic Law, and local mysticism.[30] For example, the name of one of the opponents, Hymenaeus, has never been documented as a Jew.[31] They were influenced by a Jewish, ethnic, exclusivism and became extremists, zealous for their new, blended faith. Even though they were Gentiles, they investigated genealogies in the Pentateuch[32] to unearth mythical connections between themselves and the people of Israel.[33] In either case, whether the opponents were Jews or Gentiles, they were attempting to elevate their status as legitimate teachers and broaden their influence in these churches founded by Paul.

In contrast to their fanciful heritage that supposedly qualified them for spiritual leadership, Paul presented himself as an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command and will of God (1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1), appointed to the service of Christ by the Lord himself (1 Tim. 1:12).[34] As the worst of all sinners, a confession that stood in radical contrast to the self-proclaimed

righteousness of the opponents, Paul experienced an abundant outpouring of grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus the Lord (1:15, 14, 2). He was entrusted with the "glorious gospel" (1:11), which he offered to all who would believe in Christ (1:16). Paul's Christian identity was based on his membership in the spiritual family of God, "God's household" (3:15), where the Sovereign King was his "Father" and where relationships and conduct with others were governed by "love" springing from a "pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1:5).

What were the major tenets[35] of the false teachers, and could their erroneous emphases have influenced Paul in the selection of the Christ hymn? There were Jewish components to their faith system, but the propagators lacked expertise in their understanding of the Mosaic Law.[36] While they wanted to be teachers of the law, "they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm" (1:7). In emphasizing law, they appear to have minimized the redemptive role of Christ in "uprighting" people before God. Paul declared that the law (νόμος), which the opponents stressed, was good and that there was a place for the law in the Christian faith if it was used lawfully (νομίμως)[37] (1:8; 2 Tim. 2:5; Rom. 7:12, 16).

Paul believed the law glorified God as holy, the Creator, Savior, and Judge (1:1, 17; 2:10; 4:3; 2 Tim. 4:1). The law revealed God as the living God (ὁ θεός ζῶν), present and working among his people (1 Tim. 3:15). The law compelled his people to offer the Lord all their worship, love, loyalty, and obedience. The law declared the truth that God provided grace, mercy, peace, and forgiveness, but this reconciliation came through faith in God and his provision of salvation, not through the keeping of the law (1:2, 16; 3:15; 6:17) or maintaining a Jewish cultural identity. For Paul, the law recorded the history of God establishing his covenant with the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob whom he unilaterally delivered from bondage in Egypt. The purpose for the nation was that they might know God experientially and worship Him; bear witness in word and deed to the nations of the holiness and supremacy of their God, YHWH; and be a conduit of blessing as they ushered the Savior of all people into the world (Gen 3:15; 12:3; Isa 9:6; Gal 3:8; Eph 2:17).

Paul asserted that the law established boundaries intended to restrain God's people from conforming to the sinful ways of the pagan nations. These divinely ordained limits set his people apart in terms of their faith, worship, and moral conduct. But their repeated transgressions of God's law made it abundantly apparent that "unregenerate people [did] not have the ability to do

what is good . . . the power of sin [was] stronger than the law.”[38] The law was powerless to upright God’s people morally and enable them to obey him. “The law was not the source of life.”[39]

Thomas R. Schreiner[40] summarizes what could be considered the lawful purpose of the law. First, the law had a “convicting function,” revealing that humankind without the Holy Spirit was incapable of living in right relationship with God. The basis of acceptance by God was repentance from sin and faith in him as a loving and merciful God who provided forgiveness, uprightness, and fellowship with himself. Second, the law had a “prophetic function” revealing God’s promise to send his Servant, the Messiah, the Son, and Seed—the Savior who would provide blessings for all the nations.

It seems one of the unlawful uses of the law promulgated by the opponents was to compel their Jewish followers to maintain their distinct ethnic identity and adhere to cultural norms that promoted separation from Gentiles. Gentiles, who converted to Christ and later followed the false teachers were expected to live Jewishly, adopted a Jewish cultural lifestyle, and upheld Old Testament commands including dietary laws such as abstaining from certain foods (4:3). The opponents’ views of the dietary laws corresponded with early Jewish Christian beliefs exhibited by Peter in Acts 10:13-14, who, in spite of Christ’s teaching on dietary liberation (Mark 7:19), held to Old Covenant restrictions, which thus divided Christian Jews from Gentile seekers (Acts 10:28).

The false teachers attempted to keep their followers from transgressing God’s law (1:9-10). The focus was more on the immoral conduct to be avoided and only to be maintained, rather than investing toward the Spirit-filled and Spirit-led life to be lived. These identity markers of their group exhibited a Jewish lifestyle and started by avoiding sinful behaviors (1:9-11). For Paul, the ultimate identity markers of those made righteous by Christ were “love” and humility, neither of which were observable among the opponents (1:5, 7; 6:4).[41] He may have drawn his reference to love from the heart of the law, the *Shema*: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deut 6:5), and reinforced by Christ’s declaration of the greatest commandment: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart . . . soul . . . mind . . . and the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt 22:37-39). Love fulfilled the law.

The teachings of the opponents replaced the declaration of the gospel and marginalized the centrality of Christ. These teachers of law undoubtedly regarded Moses and the angels as the mediators between humankind and the high and holy God.[42] Guthrie comments, "Jewish transcendental theology demanded an efficient mediatorial system to bridge the ever-widening gap between man and God."[43] He adds, "In Jewish thought angels performed mediatorial function in relation to the law."[44]

To counter this doctrinal wandering, Paul highlighted the Person of Jesus Christ who "came into the world to save sinners." He stressed that Christ Jesus entered the created order as a human being, a "man," "appearing" visibly and tangibly (1 Tim. 1:15; 2:5; 2 Tim. 1:10). Paul emphasized the humanness of the divine mediator who bridged the gap between a holy God and sinful people,[45] the only mediator between humankind and God (1 Tim. 2:5). Christ Jesus was their hope (1:1; 4:9) and their Lord (1:2, 12). He was the Savior of all (4:10) who gave himself as a ransom for all people, including Jews and Gentiles (2:6-7). He displayed unlimited patience, love, and mercy towards sinners, lawbreakers, and rebels who had transgressed God's law. Jesus came to save sinners, not the righteous. And while Jesus was no longer with them physically, he was in them through the presence of the Holy Spirit and would one day return and appear again (2 Tim. 4:1, 8).

Paul argued that the man, Christ Jesus, served as the only mediator. As for God's angels, they were an "unseen presence" serving and observing believers, noting their righteous judgments (5:21), stressing the believers' accountability to God, but contributing nothing to Christ's work of salvation.[46] G. W. Bromiley made this observation about angels, "They do not do the real work of reconciliation, which is Christ's prerogative … Jesus had to tread his way of atoning self-giving alone."[47]

For Paul, acceptance by God did not come through adherence to the law, Jewish ethnicity, or living according to Jewish cultural norms and sensibilities, but by faith in the Person and work of Jesus Christ.[48] Repeatedly Paul spoke of the necessity of faith in Christ as the means for entering and abiding in God's Kingdom. His own transformation served as "an example for those who would believe on him" (1:16). This worst of all sinners (1:15) experienced God's mercy and forgiveness and had entered God's Kingdom through faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. The advancement and promotion of God's work was "by faith" (1:4). "God is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe" (4:10). Timothy exemplified a model for the believers

in his faith (4:12). Paul confidently confessed, “I know in whom I have believed and am convinced that he is able” (2 Tim. 1:12).

When readers note the multiple references Paul made to the inclusiveness of the gospel, for both Jew and Greek, it appears he was offsetting the false teachers’ message of an exclusive salvation for the Jews.[49] Paul responded: “[God] wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth … [Christ Jesus] gave himself as a ransom for all men … For this purpose, I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth. I am not lying—and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles” (2:4, 6, 7).[50]

The misled teachers appeared to blend their commitment to Mosaic Law with Hellenistic dualism to the deceived people. They considered the spirit good and matter evil.[51] They forbade people to marry and ordered them to abstain from certain foods (4:3). This perspective seems quite contrary to the Hebrew Bible, which portrayed God creating man and woman in his own image, blessing them, and calling them to be fruitful, increase in number, and fill the earth (Gen 1:26-28). Regarding diet, in the beginning all seed-bearing plants and fruit were their food (1:29). But the Ephesian teachers viewed marriage, conjugal relationships, physical pleasure, and certain foods as evil, creaturely, and of the flesh.[52] The human body, at best, was a matter of indifference and functioned as the vehicle for the spirit.[53] Moral constraints were not crucial because the body would perish. The body, at worst, was evil and needed to be treated harshly, severely limiting its behavior.[54]

Coupling this ascetic view with the errant belief that “the resurrection had already taken place” (2 Tim. 2:18), the opponents adopted an over-realized eschatology. The false teachers earnestly believed they were already living the existence of angels.[55] Before being enlightened by their mixed blend of doctrine, they acknowledged they were spiritually dead. But after being instructed to accept their heterodox creed, they came alive in their spirits. They believed they had already experienced spiritual resurrection—no further physical resurrection was needed. They had become angel-like where gender distinctions were irrelevant. Holding these views led them to teach the emancipation of women from social standards, which later became a part of their corrupt, created order.[56] The basis of their message could have emerged from a mystical interpretation of Jesus’ answer to the Sadducees when asked about marriage in heaven: “When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven” (Mark 12:25). Thus, marriage was considered to be carnal, conjugal relationships and as

inappropriate, and childbearing impossible.[57] It seems this teaching was most readily received by some women in the church who were committed to spreading the deception further.[58] Wives, now living the life of angels as authentic spiritual people, were to avoid conjugal relationships with their husbands. This teaching in Corinth resulted in Christian husbands succumbing to the temptation of cohabitating with prostitutes (1 Cor 6-7). In Ephesus, Paul's repeated plea was for moral purity, marital faithfulness, and proper respect within the marriage (1 Tim. 3:2, 12; 5:2, 22; Eph 5:21-33).

When it came to their teaching regarding godly character, conduct, and attitudes, this group-imposed rules but did not address the need for ethical love and respect. Their conceit led to division, strife, quarrelling, envy, slander, and suspicion (6:4). In a milieu of conflict, Paul needed to exhort the believers, "I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger and disputing" (2:8).

Their seared consciences, hypocrisy, and dualistic asceticism allowed them to preach ascetic restraint, on one hand, while being greedy for financial gain, on the other (6:5-10).[59] Likewise, while disdaining the flesh and preaching against marriage, they had sexually taken advantage of women in the church, especially young widows (5:4, 15). Of these teachers, Paul warned: "They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires" (2 Tim. 3:6). Paul admonished Timothy to pursue absolute purity in his relationships with younger women (5:2; 4:12), and he called for younger widows to marry and bear children (5:14).

While the false teachers were indoctrinated by and followed deceiving spirits and demons, true Christians sought the voice of the Holy Spirit, warning them of hypocritical liars (4:1). The Spirit lived in the followers of Christ, gave them discernment of the truth and deception, enabled them to uphold the truth, and empowered them to live uprightly before God and people (2 Tim. 1:14). True believers collectively represented the temple of God (1 Tim. 3:15) where God's Spirit dwelt (1 Cor. 6:19). With regards to the false teachers, they made no mention of the Holy Spirit. Paul taught elsewhere that the Spirit was not present in the lives of unbelievers (compare Rom 7 with Rom 8). They lived under the enslaving power of sin and were incapable of doing God's will.

The heresy of the false teachers in Ephesus was complex and deceitful. It attracted many and caused believers to wander from the gospel. The truth of the gospel was compromised; the

attractiveness of the gospel was distorted. Silencing the elders who boldly propagated this errant message with its perverse lifestyle was Timothy's top priority.

The Literary Context of the Hymn

Having looked at the historical situation in Ephesus giving special attention to the content and conduct of the false teachers, our focus will narrow to the paragraph containing the song (3:14-16). In these verses Paul described the occasion and purpose for the epistle.[60] While he was occupied elsewhere personally addressing other apostolic issues, Paul maintained great concern for the church and his emissary in Ephesus. He desired to return and work alongside Timothy to squelch the false teaching and proclaim the true gospel, but he recognized his plan to travel back to Ephesus could be delayed.[61] However, the fragility of the spiritual climate in the Ephesian church could not wait for his personal intervention or be dependent on him alone. In light of this uncertainty, he drafted the apostolic missive[62] of 1 Timothy commissioning his official representative to exert greater zeal in confronting the false elders embedded in the church and exerting a very destructive influence on the faith of believers and the witness of the gospel to unbelievers. He also wanted to use the epistle to publicly convey greater apostolic authority on his young ambassador which would serve to encourage Timothy and influence the church leaders and congregants to heed Timothy's instructions. It was mandatory that Timothy and the church recognize their critical role and responsibility as the people of God in the city of Ephesus and in the province of Asia.

Paul states that his chief purpose for writing was to call attention to the conduct (ἀναστρέφω)[63] of the members of God's household (οἶκος) and not only among family members but as God's witnesses in the environment of Ephesus.[64] He sought to alert them to the fact that God had claims on and expectations for the behavior of his people.[65] Character and conduct, along with sound doctrine, were woefully lacking in the church due to the impact of the false teachers. One word that seemed to comprehensively describe the conduct Paul wanted for the believers was "godliness."[66] For him this word encompassed the breadth of their responsibilities to understand the truths of the Christian message and demonstrate godly behavior, relationships, and attitudes that faithfully bore witness to the person of Christ.

Regarding their conduct, while Paul saw the necessity of godly elders pastoring each congregation and setting an example for their congregations to follow, the behavior of the saints

was not to be legally imposed on them by a hierarchy of leadership but be self-regulating with the enablement of the Holy Spirit. His appeal was that every believer would "conduct themselves," stressing the middle voice of the infinitive, as loving and loyal children in God's family (3:15). Their confession of faith had to be mirrored by godly living that affected every aspect of life and every relationship. Their conduct and their verbal witness had to manifest the character of Christ.

The churches met in homes and reflected the social dynamics of a typical Greek household where there were elders, parents, family members, servants, and slaves.[67] Paul believed the interpersonal relationships in the body of Christ, the spiritual family that made up the household,[68] were vital to the testimony of the gospel. God was "Father" of all, the source of their physical and spiritual life (1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2). His people were adopted into and made up one united family through redemption offered in Christ. As a member of this family, Timothy himself was instructed to treat the older men as "fathers," older women as "mothers," younger men as "brothers," and the younger women as "sisters" (1 Tim. 5:1-2). The normative household codes that governed relationships in society, including husbands and wives, parents and children, owners and slaves, were to be honored while raising the standard for these relationships based on Christian love, respect, and purity.

The family household of God was "the church of the living God" (3:15). They were the people of God who assembled to worship, pray, study, serve, and witness on behalf of the God who was alive, active, powerful, and present among his people.[69] They "had been entrusted with the truth"[70] and had the responsibility to proclaim and safeguard it with faithfulness and integrity. The "church of the living God" stood in stark contrast to the pagan temples dedicated to Artemis, the Caesar cult, and other local deities, but tragically had wandered from the truth and lost the vitality of her spiritual life and witness.

The church represented a metaphorical temple with its pillars and a foundation devoted to God. Paul frequently referred to the believing community as the temple of God where the Holy Spirit dwelt (1 Cor 3:16-17; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21).[71] Wherever the believers gathered to worship Jesus Christ and proclaim the gospel, they functioned like a temple erected in a public space where the citizens of the city could listen to and observe the gospel in action. Paul referred to two essential components of a temple inscribing both as anarthrous singular nouns: a pillar (στῦλος) and a foundation (ἑδραίωμα), and both were directly related to the truth of the gospel.[72]

A singular pillar symbolized the church as a unified body holding up the truth for the community to observe. Possibly Paul used the anarthrous form to indicate that the church in Ephesus was very important in the spreading of the gospel, but it represented only one of many churches charged with this same responsibility.[73] Pillars held the roof aloft. In the context of Ephesus, the temple of Artemis, one of the wonders of the ancient world, housed 100 columns, each standing 18 meters high to support an auspicious, glimmering, marble roof honoring their goddess.[74] The church had the obligation to lift high the truth of the gospel for all to see. Solomon Andria notes that the pillars functioned to support the roofs of ancient temples, but they also displayed inscriptions praising the gods being worshiped in that facility. The writing engraved on the stone columns provided stories for the worshipers about the character and accomplishments of their gods for successive generations.[75] Paul’s admonition to God’s household in Ephesus was to boldly declare the gospel through their proclamation and behavior.

Paul used the analogy of the foundation of a temple to describe another aspect of the church’s responsibilities. The foundation served to buttress, hold firm, stabilize, and keep the structure from shifting.[76] In like manner, God’s family was to bear the weight of the gospel and safeguard it from being shifted or eroded by perpetrators of heterodox doctrine, whether they were false Christian teachers, Judaizers, or pagans.

Paul’s emphasis in this paragraph that introduced the song was of the Church of the Living God, as they knew how to conduct themselves within the household of faith and among their pagan neighbors. Their conduct included the responsibility of proclaiming the truth with clarity and boldness and safeguarding the truth from compromise.[77] Bridging between his metaphors, which described the role and mission of the believers, and the song, he reflected: “Beyond all question,[78] the mystery of godliness is great” (ὁμολογουμένως μέγα ἐστὶν τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστήριον, 3:16). By common agreement among the people of God, the mystery that produced the capacity for God’s household to fulfill their calling in declaring and protecting the truth of the gospel as a way of life was beyond human comprehension.[79]

To understand the phrase, the mystery of godliness (τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστήριον),[80] it is essential to analyze the syntactical relationship between mystery and godliness. The definite article and the noun, “the mystery,” form an *inclusio* bracketing “the godliness.” Literally, it reads, “the—of the godliness—mystery.” One explanation of the syntactical relationship is to identify “the godliness” as a genitive of product. Daniel B. Wallace explains that the genitive

(godliness, εὐσεβείας) is the product of the noun to which it is related.[81] godliness is the product of the mystery. This grammatical perspective can be seen in Towner's translation of the passage: "the mystery from which true godliness springs is great."[82]

Godliness (*eusebeia*) was an important concept that Paul used multiple times in the Pastorals (1 Tim. 2:2; 3:16; 4:7, 8; 6:3, 5, 6, 11; 2 Tim. 3:5; Titus 1:1).[83] In the first century Greek context, godliness referred to an entire way of life that manifested respectful devotion to a god or to God.[84] For Paul, *eusebeia* represented a life that honored and revered God as Creator and Redeemer in all aspects of life, including external behavior, internal attitudes, and sound doctrine. The person who pursued godliness devoted his entire life—body, mind, and spirit—to honoring and pleasing his god/God. The apostle believed redeemed human beings, full of God's Spirit, were capable of and expected to live this way in their relationship with the living God and before all onlookers. True godliness included conduct that was pleasing to God and loving towards people. Godliness included a power dimension[85] that brought about internal transformation: constraint against carnal temptations, courage to proclaim the gospel, and faith to perform the miraculous.[86] However, the source that provided the capacity to live a life of godliness was indeed a mystery—a truth only comprehensible through divine revelation.

What then was the mystery that could generate a lifestyle of godliness? That God made it possible for sinful people to become members of his family, know and experience the truth, and conduct themselves in ways that honored Him and demonstrated love for others, was a great mystery. How was it possible that people once dead in sin (Eph 2:1, 5) could exhibit this type of godliness?

A mystery (μυστήριον) was a truth about the Person of God or a work of God which could only be known when God provided revelation for people to understand what was unknown and unknowable. Paul selected a song that explained the mystery of how people could live godly lives.[87] The punctuation at the end of the phrase (ὁμολογουμένως μέγα ἐστὶν τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστήριον·), a colon or semicolon, indicated that there was not a full stop (period) between the declaration and the song. The phrase was intended to continue with a relative pronoun, "who" (ὅς), followed by the song which explained the mystery describing how it was possible for believers in Ephesus to conduct themselves in all godliness as God's people. This mystery was not simply a revelation of information, but the mystery was a person, Jesus Christ. The mystery was Christ who serves as the subject for each of the six lines in the song.[88] The answer to how it

was possible for the members of God's household to live in godliness was the premise of the song's content.

While it is beyond the scope of this study, readers should note that Paul moves immediately after the song with an adversative (δὲ, *de*, 4:1) to describe what the Holy Spirit had revealed about the false teachers. While Christ provided the way for his followers to live godly lives, deceitful spirits and demons deceived the false teachers to mislead and destroy the people's faith and lead them towards lives marked by ungodliness. Paul denounced them and the demonic sources of their teaching, the perversion of their content and conduct, the contradictions of their message compared to God's revelation, and the tragic impact they were having on the gospel witness and the household of faith.[89]

The Song

We now turn to the words, meaning, and structure of the song itself,[90] which Paul employed to explain the mystery of godliness.[91]

Who appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations,	Ὃς ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί, ἐδικαιώθη ἐν πνεύματι, ὤφθη ἀγγέλοις, ἐκηρύχθη ἐν ἔθνεσιν, ἐπιστεύθη ἐν κόσμῳ,

The song is introduced with a masculine relative pronoun (ὅς, who),[92] and the song functions as a relative clause clarifying the content of the mystery that makes godly living possible.[93] Grammatically the gender of the relative pronoun is confusing because the previous statement contains no masculine nouns to serve as the antecedent of the relative pronoun. The two nouns in the introductory clause, mystery (μυστήριον) and godliness (εὐσέβεια) are neuter and feminine, respectively. Wallace resolves the issue: "One of the standard features of Greek poetry is the introductory use of the relative pronoun. Sometimes, however, the relative pronoun has no antecedent because the hymnic fragment is introduced without syntactic connection."[94]

The mystery that makes godliness achievable is a person, the Lord Jesus. The song reveals how he modeled a life of godliness and made godliness possible for his followers. The emphasis on Jesus Christ is significant not only because he is the heart of Paul's gospel, but also

how Christ serves as the divine-human mediator who came to earth, exemplified godliness, and offers this transforming enablement to those who faithfully follow Him. It was Jesus whom the false teachers marginalized by replacing Him with other mediators, and rather than depending on Christ's provision of salvation by faith, as they put their confidence in adherence to the law to make themselves acceptable to God.

Before looking at the six phrases in the song, one should note that scholars approach the song with many theological presuppositions based on their views of the essential steps which Christ took to provide salvation. As Fee rightly observes, "There has been considerable debate, with nothing in consensus."[95] Some view the hymn as a Christological creed that describes the truth that was to be proclaimed and safeguarded by the church (3:15).[96] But few report a close connection between the words of the song and the issues being faced in the Ephesian context. It seems one's hermeneutics should assume Paul composed or selected this hymn because of its relevance to the topic just introduced, which then leads towards the mystery that produces Godliness, as well as the upheaval being faced by Timothy and the church caused by the false teachers.

Interpretation of the song is affected by its poetic nature, the structure of the phrases, and the meaning of the words as intended by Paul for this context. Each of the six phrases in the song begins with an aorist passive verb (with a -θη ending to exhibit a repeated assonance) where the subject, Jesus—as the antecedent of the relative pronoun—is the recipient of the action. Each of the lines, except the third, contains the preposition ἐν (*en*) which means in, by, or among and requires the noun it governs to be in the dative case.[97] And each of the six nouns following the preposition are anarthrous.

Regarding the overarching structure of the song, there are three options. Some view the song as six independent stanzas, some two stanzas with three lines in each, and some three stanzas with two lines each. The structure is adjusted by the interpreter based on how he/she interprets the meaning of each line.

Some see a chronological progression in the life of Jesus described in the six lines, moving from incarnation to ascension.[98] Those who advocate two stanzas with three lines each thus interpret the first three lines as chronological describing Jesus' earthly, salvific ministry (incarnation, resurrection, ascension); and the second stanza recounts the ministry of the church after Pentecost: preaching Christ and seeing the nations respond in faith.[99] However, this group

struggles with the logical placement of line 6 and claim it describes the ultimate glorification of Jesus "in glory," not referring to a location, in the heavenlies, but the manner of his exaltation—he has been glorified. Those who view the song as three stanzas with two lines each stress the antithetical parallelism of the phrases based on the meanings of the final nouns (for example, flesh/spirit; angels/nations; world/glory).[100] The first stanza describes Jesus' life in Palestine depicting his life from incarnation to death and from resurrection to ascension. The second stanza records those who witnessed his earthly ministry—angels in the heavenlies and nations on the earth.[101] The third stanza describes the reception he received on earth and in heaven—accepted on earth by those who believed in Him and in heaven by the angelic hosts who welcomed Him on his return to glory. Rather than indicating those who received and honored Christ, Guthrie explains that the third stanza portrays places of Christ's triumph: on earth and in heaven.[102]

If one reads through the song, it will seem that a more literal reading would be chronological, starting with Jesus' incarnation and concluding with his ascension. Keeping in view the purpose for the song, which is to reveal the mystery that made godliness possible for God's people contrasted with another gospel being proclaimed in the city, one could conclude that the song revealed how Jesus lived a life of godliness and made godliness possible for his followers. Below is a brief explanation of each of the six lines considering what Jesus, the provider of godliness, did to make godliness a reality in the lives of believers in the context of Ephesus.

Line 1: Who was manifest/revealed in flesh / Ὃς ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί

The opening line of the song stressed Christ's incarnation as a human, taking on flesh with all of its incumbent weaknesses.[103] Given the context of the false teachers who minimalized the role of the "man" Christ and viewed flesh as evil, this line captured what Paul had already claimed about Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5), who "came into the world" (1:15), appeared before people (2 Tim. 1:10), identified himself with creaturely humanity, and as God served faithfully as the mediator between God and humankind (2:5). The incarnation was a fundamental Christian truth without which salvation was not possible.[104] His becoming fully human undermined the false teachers' emphasis on asceticism and dualism that disdained flesh and praised the spirit. This

opening line affirmed the reality of Christ's incarnation and implied his preexistence.[105] The eternal God became flesh and made his dwelling among humankind (John 1:14).

Regarding the issue of the lack of an article before "flesh," Mathewson and Emig note, "Articles are often absent before definite nouns in prepositional phrases."[106] The key determinate whether a scholar should add the definite article or not is the context. Should the text read he appeared in flesh or in the flesh? The anarthrous phrase emphasized quality—he was truly flesh or existed in the sphere of creatureliness.[107] Given Paul's message that Jesus was the mystery who made godliness possible and served as the example of godliness for his followers, even though he was fully human, his emphasis on the humanity of Christ seems clear. God invaded human history as a man of flesh to bring salvation and serve as the only qualified mediator between God and fallen humanity. Portraying Christ being fully flesh and yet setting an example of godliness provided encouragement to the believers that they too could be godly while creaturely, and they could value their bodies, originating from dirt, yet made in the image of God.

Line 2: was vindicated/justified by (the) Spirit / ἐδικαιώθη ἐν πνεύματι

The verb to justify or vindicate (δικαιόω) is a highly charged theological term.[108] A. E. McGrath notes that Paul's use of vocabulary related to justification remained grounded in the OT where the meaning is more in alignment with rightness than righteousness. "Justification results from an action of God whereby an individual is set in a right relationship with God, vindicated, or declared to be in the right."[109] People who have been justified or vindicated are in "a right and faithful relation" with God. Some stress that only God is righteous and does what is upright morally, ethically, and spiritually. All people are sinners—unrighteous before God. They believe God forensically declares the unrighteous to be righteous when they repent and come to Him in faith. Sinners are still sinners in their fallen state but God, as Judge, declares them righteous.[110]

The word, justify, can mean made righteous, declared righteous or just, or shown to be righteous or innocent.[111] Here the concept can include a change of heart and character, an "uprighting" of a person's inner being before a holy God. God transforms and imparts righteousness into one's being. Fee observes, "Paul knows nothing about a salvation that does not include the righteousness of God, both received as the gift of right standing with God and as behavior that reflects that relationship . . . the Spirit [is] the one who [a]ffects God's

righteousness in our everyday lives.”[112] Right relationship and right character marked Jesus Christ in his human existence and project the image his followers were to emulate.

How would Paul apply these ideas to Christ who came into the world as a fleshly human being and yet was faultless? Theologians would not question his perfect and sinless character. His personhood did not need to be vindicated. Many scholars read line 2 as God vindicating Christ through the resurrection which followed his humiliation and death on the cross.[113] Keener views line 2 as depicting Christ’s resurrection which is a demonstration of God’s acquittal of Him after his condemnation by Pilate and the Jews which led to his death.[114] Those who hold this view presume that Christ’s death and resurrection are cardinal doctrines for Paul and must be implied in line 2. Even though the song does not speak directly of Jesus’ death,[115] Paul must have seen vindication connected to his resurrection through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is evident that Paul spoke of Christ’s death in 1 Timothy 2:5, but was he implying his death, followed by his resurrection in this phrase in the song? By way of comparison, one should note John’s apocalyptic and compressed description of the triumphant Christ who was born and immediately caught up to his throne without any mention of his death (Rev 12:5). Could there be another way of understanding Paul’s statement in light of the Ephesian crisis?

Returning to a chronological portrayal of Christ’s exemplary life in the song, line 2 could be viewed as recording the next great event experienced by Jesus. At Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in visible form and God publicly declared, “You are my Son, whom I love, with you I am well pleased” (Luke 3:22). This event served as a public vindication of the man, Christ Jesus: a declaration of innocence from the voice of God, followed by the visible coming of the Spirit to rest upon Him. In spite of his scandalous birth and simple upbringing, Jesus’ identity and holiness were confirmed: he was God’s Son, God’s Messiah, his unique Servant.[116]

According to the pattern found in Luke’s Gospel, the Spirit as the divine agent came upon people who were described as already righteous (Elizabeth, Zechariah, Mary, and Simeon were reported to be “righteous” or “favored” before the Spirit came upon them; Luke 1:6, 28, 30, 34; 2:25).[117] The Spirit coming upon his appointed people vindicated them in the eyes of their critics and empowered them to engage in God’s redemptive history. Following the anointing of the Spirit on Jesus, the Father declared Christ’s identity, mission, and righteousness, “This is my

Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased" (Matt 3:17). The coming of the Holy Spirit upon the "man" Christ Jesus initiated his public, messianic, vocational, ministry.[118]

While Jesus was fully flesh, the Spirit vindicated Him.[119] This message clearly countered the dualistic and ascetic teachings of the false prophets who viewed the flesh as evil and the Holy Spirit as good. The Spirit coming upon the man Christ Jesus did not change his creaturely nature but showed the presence of both flesh and Spirit at work in his life to accomplish God's purposes. As flesh and filled with the Spirit, Jesus exhibited godliness in word and deed. His followers, including Paul the worst of sinners, were vindicated while fully human by the coming of the Spirit and empowered to live in godliness. Line 2 supported Paul's view that salvation and Spirit anointing were holistic and all-encompassing. The whole being of Christ was anointed by the Spirit. Likewise, his followers received the Spirit and developed godly practices in word, deed, faith, attitudes, and adherence to doctrinal truth.

The antithetical parallelism of the last two words of lines 1 and 2, flesh and Spirit, could be viewed as highlighting the holistic nature of Christ. He was completely flesh but also filled with the Spirit beginning at his conception by the Spirit (Luke 1:35), later anointed and empowered by the Spirit (Luke 3:22), led by the Spirit (Luke 4:1), and filled with the Spirit throughout his life on earth (Luke 4:1; 10:21; Matt 27:50-53).[120] Those who followed Christ were of a similar nature as fully human but also made alive, guided, and empowered by the Spirit.

Line 3: Was seen/viewed (by) angels / ὤφθη ἀγγέλοις

Line 3 is the exception to the grammatical pattern in the song. There is no preposition (ἐν), but the noun is in the dative, a dative of recipient[121]—Jesus was seen or observed with respect to or by angels or by the angels. Wallace describes this dative as emphasizing the passivity of the recipients, those represented by the noun in the dative. The recipients did not act or initiate the act of seeing. They simply observed the actions of the subject of the phrase, Jesus Christ.[122] This emphasis on the observer's role of the angels is based on the line's grammatical construction and is supported by Daniel Reid who states that Paul at times "could employ angels as foils for the surpassing glory of the gospel of Christ."[123] From Paul's perspective, when did the angels view Christ?

Marshall, holding to a two-stanza structure for the song, claims that Jesus was seen by angels in heaven after his resurrection and ascension. He maintains that this statement provides further evidence of his vindication.[124] Bromiley, on the other hand, describes the presence of angels during Jesus’ ministry on earth, “They are naturally present when this [story of Christ] both begins with the nativity (Matt 1; Luke 1-3) and ends with the resurrection (Matt 28:2) and the ascension (Acts 1:10ff) . . . on his way to the cross in his temptation (Mark 1:12) and then before the crucifixion (Luke 22:43) … They will come with Christ when he returns in glory (Matt 24:31).[125] Andria holds a similar position: the vindication by the Spirit and seen by angels occurred at Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan River.[126]

Recalling the historical context of Ephesus, the false teachers minimized the importance of Jesus as the One and Only Mediator between God and human beings. They believed the mediatorial role was filled by angels and the giver of the Law, Moses. To clarify the participation of angels during the ministry of Christ and in the lives of those who followed him, Paul used this phrase to emphasize the witnessing role of angels in the saving work of Jesus Christ. They observed the One who took on flesh to mediate between God and humankind, overcame the temptations of the devil, ministered selflessly, was misunderstood, and ultimately condemned and murdered. Line 3 minimized the importance of angels which may be the reason why Paul altered the grammatical form of this statement while keeping the main attention on Jesus. In the epistle, Paul mentions that angels observe and bear witness of the work and judgments of Christ’s followers (1 Tim. 5:21). Angels are God’s messengers and assist his people, but Jesus alone is Mediator, Savior, and the Provider of Godliness.

Line 4: Was preached among the nations / ἐκηρύχθη ἐν ἔθνεσιν

This phrase of the song could assert that the person and ministry of Jesus was publicly proclaimed in the sphere or realm of the nations.[127] Some scholars consider the first three lines as one stanza dealing with the ministry of Jesus on earth: he was incarnated, resurrected, and exalted to heaven where he was seen by the angelic hosts. The next stanza, according to this group, describes the ministry responsibilities of the church. “Back on earth,” in contrast with what occurred in heaven at Jesus’ exaltation, Jesus was preached among the nations and believed on in the world.[128] This perspective is reasonable except for the sixth line which returns to the

subject of Jesus as he was either taken up in glory at the ascension or honored with glory in the heavenlies.

Part of the motivation for interpreting line 4 as the ministerial responsibility of the church following Christ's ascension is the presupposition by some that Jesus' earthly ministry was almost exclusively limited to Jews in Israel. On the day of Pentecost and thereafter, global evangelization and discipleship became the agenda of the church.[129] For example, Keener states, "The Gentile mission was at most peripheral to Jesus' earthly ministry: he did not actively seek out Gentiles for ministry (Matt 10:5) . . . The Gentile mission became central to the early church."[130] It is true that the church began to slowly move centrifugally from Jerusalem to evangelize people beyond the Jews in Israel following Pentecost. However, this perspective ignores the ministry of Jesus to Gentile nations while he walked this earth. It also ignores the expanding propagation of the gospel by those transformed by Christ after personal encounters with him. Matthew, the Gospel writer considered by some to be writing primarily to a Jewish audience, highlights the gospel witness to Gentiles who amplified the message. Matthew records that Jesus was preached among the nations by the magi (Matt 2:2-3), by many who experienced healing even as far as Syria (4:24), by Gentile inhabitants in Galilee who saw the great light (4:15-16), through the testimony of healing by the Roman centurion's servant (8:10, 13), through the witness of the deliverance of the Syrophoenician's daughter (15:22, 28), and by the Roman guards at his crucifixion and resurrection (27:54; 28:4). During his life on earth, the gospel of Jesus was preached among many of the ethnic groups (*ethnê*)[131] throughout the Middle East.[132]

Unlike the false teachers who showed racial exclusivism and partiality in their witness, the church had to be faithful to the one who "wants all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4).[133] Jesus came to earth to fulfill the promise given to Abraham that his seed would be a blessing to all the nations. He intentionally crossed political and cultural borders to bring the good news to other people and nations. Those who heard, believed, were healed, and expanded the claims of the gospel.

The mystery of godliness came to offer salvation to all and to provide the ability to live in all godliness no matter what was one's ethnic or religious background. Unlike the restricted and exclusive message of the opponents, Timothy and the Ephesian church were to continue to spread the gospel in the city, province, and beyond to all who would hear.

The antithetical parallelism of the final words of lines 3 and 4, angels and nations, could represent two audiences: one who observed and the other who not only saw but received the gospel. Angels witnessed but did not participate in the work of salvation nor receive its benefits. The nations experienced the gospel and were commissioned to continue the disciple-making process as an expression of their godliness.

Line 5: Was believed on in the world / ἐπιστεύθη ἐν κόσμῳ

The false teachers appeared to emphasize obedience to the law and living Jewishly in terms of customs and culture. They ignored the importance of faith, especially faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. They replaced faith in Him with observance of the Law and, in the vacuum of faith, they propagated extreme practices such as abstaining from marriage and avoiding certain foods. For Paul, faith in Christ was the essential step needed to be approved by God. Jesus modeled the life of faith as he bore witness to God and entrusted himself to his heavenly Father. The life of godliness commenced with faith for anyone living in this created world (*kosmos*)[134] and moved forward from faith to faith.

Line 6: Was taken up in glory / ἀνελήμφθη ἐν δόξῃ

The term for "taken up" is found in Mark 16:19, Acts 1:2, 11, 22. In each of these cases, the authors described the physical ascension of Jesus into heaven. Perkins reports that taken up (ἀνελήμφθη) "always refers to the ascension . . . the relocation of a person to another place."[135] Marshall notes, "He was taken up to be with God in glory; although this clause comes after the mention of the worldwide mission, it can only refer to the ascension."[136] If someone acknowledges that the earthly mission of Jesus included the proclamation of good news to the nations and that faith in Him was the entry point into his Kingdom, line 6 is the appropriate chronological description of the end and climax of his earthly ministry—he ascended into heaven and to his throne.[137]

There are alternate views about the meaning of line 6. Keener states that this phrase refers to "Jesus' return (cf. Dan 7:13-14) rather than to his ascension."[137] Towner believes the emphasis is not on his ascension from earth, but the status of glorification conferred on Him through his exaltation.[138]

The dative, in glory (ἐν δόξῃ[139]), could be a dative of manner[140] or a dative of location: the manner in which he ascended was one that was glorious as "he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight" (Acts 1:9). Or the emphasis of the dative could be on the location, the highest heavens, when God "raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given" (Eph 1:20-23).

The one who lived in all godliness was taken up by God in a glorious manner and exalted over all creation. Christ was taken into heaven bodily including his flesh and Spirit. Those who put their faith in Him had the promise that one day they would be resurrected and join Him in the heavenlies. If his people would be faithful in their faith, godliness, and testimony, they lived with the blessed hope that their resurrection awaited them (2 Tim. 2:18).

Viewing the song as a chronological description of the life of Jesus seems to explain the basis for the mystery that makes godliness possible and provide a polemic against the false teaching of Paul's opponents. While the false teachers gave their attention to navigating a dualistic existence between flesh and spirit, stressing adherence to the law in order to avoid living unrighteously, Paul's song exalted Christ and provided guidance and hope for those who lived for Him in this sinful world.

The final words of lines 5 and 6 make another interesting comparison between the world (*kosmos*) where Christ came to provide salvation for all humankind and glory (*doxa*) the eternal location where Christ and his people would be united and spend eternity together. Godliness was to be the distinguishing mark of his people while they lived on this earth, and it was the key characteristic of those who would be caught up to meet Him in the air (1 Thess 4:17).

Conclusion

Songs are amazing means of communication in that they convey a message that far exceeds the limitation of their words. Songs inspire the imagination and faith while speaking explicitly to the existential conditions one faces. Paul used the Christ hymn of 1 Timothy 3:16 because it expressly addressed the *ad hoc* conditions being faced by the church in Ephesus. The song countered the false teachings of the opponents to the gospel and exalted Christ who not only lived a life of godliness as a human being on earth but provided the spiritual enablement so his followers could live and grow in godliness. The members of God's household would truly

proclaim and safeguard the truth of the gospel as they committed themselves to honoring Christ, lived in the presence of the Spirit, exhibited moral purity and holiness, loved one another, and boldly proclaimed the gospel to the nations. Choose your songs wisely and pay attention to the words.

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[1] 1 Timothy 3:16 is labeled by various scholars as a song, hymn, hymn fragment, or credal statement. See Jeremy Beghie, "The Bible and Music," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 523. The hymn may have already been well-known in the early church. Paul employed it to stress his agenda. See William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 551-552. Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 762, refers to the passage as an early Christian hymn focusing on Christ.

[2] For a discussion on commissive and inferential language see Robert H. Stein, *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible: Playing by the Rules* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 73-74. Commissive language is an important reminder that God communicates to people holistically including their rational minds and emotions.

[3] Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 192.

[4] It is not in the scope of this article to address the authorship or dating of 1 Timothy. For further examination of these issues, see Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 607-649; Homer A. Kent, Jr., *The Pastoral Epistles*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1982), 23-68; and Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 9-36.

[5] Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 762, observes, "The question of context usually either is neglected or at best receives mere lip service."

[6] Jeannine K. Brown, *Scripture as Communication*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021), 24.

[7] Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988),10, rightly observes, "The letter betrays evidence everywhere that it was intended for the church itself, not just Timothy. But because of defections in the leadership, Paul does not, as before, write directly to the church, but to the church through Timothy." For a similar view see Kent, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 20.

[8] Mounce comments, "It is generally recognized that this paragraph is the heart of the Pastoral corpus." William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 214.

[9] Mounce translates the phrase "the pillar" as "a pillar" which agrees with the anarthrous form in the Greek text. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 213.

[10] Mounce uses the relative pronoun, who, in his translation which agrees with the Greek text and is supported by the oldest manuscript evidence. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 213-214.

[11] The NIV uses this indentation scheme for the song which proposes three strophes of two lines each and a type of parallelism within each strophe. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 214, configures the hymn with two strophes, each with three indented lines. The poetic aspects of the song will be discussed below.

[12] Fee believes the only legitimate occasion and purpose for Paul writing this epistle is to stop the influence of the false teachers. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy*, Titus, 7. However, Samuel M. Ngewa, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus* (Nairobi: Hippo Books, 2009), 80, states that "Paul's ultimate goal in writing this letter is to inform Timothy and the members of the church in Ephesus how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household."

[13] Paul writes to Timothy to command certain, unspecified men μὴ ἑτεροδιδασκαλεῖν (not to teach other, different, or novel things). The present tense complementary infinitive has the prefix ἕτερος, meaning other, so “other” of a different kind, which is combined with the word, διδάσκω, means to teach. The word, called “a fascinating word” by Mounce, refers to false teachings which differ from Paul’s gospel (Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 19) and is only found twice in the NT, both times in this epistle (1 Tim 1:3; 6:3). It is also worth noting that the infinitive is in the present tense implying that the action is present and is ongoing. Thus, Mounce translates it “continue to teach.” See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 598-599; and William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek: Grammar*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 303.

[14] Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus,* 44. Paul speaks of “Jewish myths” in his letter to Titus in Crete (Titus 1:14), but he does not use the word “Jewish” in his letters to Timothy. There is clearly a strong Jewish influence on the content of the false teachers in Ephesus in terms of teaching the law and an implied exclusion of Gentiles from the believing community. A Jewish perspective could explain the attention to myths, genealogies, and the mediatorial roles of Moses and angels.

[15] The magical milieu of Ephesus is seen in the slow conversion process of Ephesians who held onto their practices of sorcery until a gospel power encounter exposed the demonic nature and destructiveness of their indigenous religion. Their total commitment to the Lordship of Christ was marked by their abandonment and eradication of their pagan religious paraphernalia (Acts 19:17-20)

[16] Ephesus was known as a trading center with a robust economy giving profit and wealth opportunities to the group of aggressive, shrewd, and hardworking people. A significant portion of the economy centered on religious worship (Acts 19:23-31). See Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 37, 38.

[17] See 1 Corinthians 7:1 where the Corinthians assert that it is not good for a man to marry (“touch a woman” as a euphemism for conjugal relationships with one’s wife) which seems quite similar to the false teachers of Ephesus who forbid people to marry (1Tim. 4:3). For an in-depth discussion of the issue in Corinth, see Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 270-277.

[18] Paul confronted the false teachers in Colosse who were imposing human-made rules on the believers and judging them based on what they ate and drank (Col 2:16, 21, 23). In Ephesus, the opponents are commanding believers to abstain from certain foods (1 Tim 4:3). See F. F. Bruce*, The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 113-129.

[19] In his epistle to the Ephesians, Paul addressed many of the issues that reoccur in his correspondence to Timothy such as the supremacy of Christ over all aspects of his creation, the mystery of Christ’s saving work, the unity of Jews and Gentiles in the body of Christ, household codes related to marriage and to owner-slave relationships, and godly conduct in terms of sexual morality, conversations, and anger. For further study, see Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians*.

[20] Every aspect of life in Ephesus, which included civic, religious, cultural, social, and economic affairs, was permeated by religious beliefs and practices. The cult of Artemis predated the 4th century BC. The influence of the emperor cult was growing. Judaism was being practiced by local Jews and possible God-fearers as indicated by the presence of a local synagogue (Acts 18:19). Whereas the Jews in Ephesus initially welcomed Paul and his gospel preaching, they grew hostile, became obstinate, refused to believe, and maligned the Way (Acts 19:9). This led to Paul establishing a teaching-preaching-miracle working, missional sending center, distinct from the synagogue, the lecture hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9-12). See Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 37-39.

[21] It is generally understood that the church in Ephesus consisted of numerous house churches scattered across the city and beyond. Multiple gatherings made supervision of church leaders and their doctrine more challenging. See Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 8.

[22] I. Howard Marshall, “1 Timothy, Book of,” *DTIB*, 801.

[23] Paul refers to a group of false teachers as "certain men" (τισὶν, an indefinite plural pronoun, 1 Tim 1:3), unspecified people. However, he named two of the more destructive leaders, Hymenaeus and Alexander (1:20), whom he had excommunicated. Hymenaeus is referenced again along with Philetus (2 Tim 2:17) as ringleaders who have wandered from the truth and destroy the faith of others. Alexander the metalworker opposed the gospel message and brought great harm to Paul. He was an ongoing threat (2 Tim 4:14-15).

[24] Mounce stresses the fact that these men "made a conscious, deliberate choice to reject the truth and as a result have brought the church into reproach." Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 67.

[25] Guthrie notes an "absorbing interest in genealogies" among contemporary Jews which centers mainly around Pentateuchal descendancy. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 628. Friedrich Büchsel proposes that the genealogies are the biblical history of Jewish people but embellished by mythical interpretation. Friedrich Büchsel, "γενεά, γενεαλογία," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol 1, ed. Gerhard Kittel; trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 664. Towner mentions one reason for studying genealogies, "Within Judaism, genealogies played the key role of establishing a person's bloodline and link to a particular family and tribe: rights by birth." Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 110. However, some scholars think the pursuit of genealogies had to do with the content of their teaching and not about their status in the community. "There is no evidence to suggest . . . that the false teachers speculated on their own genealogies which would give them standing in Judaism." See I. Howard Marshall and Philip H. Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, ICC (London; T&T Clark, 2004), 366. However, the opponents desire to be recognized as teachers of the law (νομοδιδάσκαλοι) by the community implies they were searching for ways to strengthen their leadership positions in the churches where they were already teaching unorthodox doctrine.

[26] Andrew E Hill, "Genealogy," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 245.

[27] According to Büchsel, "They are Jews." Büchsel, "γενεά," 664; of the same opinion is Solomon Andria, "1 Timothy," in *Africa Bible Commentary*, ed. Tokunboh Adeyemo (Nairobi: WordAlive, 2006), 1469.

[28] The practices they imposed on their followers may not have included circumcision which is not mentioned in either of the epistles to Timothy. On one hand, they instituted a measured Judaizing, and on the other hand, they were extreme in their religious and cultural restrictions: forbidding marriage and the eating of certain foods.

[29] Larry J. Perkins, *The Pastoral Letters: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 10, observes that the teachers "may not be Jews."

[30] A case can be made for the false teachers being Hellenistic Gentiles. The two teachers whom Paul excommunicated, Alexander and Hymenaeus, have names that identify them as Greeks (1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 2:17; 4:14). Hymenaeus was a name frequently found in Greek mythology. Regarding Alexander, although this name was given to Jews, Towner asserts that this man was the same individual who inspired the riot of the idol makers against Paul in Acts 19:33. His occupation and influence in the city would imply that he was a Gentile who eventually gained a prominent position in the Ephesian church. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 160.

[31] Perkins, *Pastoral Letters*, 28. The name Alexander is a Greek name but was used by both Gentiles and Jews.

[32] Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 628.

[33] Highlighting one's identity with a tribe in Israel along with maintaining Jewish religious and cultural practices and having received formal, Jewish orthodox training served increase the status of teachers both in the church and synagogue (Phil 3:3-6).

[34] To bolster his authority as a commissioned agent of Jesus Christ who has the right to stop the false teachers, Paul stresses that he is an apostle of Christ within the Ephesian context. Perkins, *Pastoral Letters*, 37.

[35] The content of the false teachers was a syncretistic blend of many religious elements but not clearly systematized.

[36] In Paul’s two letters to Timothy, there is no mention of the opponents pushing for circumcision as was the case with Pharisaic Christian Judaizers in Galatia, Antioch, and Jerusalem. This leads one to believe that the false teachers of Ephesus were more Hellenized and, while they held strongly to some aspects of asceticism, they maintained a high view of the human body. Unlike most Hebraic Christians, they did not advocate circumcision, their perspective agreeing with Paul but for different reasons. Another possible explanation for no mention of the need for circumcision was that the audience being targeted by the false teachers was Jewish, people who already bore the mark of the covenant. They had little concern for preaching their hetero-gospel to the Gentiles.

[37] The law (νόμος) was to be used lawfully (νομίμως), also translated as properly or rightfully. Paul used the same adverb in 2 Timothy 2:5 to describe the athlete who was required to complete “according to the rules” (νομίμως). This observation is probably a play on words: the law used lawfully. Perkins, *Pastoral Letters*, 11.

[38] Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1993), 85. Paul taught that obedience to the law did not make one righteous, upright before God. While the law was good and spiritual (Rom 7:13-14), it was powerless to transform lives and to enable people to overcome sin and live uprightly (Rom 8:3). The law set apart the OT people of God from their pagan neighbors, but it did not change their hearts nor enable them to keep from transgressing God’s standards.

[39] Ibid,, 61.

[40] Ibid., 15-16.

[41] Mounce further explains, “The opponents’ preaching resulted in speculation. The goal of Paul’s command that they stop their false preaching is love, thus repeating a basic conviction of the early church that the greatest command, in that it sums up all the other commands, is the command to love (Matt 22:34-40; Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14) and that love is more significant than ritual observance such as law keeping.” Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 22.

[42] Daniel G. Reid, “Angels, Archangels,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin, and D. G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 22, observes, “In some Jewish traditions, the Law had been ordained through angels and by a mediator” which stood in stark contrast to Paul’s teaching on the work of God in Christ.

[43] Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 568.

[44] Ibid., 566, 568.

[45] Andria states, “This verse [2:5] clearly affirms the humanity of Jesus . . . a mediator has to be one of us.” Andria, “1 Timothy,” 1470. Perkins, *Pastoral Letters*, 35.

[46] For a further examination of the role of angels, see Stephen F. Noll, “Angels, Doctrine of,” *DTIB*, 45-48. See Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 315.

[47] G. W. Bromiley, “Angel,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984), 46.

[48] Douglas J. Moo, *Romans,* NIVAC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 244, aptly comments, “Sincerity is not enough. As long as people are ‘sold as slaves to sin,’ sincerity by itself can never lead to genuine fulfillment of God’s law.”

[49] Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 165, 167, speaks of the false teachers’ separatist and elitist tendencies.

[50] Gentiles is the translation of *ethnê,,* which Perkins, *Pastoral Letters*, 37, asserts a reference towards the nations distinct from Israel (1 Tim 2:7; 3:16; 2 Tim 4:17).

[51] Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 9.

[52] Kenneth E. Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011,), 200, 203, describes the ascetics who claimed, "The body is evil. True spirituality means even if you are married, marital relations should be avoided . . . they were convinced that spirituality and sexual practices were incompatible."

[53] Believing that the body would be destroyed by God in the end, bodily appetites such as food and sex were matters of indifference. They had no bearing on one's eternal destiny. This view encouraged a libertine perspective on life. However, Paul admonished Christians to have a high view of their bodies and to guard their moral purity because the body was included in the saving work of Christ. Their bodies belonged to the Lord, served as a temple for God's Spirit, and would one day be resurrected. See Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 255-260.

[54] Fee discusses the dualistic view of the body: one from an ascetic perspective; the other from a libertine angle. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 273-280.

[55] Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 99.

[56] Werner Foerster, "σέβομαι," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 7; ed. G. Kittel, G. Friedrich; trans. G. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 183. To counter the opposition's views about creation, social order, and procreation, Paul himself referenced the creation account (1 Tim 2:13-14).

[57] Foerster, "σέβομαι," 183, reports that the false teachers "regarded the family with contempt."

[58] Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 8, 122.

[59] Marshall observes that Paul, in this epistle, provides "a full-scale treatment of the dangers of wealth, both the desiring of it and the misuse of it (6:3-19; cf. 2:9-10; 5:6). The author is quite clear that there are real dangers, against which Christians must be extremely vigilant." Marshall, "1 Timothy," 804.

[60] Fee believes this paragraph presents the occasion but not the purpose which was stated in 1:3, silence the false teachers. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 91. Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, rev. ed., TNTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 98, seems misdirected when he states, "This section marks a pause in the apostle's instructions … to give a reminder of the wonder of the Christian revelation."

[61] While the situation in Ephesus was dire, Paul must have identified other locations that were equally or more tenuous. For this reason, he left Timothy in Ephesus while he traveled on to Macedonia (1:3). Paul undoubtedly received updates on the progress of Timothy's mission in Ephesus and saw the need for his return. One cannot be certain whether he faced travel delays or ongoing spiritual dilemmas in his current location that demanded more of his time and attention, but in any case, he realized his speedy return to Ephesus was unlikely.

[62] Paul started this paragraph by stating, "I am writing these things to you [Timothy]" (Ταῦτά σοι γράφω), where "these things" is a reference of all he had already penned and possibly included the entire epistle. See Perkins, *Pastoral Letters*, 68.

[63] Paul uses ἀναστρέφεσθαι which is a present, middle or passive, infinitive. In the middle voice, it would read "to conduct oneself." The verb means to behave or conduct oneself in a general, comprehensive sense. See Kent, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 139. Mounce says this word refers to people's general conduct, their way of life. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 220; Perkins, *Pastoral Letters*, 70.

[64] In the Greek text, the subject of the verb, to conduct, is not stated. While some believe Paul is speaking primarily Timothy, his deputy representative, the context seems to include the entire church, the household (οἶκος) of faith, all those commissioned to live in all godliness, proclaim the truth of the gospel, and safeguard the doctrine taught by the apostle. Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 99. Paul used the word house or household to emphasize the people, not the building, and the social-spiritual unit they represented. The concept of the household included family relationships, loyalty, responsibilities, identity, protection, and refuge. See P. H. Towner, “Households and Household Codes,” in *DPAHL*, 417-418.

[65] Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 272-273.

[66] A comprehensive definition of godliness is provided below along with its syntactical relationship to “the mystery,” the subject in the nominal clause.

[67] Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 608.

[68] John R. W. Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 103-104.

[69] Stott, *The Message*, 104.

[70] Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 91.

[71] For further discussion, see Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 92.

[72] Pillar and foundation stand appositionally to the church and household. Each of these descriptions is a critical component of the responsibility of the body of Christ in Ephesus. See Perkins, *Pastoral Letters*, 71.

[73] See Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 100.

[74] Stott, *The Message*, 105.

[75] Andria, “1 Timothy,” 1473; Keener, *Bible Background*, 608, refers to the role of pillars as providing support, upholding structures.

[76] Stott, *The Message*, 105. Perkins, *Pastoral Letters*, 71.

[77] Paul believed that Timothy’s example of godliness would have a more powerful influence against the false teachers than any attempt to combat their baseless myths. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 653.

[78] Paul introduces the song with the statement, “By common consent, great is the mystery th[at] produces godliness.” By common consent, undeniably, or most certainly are translations of ὁμολογουμένως. By common consent within the body of Christ, the mystery that makes godliness possible is great—beyond human comprehension. See Perkins, *Pastoral Letters*, 72.

[79] The greatness of this mystery is emphasized by Paul based on the word order of the sentence, “great” coming first in the statement and serving as an adjective to “the mystery.” Perkins, *Pastoral Letters*, 72.

[80] Both nouns have a definite article: the mystery and the godliness. “The godliness” accentuates the particular character that God has made possible through his mystery.

[81] Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 106. Wallace labels this form a genitive of produce. “The genitive substantive is the produce of the noun to which it stands related.”

[82] Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 270.

[83] *Eusebeia* occurs 15 times in the NT. Of those, 10 are found in the Pastorals.

[84] Foerster, "σέβομαι," 168-196, asserts that godliness (*eusebia*) describes "the whole of Christian existence as the vibrant interplay between the knowledge of God and the observable life that emerges from this knowledge." Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 170. See F. Q. Gouvea, "Godliness," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theo*logy, ed. W. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984), 468. Perkins, *Pastoral Letters*, 72, 62, translates *eusebia* as complete piety which integrates faith and life. He explains that this manifestation of piety included "the daily decision to pursue a life of godliness in conformity with the gospel." Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 763, 792, states, *eusebia* "refers to the manner of life that issues from a [proper] knowledge of God, and thus includes both right thinking and right living."

[85] John R.W. Stott, *Guard the Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1973), 88, reports, "True religion combines form and power."

[86] Paul describes the false teachers displaying a form or veneer of godliness while denying the power of godliness (μόρφωσιν εὐσεβείας —τὴν δύναμιν εὐσεβείας, 2 Tim 3:5). These two genitives are genitives of production, "the genitive substantive produces the noun." Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 104). Godliness was exhibited publicly through true worship and authentic love, not through ascetic practices and Jewish legalism. The mystery which was Christ produced godliness through the power of the gospel (Rom 1:16) applied to the life of the believer through the presence of the Holy Spirit. See Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 792-793; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 547-548; Guy H. King, *A Leader Led: An Expositional Study of 1 Timothy* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1962), 91.

[87] See Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 226. Mysteries are described by Paul in Colossians 1:26, 27; 2:2; 4:3; Ephesians 5:32.

[88] Perkins, *Pastoral Letters*, 73.

[89] See Gordon D. Fee, *Pauline Christology* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 432.

[90] Marshall labels the hymn as a "cryptic description of Christ . . . a remarkable revelation of God." Marshall, "1 Timothy," 802.

[91] Andria observes that a mystery cannot be known without the intervention of God who, in this hymn, reveals the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Andria, "1 Timothy," 1473. Keener simply refers to the content of the hymn as "the standard of faith," without referencing the mystery of godliness. Keener, *Bible Background*, 608. Mysteries were truths that exceeded people's ability to understand unless God provided some revelation. In Paul's other epistles, he described the "mystery." In Colossians 1:27, he gave a definition of "this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." In this same epistle, he said that God "has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col 1:12–14). The mystery of godliness was the divine revelation that sinners who had lived under the dominion of Satan could be transformed to be like Christ, receive adoption into his household of faith, and be given the spiritual ability to live godly, holy, lovingly, and boldly for Christ and the truth.

[92] Later manuscripts changed the relative pronoun, who (ὅς), to the noun, God (θεός). For further examination of the textual critical issues, see Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 95; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 214; and Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 278.

[93] David L. Mathewson and Elodie B.Emig, *Intermediate Greek Grammar* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 432.

[94] Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 341.

[95] Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy*, Titus, 93.

[96] Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 91, 95.

[97] If one follows the eight-case system, the noun following ἐν could be in the dative, locative, or instrumental case.

[98] Stott, *The Message*, 106-107, comments that the chronological interpretation views each line as a “fresh, consecutive event or stage in the career of Jesus, taking us from the first coming to the second.” For Stott, the hymn is a liturgical, doctrinal statement; he makes no connection between the hymn and the immediate context of the church in Ephesus.

[99] Stott, *The Message*, 107, mentions that the second stanza alludes to the “life of the exalted Lord” who was preached, believed on, and glorified. The two-stanza view is the one held by Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 431.

[100] Some further note the chiastic nature of the song with the pattern of ab/ba/ab. See Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 96.

[101] Stott, *The Message*, 107-108.

[102] Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 102.

[103] According to Wallace’s paradigms, *Greek Grammar*, 153, this phrase could be labeled a dative of sphere. “The dative substantive indicates the sphere or realm in which the word to which it is related takes place or exists.” Jesus became manifest in the realm of creaturely flesh existing in the realm of humanity. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 765, considers this phrase a dative of sphere meaning in the “sphere of humanity.”

[104] Andria, “1 Timothy,” 1473.

[105] Marshall, “1 Timothy,” 802.

[106] Mathewson and Emig, *Intermediate Greek Grammar*, 151, 171-172.

[107] Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 243-244, reports that qualitative, abstract nouns stress quality, nature, essence, and class traits and are anarthrous. The song could be stressing the human, creaturely nature into which Jesus was incarnated. This very nature would have been viewed as evil by the ascetic opponents of Paul.

[108] Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 227, writes, “The second line is one of the more difficult lines in the hymn to interpret.” Those with a Reformational perspective stress the utter sinfulness and helplessness of people. For sinful humans to be accepted by God, God must do all the work of transformation while the sinner receives God’s grace passively. The change is viewed as forensic stressing that God makes the declaration of “uprightness,” even though the person is still a sinner but saved by grace.

[109] A. E. McGrath, “Justification” in *DPAHL*, 518.

[110] Steven M. Studebaker, “Beyond Tongues: A Pentecostal Theology of Grace,” in *Defining Issues in Pentecostalism*, ed. Steven M. Studebaker (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2008), 49, 48, explains, “The crux of salvation is forensic justification . . . covered by the righteousness of Christ . . . they should be accounted righteous outside themselves . . . Christ’s work is for us, but outside of us.”

[111] Perkins, *Pastoral Letters*, 73.

[112] Gordon D. Fee, "Some Exegetical and Theological Reflections on Ephesians 4.30 and Pauline Pneumatology," in *Spirit and Renewal: Essays in Honor of J. Rodman Williams*, ed. Mark W. Wilson (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 140, 141.

[113] Those who apply this perspective to line 2 would then assert that line 3 reveals Christ's exaltation and praise by the angelic hosts, all after the resurrection and ascension to his divine seat at the righthand of God. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 227, asserts that the phrase "most probably refers to the resurrection." Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 766, claims that based on Christ's resurrection, he entered the sphere of the supernatural, the spiritual, and the realm of the Holy Spirit.

[114] Keener, *Bible Background*, 608.

[115] Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 102, makes the important observation: "It is noticeable that nowhere in the hymn is the death or resurrection of Christ mentioned." He explains that Paul only used selected parts of the hymn for specific purposes.

[116] The events related to Jesus' water baptism, the coming of the Spirit, and the voice of God have clear intertextual connects with Isaiah's identification of God's special servant: "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations" (Isa 42:1).

[117] Robert P. Menzies, *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 107, says that in Luke 1-2, "We are introduced to a host of righteous characters."

[118] Roger Stronstad, "The Charismatic Theology of St Luke Revisited," in *Defining Issues in Pentecostalism*, ed. Steven M. Studebaker (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2008), 106, 105-122, states, "In Luke-Acts al who receive the Holy Spirit have first gained the essential spiritual prerequisite, namely, they are already saved . . . all are in right standing before God." He also stresses that the coming of the Holy Spirit upon people is for prophetic, vocational ministry both for Jesus and his disciples.

[119] Spirit, in the dative case, is used as a dative of agency or agent, the one performing the action. "Vindication happened through the agency of the Holy Spirit." Perkins, *Pastoral Letters*, 73. See Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 101. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 163, explains, "The dative substantive is used to indicate the personal agent by whom the action of the verb is accomplished." The Spirit is the Person who vindicated the incarnate Jesus who humbled himself to become "man" in order to serve as the effective mediator between God and humankind. It should also be noted that Spirit is anarthrous. But as a proper name and "one-of-a-kind" noun, the definite article is unnecessary. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 245, 248.

[120] For a significant discussion of the Spirit at the time of Jesus' death, see Blaine Charette, *Restoring Presence: The Spirit in Matthew's Gospel* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 92-96.

[121] Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 165, 148. Wallace explains, "in no instance can it be said that the person(s) in the dative case initiate(s) the act. In other words, volition rests wholly with the subject, while the dative noun is merely recipient." One might label this phrase as a dative of recipient. The noun is anarthrous and could be understood as a generic noun referring to the myriads of angels, God's created heavenly hosts, who watched the Son of God enter the realm of humanity in order to provide salvation for God's human creatures. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 253. Perkins, *Pastor Letters*, 74, labels the phrase as a dative of reference which refers to the person or party to whom God decides to make himself visible.

[122] Stott, *The Message*, 107, reports that the angels "watched the whole unfolding drama of salvation."

[123] Reid, "Angels," 22. However, it should be noted that Reid, in examining this song, notes a correspondence between lines 2, 3, and 6 and claims, "Christ's appearance before angels refers to his exaltation in the presence of

angels of glory who acclaimed honor and praise to the exalted Lord, perhaps in triumphal procession,” 21. Based on the grammar of line 3 and the historical context of Ephesus, his view of the song seems amiss.

[124] Marshall, “1 Timothy,” 802.

[125] Bromiley, “Angel,” 46.

[126] Andria, “1 Timothy,” 1473.

[127] Examining Wallace’s categories, *Greek Grammar*, 148, 153, 142, the phrase could be viewed as a dative of recipient, the nations being the ones to whom Jesus was preached; a dative of sphere—in the realm or sphere of the Gentile nations, emphasizing that the gospel was proclaimed beyond the Jews and the borders of Israel; or it could be viewed as a dative of advantage—Jesus was preached for the benefit of the nations. Anarthrous “nations” could emphasis this particular class or quality of peoples who stood outside or distinct from the nation of Israel, the target audience of the opponents. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 244.

[128] Marshall, “1 Timothy,” 802.

[129] Stott, *The Message*, 107, reports that this phrase is “a clear reference to the church’s world-wide mission in obedience to the great commission of the risen Lord.”

[130] Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 263. He also comments, “Jesus historically limited his own mission primarily or exclusively to Israel” (315). For a similar view see Jeannine K. Brown and Kyle Roberts, *Matthew,* THNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018), 146, 100, who comment, “Jesus has defined the boundaries of his mission . . . to focus (exclusively) on Israel rather than on Samaritans or gentiles (10:5-6).”

[131] *Ethnê,* the nations, as distinct from Israel. G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1922), 129.

[132] Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah recorded 700 years before his coming, “It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth” (Isa 49:6).

[133] Perkins, *Pastoral Letters*, 74-75, seems to overlook the exclusive nature of the preaching of the false teachers. While he acknowledges that for the term ethne “the usual reference in the NT is to non-Jews,” he proposes that nations, in this case, “probably includes both Jews and non-Jews.”

[134] Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 153, dative of sphere, in the realm of created matter which God had created. The kosmos represented the “all” whom God wanted to be saved and to benefit from the saving work of Christ. The anarthrous “world” or “created order” would represent a quality or nature of this generic noun. There was one way alone for all humankind to experience God’s grace and have the possibility of becoming godly, and that was through faith—no other way. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 244.

[135] Perkins, *Pastoral Letters*, 75.

[136] Marshall, “1 Timothy,” 802. Stott, *The Message*, 107, notes, “The final statement . . . sounds like another reference to the ascension,” considering the vindication by the Spirit to be the first reference to the resurrection and ascension. To maintain a chronological sequence, he claims that line 6 refers to the parousia “foreshadowing the final epiphany in power and great glory.”

[137] On the other hand, King, *A Leader Led*, 67, indicates that line 6 is out of order because the ascension had to precede the preaching to the nations.

[137] Keener, *Bible Background*, 608.

[138] Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 284.

[139] Glory (*doxa*) could be understood as an abstract noun, thus anarthrous, or a one-of-a-kind location, the glorious realm of God. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 244, 248-249.

[140] According to Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 161, 147, the dative of manner denotes the manner in which the action of the verb is accomplished. It could also represent a dative of destination, Christ's transfer from one place to another—from the realm of the created order (κόσμος) to the realm of the glorious heavens, the place of glory (δόξα).

Standing on Their Shoulders: A Study of Early Assemblies of God Missions in Egypt

Christi Trimbur*

Introduction

> In 1926 a contributor to *The Latter Rain Evangel* wrote:
>
> Pioneers are not weak men; not vacillating, frivolous women; but men and women with purpose and faith; men and women who are dauntless, stalwart, and heroic. Their names may never be written in the hall of fame, for they are humble folk, these pioneers for the [g]ospel, but yonder in the glory their sacrificial lives will shine with dazzling splendor (A.C.R. 1926, 9).

This passage accurately describes the Assemblies of God pioneer missionaries to Egypt. They labored continuously amidst hardship, war, lack of finances, and sickness so that the ministry could move forward and those who had never heard the [g]ospel could discover the truth for the first time. Yet, regardless of the surrounding circumstances, they pressed on, with one foot planted on Egyptian soil and the other in eternity, as they worked to bring as many to faith as possible.

The first Assemblies of God missionaries moved to Egypt in 1909, pioneering a new work in the nation. By 1970, Florence Christie (1997, 242) reported that the Egyptian Assemblies of God (EAG) had 140 churches throughout the country. This exponential growth is primarily due to the steadfast work and commitment of Assemblies of God (AG) missionaries during that time. This paper seeks to determine how the lives of missionaries who have gone before can inform those serving in Egypt today. After a brief history of the work of the AG missionaries from 1909 through 1970, significant themes from their lives and work will be discussed. This study will then lead to concluding remarks, including suggestions for those serving in the nation today to enhance future growth.

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A Brief History of Assemblies of God Missionaries in Egypt

Ghali Hanna, an Egyptian, received the baptism in the Holy Spirit at a conference held in Jerusalem by Lucy Leatherman, a missionary from the Azusa Street mission (Anderson 2006, 115). After that, he returned to his hometown of Assiout in Upper Egypt and witnessed God start a revival there. Ghali Hanna and other Pentecostal believers then requested foreign missionaries to come and help (Anderson 2007, 155). As a result in March 1909, the first American Pentecostal missionaries, George and Lydia Brelsford, arrived in Assiout, Egypt, birthing the Assemblies of God movement in the nation (Anderson 2007, 155).

The Brelsfords were joined by Herbert Randall, initially as a missionary of the Canadian Holiness Movement and later with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada; the Crouch family; C. W. Doney; Lillian Trasher; and A. H. Post, who was one of the original members at Azusa in 1906 (Burgess and van der Mass 2002, 6). Mabel Dean joined their apostolic band in 1924, first living in Assiout with Trasher and then moving to Minya. By 1953, George H. Carmichael (1953, 11) notes that Egypt is the "most encouraging Assemblies of God mission field in the Near East." Florence Christie (1997, 219), a long-time missionary to Egypt, stated that "in 1940 there were [30] churches; 1950, [56] churches; 1960, 107 churches; 1965, 135 churches. They almost doubled their number every [10] years." These increases in church were an astronomical feat, particularly when considering the political climate in Egypt during much of that time being plagued by war, diseases, sicknesses, Islamic influences, and lack of funding.

Strategy

The growth of the EAG between 1909 and 1970 did not simply happen. Instead, it resulted from pioneer AG missionaries' hard work and strategy. Their strategy led to the remarkable planting of an average of 2.3 churches annually over 61 years in a Muslim-majority country. This strategy began with prayer.

Prayer as a Lifestyle

Early Pentecostal missionaries modeled a lifestyle of prayer. Laura Chevalier (2019, 297) correctly evaluates the life of Trasher, stating that Trasher's writing demonstrates one that relied on prayer for daily provisions. Stanley Frodsham (1941, 11) tells of a time when the orphanage

was in dire need of finances and not able to provide food for everyone. Trasher then brought all the children into the prayer room, explained the situation to them, and announced that it would be best for them to go to their relatives until God provided. The children began praying with Trasher. The very next morning a check from America arrived that covered the expenses needed. In this way, the children learned to live by faith through prayer from their "Mama" Lillian. So much so that at another time when Trasher was traveling, and money was again scarce, the daily menu consisted mainly of beans and lentils. The four- and five-year-old children asked the cook for meat. The cook replied that they should do what Lillian would do and ask the Lord. The children immediately began to pray for the Lord to send them meat. While they were praying, someone brought half a cow (Frodsham 1941, 11).

Mabel Dean and Christie Burt echoed the necessity of a foundation of prayer for revival to occur. Burt (1949, 10) states that before a revival, the local pastor in Tahta, Egypt requested the entire church to fast and pray for 10 days for a revival. As a result, approximately 35 people came to faith in Christ, and a number were baptized in the Spirit. Likewise, a revival in Upper Egypt came out of prayer by Dean, her evangelistic band, and young people in a Sunday school class in which many were saved and filled with the Spirit. Thus, it can be surmised from the lives of these early missionaries that prayer is the foundation upon which revival is built, leading to salvations and baptisms in the Spirit.

This lifestyle of prayer led early missionaries to request prayer from those "back home." Over and over in various Pentecostal magazines, one finds missionaries in Egypt asking for prayer. In 1911, George Brelsford (1911, 22) wrote *The Latter Rain Evangel* pleading with readers to pray for the nations to be reached, particularly Muslim countries such as Egypt. Their prayer requests also kept them connected with their constituents in the United States, allowing those "back home" to participate in the work in Egypt through prayer.

This lifestyle of prayer led to reported revivals throughout the nation over the decades. In addition, the missionaries witnessed direct answers to prayer as the Lord provided for basic needs and healed others. Most importantly, their prayer led them to accomplish great work for God in Egypt.

Prayer as a Strategy

In 1911 Marie Ericsson moved to Port Said to begin a new work in the area. In her article for *The Latter Rain Evangel*, she admitted that entry into the community could not come through human power. So, she and her colleagues began praying to God. For two weeks, they prayed specifically for entry into homes in the community to share the gospel. Instead, they found that the Muslims kept coming to them instead of their team going into the intended homes (Ericsson 1926, 2-3). So, they altered their ministry strategy through an answer to prayer, and a new ministry of teaching young girls began, those girls who came initially to their doors.

Similarly, Mabel Dean prayed ardently for the ministry of her "girls" as they, now disciples of Christ, went into villages throughout Upper Egypt to share with others. Dean prayed with and trained these Spirit-filled young women, mainly from the Lillian Trasher Orphanage, on how to evangelize in homes and how to hold services (Assemblies of God Division of Foreign Missions 1990, 53-54). Reports show an excellent response because of Dean's faithful prayer as churches were planted throughout the area (Assemblies of God Division of Foreign Missions 1990, 58).

These testimonies exemplify the missionaries' commitment to prayer before entering a new area or ministry, as they sought the Lord for direction and open doors. Burt (1997, 106) maintains that the missionaries' desire for Egypt during her time was "that the Lord would move in His own might and power and send a revival of His Spirit among the villagers in ALL neglected areas – not just limited territory. We fasted, asking for the hand of God to do what we could not" (emphasis original). They firmly believed that they could do nothing except through prayer. In other words, as stated by Oswald Chambers (1992, loc. 5461), "Prayer does not equip us for greater works – prayer is the greater work."

Significant Themes in Their Activities

The writings of early missionaries in Egypt show their consistent lifestyles of prayer. Out of these prayers came strategies for local ministry throughout the country. Through a reading of their testimonies, themes emerge from their lifestyles of both prayer and ministry strategy. They were committed to investing in local people, building a foundation of Scripture, evangelization, building the church, relying on the Lord, and relying on the local people.

Invest in Local People

A.H. Post noted that training Egyptian believers for the ministry was paramount because they already knew the language and culture. He believed the right local person could win more souls for Christ than an American missionary could (Anderson 2013, 129). C.W. Doney agreed with this concept, raising Egyptian evangelists and pastors (Frodsham 1941, 5). Investing in local believers became a foundational principle for AG missionaries in Egypt for the next 70 years.

Dean took this principle to heart. Her evangelistic bands comprised girls from the Lillian Trasher Orphanage and a baby girl she was given by an Egyptian family and whom Dean raised herself (Assemblies of God Division of Foreign Missions 1990, 54). Additionally, Sabry Mikhail became Dean's spiritual son and ministry helper, seeing him as her "Timothy," a reference towards Paul's mentoring relationship to Timothy in the New Testament (Assemblies of God Division of Foreign Missions 1990, 53). As her ministry grew, Dean added to her evangelistic bands, training young Egyptians to enter new villages in Upper Egypt.

Trasher, too, felt investing in Egyptian believers was paramount to the continuation of the work. One day, she and some of the boys from the orphanage looked out at the vast number of villages surrounding their area. One of the boys commented that it would require a great deal of effort for Lillian to begin a ministry in each of these villages. Trasher replied, "No, son. Not of me, but of you boys. This is your work" (Trasher 1937, 15). Upon completion of high school, which included Bible education, Trasher and her staff dedicated young men they determined were called to the ministry and sent them to work with an Egyptian pastor to learn the work of the ministry (Trasher 1937, 5). In this way, not only were boys from her orphanage trained for ministry, but local Egyptian pastors conducted the training. This mentorship cycle built strong bonds between the pastors and those trained.

This investment in local believers for the work of the ministry led to the creation of the EAG. By 1944 Philip Crouch reported that 30 local pastors and evangelists were under the direction of an executive committee of Egyptians (Crouch 1944, 3). Six years later, Crouch (1950, 21) reported that the youth who participated in revivals in the early days of the Pentecostal movement in Egypt had now become leaders of the newly formed church. "They have labored, they have prayed, they have sacrificed, they have borne persecution. And as a result, a church has been established which has the confidence of thousands of villagers

throughout the country." Christine Carmichael (1961, 26) additionally summarized the field's reason for the goal of investing in local people succinctly,

The ultimate task of communicating the gospel to Egypt must rest upon trained national leaders and a strong indigenous church. The most valuable service we can render the densely-populated Nile Valley is to train and prepare Egyptian young men [and women] for Christian ministry. There are hundreds of villages in the Nile Valley where the gospel has never been heard. Egyptians who have heard the gospel story once must be told again. Those who have believed must be established in the Word of God.

Coupled with their commitment to a lifestyle of prayer, the early missionaries' desire to reach Egypt through its own people created the EAG. To further develop local leadership, they established in 1952 the Middle East Bible School (later named Middle East Evangelical Theological Seminary) (Christie 1997, 157). The attentiveness to investing in local believers built a strong foundation so the ministry could continue when tragically missionaries had to evacuate due to later unrest (Christie 1997, 172).

Build a Foundation of Scripture

The focus on local believers could only occur because these founding missionaries lived a lifestyle of prayer and believed in the importance of Scripture. They recognized that local believers could only minister effectively by building a foundation of Scripture. They also understood that "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16-17 NIV) and that the teaching, rebuking, and correcting could happen even for those who do not yet follow Christ.

Ericsson (1926, 3) testified that they gave each of the girls in their school a Bible as soon as they could read. Unfortunately, some could not take them home because their fathers would not allow it. Even so, they read them daily at school. She goes on to share that the stories in Scripture illuminated the gospel message for these girls; as a result, some of those girls came to faith in Christ. Furthermore, Doney (1927, 23) told of Muslim men who wanted whole Bibles, not just the New Testament, so they could study it in its entirety. This desire led to many young men attending services regularly and seeking the truth.

The most apparent evidence of early missionaries' belief in the importance of Scripture and reliance on it for evangelism and discipleship while serving in Egypt comes from Florence

Christie (1997, 116-117). In 1950, a young man named Ishak ("Isaac") asked Christie if he could travel up and down the Nile Valley selling Bibles and Testaments. She and her colleagues saw the potential in this strategy since a person indigenous to the culture could be much more effective in this sort of ministry than an outsider. Ishak could enter areas in the Egyptian interior untouched by the EAG or AG missionaries. Within a year, Ishak distributed "approximately 2,000 Bibles and New Testaments, 1,800 Gospels, 950 Bible study and Gospel stories, and 2,700 tracts." By 1955, they witnessed an estimated 8,000 Bibles, Testaments, and Gospels distributed (Christie 1997, 161). They developed the program to be sustainable, with each dollar gained through the sale of a book providing another book to sell in the future. Moreover, the program delivered God's Word deep into Egypt in areas unreached previously by any Christian. Thus, Christie argued that the people they hired to sell Bibles were one of their best tools for spreading God's Word as well as for building an indigenous church.

Christie's argument that spreading God's Word throughout Egypt built an indigenous church is well founded. The early missionaries' commitment to building a foundation of Scripture for Egyptian believers led to the formation of a Bible school, numerous churches planted, and countless choosing to follow Christ upon reading God's Word in new areas. Thus, building a foundation of Scripture upon a lifestyle of prayer and investing in local believers was crucial to forming an indigenous Egyptian church.

Evangelize

Allan Anderson (2006, 111) evaluates Pentecostalism, stating that from its beginnings, it "placed emphasis on evangelism and missions as a result of the experience of the Spirit baptism." This emphasis is evidenced by an article produced by *The Latter Rain Evangel* stating, "If we have not the spirit of evangelism for the whole world, we have not the spirit that Jesus had when He left heaven for this sin-cursed earth" (The Latter Rain Evangel 1920, 12). This statement fits the life and work of early Pentecostal missionaries in Egypt.

In the beginning, the breadth of the work in Egypt was enormous. Because of this movement growth, George Brelsford (1911, 22) and his colleagues prayed for creative means of reaching those who had still never heard the gospel. They decided to create an evangelistic booklet entitled "The Message of God" in Arabic because of this time of prayer. Egyptian believers and missionaries worked together to distribute this little booklet throughout the country

(Hicks 1914, 3). By 1919, C.W. Doney (1919, 8) wrote that many of the 6,000 villages throughout Egypt asked for missionaries and evangelists to come to their villages as a result of reading the pamphlet, stating that they wanted someone to bring the gospel message to them.

The early Pentecostal missionaries continued developing even further creative means of evangelism which culturally would work in Egypt. For example, in 1926, just two years after her arrival, Dean and an female missionary, who was a baby she had taken in, moved to Minya in Upper Egypt, approximately 70 miles north of the Lillian Trasher Orphanage. Together the pair's evangelistic work began with a Sunday school with three little boys from the streets. Gradually, the meeting grew, and through the children, Dean and her ministry partner reached the hearts of the parents (Assemblies of God Division of Foreign Missions 1990, 53). This Sunday School ministry led to the development of evangelistic bands of girls from the Lillian Trasher Orphanage going into villages throughout Upper Egypt, as noted above.

One interesting practice related to evangelism was how missionaries empowered local believers. Pentecostal missionaries joined with other denominations to facilitate a movement among young Egyptian believers, facilitated by *Khalas in-Nafus* (Salvation of Souls), an Egyptian layperson who emphasized the purpose of evangelism with following up by ministering to those who responded to the message, a new practice for Egyptian believers. One report stated that more than 200 converts chose Jesus at one convention held in Assiout (Crouch 1950, 22).

The above testimonies demonstrate the dedication of early AG missionaries towards completing the work of evangelism. This method included creative means of evangelism as well as empowering local believers for the work of spreading the gospel. This strategy, then, expanded the Assemblies of God's mission to new areas throughout Egypt.

Build the Church

For early Assemblies of God missionaries, the essential function of church structures entailed utilizing house prayer gatherings that led to revivals (Chevalier 2019). Consequently, the need for mission buildings became crucial towards the developing ministry of Assemblies of God missionaries. One of their first acts with this strategy in mind was to purchase and build a structure that would house the missionaries, their families, and the work of the ministry. Their rapid expansion of believers and missionaries created a replicating need for mission buildings throughout the major cities of Egypt (Frodsham 1941, 11). These mission compounds may be

considered outdated in most modern contexts; however, creating space for church functions such as preaching, teaching, worship, and discipleship in local communities was not then and still does not remain outdated.

These mission stations allowed missionaries to hold meetings whereby they preached the gospel message to those residing in the immediate area. Because of this, missionaries established more mission stations as they moved further into other parts of the country. For instance, Florence Bush (1915, 10-11) shared that when they opened a mission station in Tanta, a city in the Nile Delta, the people came in great crowds to their meetings. They shared the simple message of salvation, with many coming to faith and being baptized in the Spirit. Dean first rented a small apartment but quickly realized she needed a larger space to hold meetings as her ministry grew. She found a two-story building with a large room downstairs that served as the sanctuary, with the upstairs area reserved for living quarters (Assemblies of God Division of Foreign Missions 1990, 54-55). Because many Egyptians, particularly in Upper Egypt, are quite poor, attendees of church meetings must walk from their homes or places of work. Church buildings were needed in each small village to minister effectively to those people (Burt and Christie 1949, 10). During her 37 years of ministry for God in Egypt, Dean and her evangelistic band planted 15 churches that owned their buildings and 30 churches that met in rented sanctuaries (Assemblies of God Division of Foreign Missions 1990, 61).

Constructing these church buildings, then, required finances. In the village of Tahta, the church needed renovations, so the people resolved to do as much work as they could with the money they had raised among themselves. They also provided creative means of making their money stretch further. For instance, "one man offered to carry the lime and cement for repairing the church from the city on his camels. A woman said her income from her chickens would be given to the repairing of the church" (Burt and Christie 1949, 10). In this way, most buildings were built using Egyptian funds.

Rely on the Lord

To move from the relative comfort and safety in the United States to the desert sands of Egypt is no small ask for the typical Christian. Yet, these early Assemblies of God missionaries chose to obey the call from the Lord to go to Egypt, regardless of the cost. Since these missionaries chose to obey the Lord's call to go to Egypt, they also decided to rely entirely on

Him. All of them depended on offerings from churches in the United States to provide for their basic living as well as for their ministry needs, thanking their supporters for donations in weekly and monthly magazines circulated through Pentecostal churches (Trasher 1919, 7-8). Trasher reported her desire to rely entirely on the Lord for provisions for herself and her orphanage. She wrote of the joy she felt since determining only to buy what they had money to pay for. In one instance, she had enough fabric for her children but nothing more, and they badly needed new clothes. However, a widow went to her saying that her children needed clothes. She gave the woman what she needed, not knowing what would happen to her children. A few days later, as she was cutting the last piece of cloth, all the while asking the Lord for money for more fabric and the food she and the children required, someone brought $5.00. Ten minutes later, someone handed her $10.00. Then the next day, someone gave her $25.00, which was enough for all the cloth she needed (Trasher 1937, 5-6).

This total reliance on the provision of the Lord for each day modeled faith to those around them and provided joy in their life and work. Philip Crouch (1944, 3) wrote of his first visit to Lillian Trasher's Orphanage. He expected to come across a woman burdened with the work before her. Instead, to his surprise, a woman stood before him who "just bubbles over with the joy of the Lord in her work."

Rely on the Local People

Reliance on the Lord for provisions necessitates being open to the variety of ways the Lord will provide for needs. One way in which he provides is through local people. Trasher became known as the "lady on the donkey" because she rode around the local community asking for assistance, regardless of religious affiliation (Chevalier 2019, 300). Egyptians dubbed Florence Christie the "American Beggar" because she went to churches throughout Egypt seeking financial support for ministry (Christie 1997, 62). Through their requests, local people could give in partnership with the missionaries.

Embracing reliance on the Lord for provisions extends to local people and constitutes a need for both modeling and teaching tithing and generosity as an extension of relying on the Lord. Rev. Harold K. Needham, President and Founder of Southern California Bible School, gave this advice to new missionaries leaving the field, including Florence Christie: "Teach tithing and Christian stewardship even if other missionaries feel it is too demanding. Remember,

the people are not too poor to tithe. Tithing will strengthen their character and the word of the Lord" (Christie 1997, 15). Florence Christie visited the largest church in her area, with approximately 190 members but no pastor. She was surprised at their faithfulness in tithing. When asked how they learned about tithing, the church members said that the Spirit had led them as they read their Bibles. As a result, the church became the mother church of 10 other smaller churches in neighboring villages. Another testimony states that the lay ministers working with the "Salvation of Souls" movement paid their way, relying on the Lord for what they needed rather than the missionaries. These young men witnessed hundreds come to faith in Christ (Crouch 1950).

For Dean, sharing was a part of living; she modeled generosity for those around her. Whenever she received something from the U.S., she divided it among her workers. She placed any funds she received in a can, and whenever anyone had need, they took what was necessary. When the can was empty, she and her workers asked the Lord to refill it (Assemblies of God Division of Foreign Missions 1990, 60). Similarly, a young boy from the Lillian Trasher Orphanage was placed in charge of a village school opening that year. He started without desks or benches or even mats. He sacrificed out of his meager wages and gave liberally, which caused the people to contribute as well. As a result, the school and its young teacher became firmly established in the community allowing for the gospel to be received by villagers (Christie 1997, 154-157). More churches were planted due to relying on local people's tithes and generosity. This sustainable system helped the Egyptian Assemblies of God church discover they could depend on the Lord for provisions and not on the missionaries.

Suggestions for Future Growth

The academic discipline of history tends to discourage inferring present-day application when studying the past because it is only possible to account for some of the variables present (Chevalier 2019, 302). However, Gordon Heath (2008, 20), in his brief work, *Doing Church History,* argues that Scripture compels us to learn from the past. For instance, in 1 Corinthians 10:11, Paul affirms that events in Israel's history were written down as warnings for those coming after. Again, in Hebrews 11:4, the author states that "by faith," Abel and the others from this chapter still speak to readers today. Thus, for Christians, the study of history goes deeper than the recreation of events from the past. Philip Sheldrake (2005, 13), a leading spirituality

studies scholar, asserts that the study of spirituality is "self-implicating, it is not only informative but also transformative." Laura Chevalier (2019, 302) expounds on this idea, stating that "as a scholar studies a spiritual tradition or historical religious text, he or she seeks information from them, and at the same time searches them for truth that he or she can appropriate." In other words, it is impossible to read the accounts of pioneer Assemblies of God missionaries and remain unchanged.

This transformation goes beyond the individual reading the accounts of these missionaries. Heath (2008, 15) contends that "by helping the church remember its past, church historians contribute to a healthier church. In the same way, church leaders who help their church remember its past contribute to a healthier church." In other words, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" (Santayana 1905, 172). Thus, current Assemblies of God missionaries and the leadership and pastors of the EAG can learn much from these pioneer missionaries.

First and most important is the lesson on the lifestyle of prayer. For those early missionaries, everything happened due to strategic and ongoing prayer. Their prayer helped guide their strategy. The discussion above demonstrates the missionaries praying for themselves and their ministries but also modeling a life of prayer and instilling that value within the indigenous church in Egypt. Hence, present-day missionaries can apply this truth to their lives and ministries, choosing to continue to build and model lifestyles of prayer.

Second, early Assemblies of God missionaries in Egypt chose to invest in local people. They raised pastors and evangelists from the beginning, believing they would spread the gospel further than the missionaries could. These local believers created the Egyptian Assemblies of God with churches spanning the country. These local believers were the first students at the Bible school, becoming the first ordained pastors. Working alone can indeed create faster results, but as the African proverb says, if you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together. If present-day missionaries and the EAG choose to work in partnership, the church could grow exponentially in Egypt, affecting people groups yet unreached.

Third, these missionaries evangelized continually. They modeled evangelism and then empowered local believers to evangelize. They embraced creative means of sharing the gospel. They sowed broadly and proclaimed boldly. They reached further and further into new areas of Egypt with the Gospel message. Evangelism was not an option for them. It was simply part of

their daily life. Present-day missionaries can take this value to heart, recognizing that both missionaries and local people must evangelize to expand the church's reach in the country.

Fourth, early Assemblies of God missionaries built the church. They built churches throughout the entire country. They understood the need for community and created space for Egyptian believers to meet with God. Although today's Egypt is vastly different from 1909, the human need for community with others and God has not changed. Thus, present-day missionaries, in partnership with the EAG, should find ways of building more churches in more communities, which may include creative means such as house groups due to the change in the current political climate.

Fifth, these missionaries relied on the Lord. They lived out Matthew 6:11, "Give us today our daily bread." They found joy in the freedom of complete reliance on the Lord. As of the time of writing, Egypt is experiencing one of the worst economic crises in its modern history (Egyptian Streets 2023). As their currency continues to plummet, Egyptians can be seen weeping as they worry about how they will feed their families. Present-day missionaries in Egypt can learn from those who served in Egypt during wars, famines, and diseases how to live generously and joyfully amidst difficulties, modeling a lifestyle of reliance on the Lord.

Finally, early Assemblies of God missionaries relied on the local people. They asked for help as needed, knowing that the Lord could provide for their needs in various ways. Likewise, present-day missionaries can choose to "take off" the clothes of independence and self-reliance prevalent in American culture and instead clothe themselves with "compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience" (Colossians 3:12) by showing vulnerability and asking for help when it is needed from others, especially among the Egyptian local believing community.

Conclusion

C. W. Doney (1919, 8) summarized the life of early missionaries to Egypt beautifully: "Beloved, a laborer is a true missionary, a man or woman who has heard the call of God and gone forth to the regions beyond, led by the Holy Ghost, willing to give his life, if needs be, to bring men and women to Jesus Christ." They prayed continuously, lived by faith, invested in local leadership, and worked tirelessly to form the EAG. Because of their labors in faith, they have much to say to those serving in Egypt today so that the EAG can continue to grow and reach new areas for the glory of God.

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Missiological Reflections

Multiplying Indigenous Churches in Rural America

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Note

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Introduction

As a retired Assemblies of God missionary to Africa, I have long believed in and practiced the proven strategy of planting Spirit-empowered indigenous churches. The principle of indigeneity comes from the world of horticulture. An indigenous plant grows naturally in its own native environment. It needs no outside assistance. While non-native plants require

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He has written nineteen books: Teaching in the Spirit (1995), Power Ministry: How to Minister in the Spirit's Power (1998), From Azusa to Africa to the Nations (2005), Empowered for Global Mission (2005), Acts: The Spirit of God in Mission (2007), In Step with the Spirit: Studies in the Spirit-filled Walk (2008), The Kingdom and the Power: The Kingdom of God: A Pentecostal Interpretation (2009), Teaching in the Spirit (2009), Experiencing the Spirit: A Study of the Work of the Spirit in the Life of the Believer (2009), You Can Minister in the Spirit's Power (2009), Proclaiming Pentecost: 100 Sermon Outlines on the Power of the Holy Spirit (co-editor, 2011); The 1:8 Promise of Jesus (2012), Missionary Tongues Revisited (2014), Walking with the Apostles: 45 Days in the Book of Acts (2016), The New Testament Strategy of the Spirit (2017), Proclaiming Christ to the Nations: 100 Sermon Outlines on Spirit-Empowered Mission (2017), Interceding for the Nations: 100 Sermon Outlines on Missional Prayer (2018); How to Live for God: A Guide for New Christians (2018), and Mobilizing for Missions (2019).

The second book, Power Ministry, has been translated into seven languages and is used in Bible schools throughout Africa and in parts of Europe. He also wrote Paradigms for Pentecostal Missions: Graduate Study Guide. In addition, Dr. Miller has written for the Pentecostal Evangel and Advance magazines. His books have been published in several languages including Spanish, French, Portuguese, Romanian, Swahili, Kinyarwanda, Chichewa, Moore, and others.

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extraordinary means to nurture them and keep them alive, an indigenous plant needs no such assistance. It naturally blooms, matures, and reproduces on its own. A Spirit-empowered indigenous church is a church that emphasizes the empowering work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of its members and practices the biblical principles of self-governance, self-support, and self-propagation.

This was the strategy followed by the apostle Paul in the book of Acts. When he entered new territory, he preached the gospel with power, gathered converts into churches, raised up workers from the native soil, ensured that they were filled with the Spirit, trained them, deployed them, and moved on to the next place. Each time, he left behind a Spirit-empowered church that could support itself, govern itself, and extend the gospel throughout the region. In doing this, Paul was following the pattern first set by Jesus.

Worldwide Success

Adherence to these indigenous church planting principles has played a significant role in the growth of the Assemblies of God worldwide. In just over a century, the AG mission has grown from a few underfunded missionaries serving in a handful of countries to a small army of 2,699 world missionaries serving in 153 countries. Globally, the movement reports 56 million adherents meeting in 432,000 local churches. Missions scholars have attempted to explain the movement's success, citing cultural and sociological factors. Insiders, however, attribute the movement's success to the grace of God and to its strong commitment to Pentecostal experience and practice and a relentless application of indigenous church principles.

In addition to the above figures, AGWM reports 159,242 ministerial students presently being trained in 2,929 Assemblies of God Bible schools. With the typical student completing his or her training in two to four years, this means that, on average, Assemblies of God schools are graduating more than 50,000 students each year—or about one-half million new Pentecostal ministers each decade. This is a powerful reality. And yet, this is not the most significant dynamic contributing to the growth of the Assemblies of God worldwide.

The most significant dynamic occurs in the tens of thousands of local assemblies around the world who supply our Bible schools with fresh ministerial candidates. It is in these churches, large and small, urban and rural, that prospective Pentecostal ministers are being saved, filled with the Spirit, and challenged to pursue God's mission. It is in these churches that they first

sense a call into ministry and are directed to the Bible schools for further training. Healthy, Spirit-empowered local churches are the key to the future success of the movement. This is true around the world. It is also true in our American AG churches.

Reaching Rural America

Reaching rural America will require the multiplication of Spirit-empowered indigenous churches in thousands of small towns and communities across the nation. And this multiplication of churches will require the proliferation of a new breed of indigenous church planters. These new church planters will not fall from the sky. And it is unlikely—except in rare cases— that they will spring from our urban churches. They will emerge primarily from our rural churches across the nation. It was after observing people in the "towns and villages" of rural Galilee, that Jesus said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Mark 9:37-38).

This is where our present rural pastors come into the picture. Only they can initiate the process. Without focused, Spirit-directed, missions-minded rural pastors, nothing else will follow. They are the match that must light the fuse. And their churches are the seedbed from which new church planters must sprout. To fulfill the vision of reaching rural America, every rural pastor must see his or her church as a missions mobilization station.

Thus, when we plant churches, we cannot plant just any kind of churches. We must intentionally plant Spirit-empowered indigenous churches. To do this we must purposely raise up an army of well-trained, Spirit-empowered indigenous church planters. In our Bible schools in Africa, we teach our pastors to view themselves not only as a pastor caring for a single flock of people but as a missionary-pastor tasked with reaching an entire region with the gospel. I recall one student coming to me with a wide smile on his face. "My teacher," he said, "my leaders have made me a presbyter." "That's great," I replied, "how many churches are in your section?" "Just mine," he answered, "they told me to plant my own section."

Getting Started

In the remainder of this article, I will suggest a strategy for getting this process started. In my years of collaboration with leaders, missionaries, and church planters across Africa, I have

observed four qualities exhibited by those pastors and churches who consistently produce new Spirit-empowered ministers and church planters:

1. Consistent teaching and preaching on the mission of God. Those pastors and churches who consistently raise up Spirit-empowered ministers and church planters possess and propagate a clear understanding of God's mission and the Church's role in fulfilling that mission. God's mission, sometimes referred to as the *missio Dei,* is His intention to redeem and call to himself a people out of every nation, tongue, and tribe on earth (Rev. 5:9; 7:9). Jesus summed up that mission in His Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:20-21; Acts 1:8). God now petitions His people to join Him in fulfilling His mission. If we hope for church planters to arise out of our congregations, we must consistently teach God's people about God's mission and guide them in finding their place in fulfilling that mission.

2. A strong emphasis on Spirit baptism. Second, those pastors and churches who consistently produce Spirit-empowered ministers and church planters rightly regard the baptism in the Holy Spirit as an essential missionally empowering experience (Acts 1:8). Because of this, they preach and teach often on the subject, and they regularly pray with their people to be filled with the Holy Spirit. They then trust the Spirit to work in the lives of their people, convicting, calling, and emboldening them for service. The words of the late AG missiologist, Melvin Hodges, are especially applicable: "To be successful in indigenous church ministry, missionaries [church planters] must do more that teach and initiate believers in right methods. They must also initiate believers into the realm of the Holy Spirit's workings. New Testament methods coupled with New Testament power is the answer to present-day problems on the mission field" (*The Indigenous Church and the Indigenous Church and the Missionary,* Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2009, 127).

3. Modeling evangelism and church planting. Further, those pastors and churches who consistently produce church planters and other missional leaders are themselves winning souls to Christ and planting other Spirit-empowered missionary churches. In other words, church planters typically rise out of churches that are led by pastors who are themselves reaching out to the lost and planting new churches. These missional pastors then invite others to join them in the mission. If we expect to raise up indigenous church planters across rural America, we must ourselves become church planters. And we must invite others to join us in the venture. Further,

we must ensure that the churches we plant are themselves Spirit-empowered indigenous churches led by Spirit-empowered missional leaders. And so it goes.

4. Facilitating the call of God. Finally, those pastors who effectively raise up other Spirit-empowered ministers and church planters speak often on the call of God, and they provide their people with opportunities to respond to that call. Then, when individuals do respond, these pastors invest time and energy in guiding and nurturing them in fulfilling God's call on their lives. Following the example of Jesus, they spend much time with them inviting them to join them in ministry (Mark 3:14; Luke 8:1, Luke 9:1-2). And when God leads them to go to Bible school to seek further training, the church stands behind them with their prayers, encouragement, and financial support.

At the heart of planting indigenous churches is confidence in the Spirit of God. The Pentecostal pastor can be confident in the people, no matter how commonplace and unsophisticated they may seem, because he or she believes that the same Spirit who indwells, empowers, and equips them, will indwell, empower, and equip others.

Cup of Cold Water and Person of Peace in Context: A Missionary Commentary on Matthew 10: Ministering in Dangerous Places in the Power of the Holy Spirit

Jeffery Nelson*

Introduction

Much has been written concerning "*anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones"* (Matthew 10:42) (all references from NIV). Reading Matthew 10 in context produces a rich understanding of these words not consistent with typical popular interpretation.

The verses speaking of a "cup of cold water" are often used to support humanitarian ministries with evangelistic focus. This excerpts from a missionary newsletter illustrate the point: "If anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones…he will certainly not lose his reward." - Matthew 10:42…Sow a financial seed to continue sharing the love of Jesus with the least and the lost in the nations of the world today!"[1] It is interesting that the part of the verse that is deleted is "because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth" and instead there is an emphasis on giving to the lost. Both verses given in the Bible containing this expression of a "cup of cold water" (Matt 10:42 and Mark 9:41) are speaking of giving water to followers of Christ, not the lost. In fact, in both references Jesus was stating that if someone gives you, the disciple taking the gospel out, a cup of cold water he will not lose his reward. Often today we reverse the authorial intent. We teach that the minister gives a cup of cold water to the lost. Rather Jesus said that if a non-believer gives a cup of cold water to the missionary, they will be rewarded.

Reading Matthew 10 in context will bring the proper focus of the cup of cold water particularly as it relates to the person of peace.

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Call and Authority

Matthew 10:1 *Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness*.

There is a three-component pattern in Jesus' call to disciples: (1) to be with him, (2) to receive authority and power, and (3) to proclamation of the good news. We see this when Jesus called the twelve disciples (Mark 3:14-15), when he sent out the twelve (Matthew 10:1, 7; Luke 9:1-2), and when he sent out the seventy or seventy-two disciples (Luke 10). Each time he called individuals to be with him, then he gave them authority, and he sent them out to preach.

The authority came from the Father, through Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, to the disciples. That same Spirit that filled the disciples is poured out on his followers today (Acts 2:39). Those going to dangerous places have access to the same authority, power, and message to transform lives.

The Twelve named

2. *These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; 3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; 4 Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.*

Jesus called ordinary men who would accomplish supernatural things through the Spirit.

The Twelve sent out

5 These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. 6 Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel.

Observe Jesus' use of the words go, no, and enter here: "go nowhere…enter no town…but go rather to…and preach as you go" (vss. 5, 6 and 7). Jesus was specific concerning where to go, where not to go, and what to do as they went. At this time in Jesus' ministry, he was

focused on the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Later he sent his disciples to all nations (Matt. 28:19-20). The Lord directs his disciples to certain people groups at particular times.[2]

In Paul's ministry there was a similar direction to not go to particular people at a specific time but go to another people. Paul did not base his mission on strategy alone but was also strongly influenced by the leading of the Spirit. Paul had attempted to go to Asia toward the beginning of his second missionary journey, but the Holy Spirit had forbidden him (Acts 16:6). He then tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them (Acts 16:7). Later God opened the door for Paul to establish the work in Ephesus, Asia (Acts 19). And 1 Peter 1:1 explains that God's elect was established in Bithynia. Jesus declared God's plan, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19). Paul was attempting to do his part to fulfill God's plan. He strategized to go to Asia or Bithynia. God had a plan and a correct time to reach those two provinces, but God overruled Paul's strategy by his Spirit. God sent him to Europe on the second missionary journey rather than the places he had strategized. One can learn the principle that God works both through a believer's strategic planning and his Spirit's supernatural leading.

The Twelve sent to Preach

7 As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.'

The disciples were instructed to preach. The message was the same as John the Baptist had preached (Matt. 3:2) and Jesus was preaching (Matt. 4:17), "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." The kingdom of heaven is demonstrated in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 1-2) and the New Heaven and New Earth (Rev. 21-22) as a place where God and people love each other as he intended. Preaching is designed to unite people estranged by sin from God's love to himself. Jesus showed how the kingdom of heaven could exist in the hearts of people between the Garden and Heaven.

Authority utilized

8 *Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.*

The authority that Jesus gave in verse 1 he expected the disciples to use as they went to preach. God often shows himself strong where darkness is the strongest. Missionaries and evangelists should take opportunity to pray with the sick, raise the dead, and cast out demons when they enter communities where he is not known. God can even use disciples later who have earlier failed to drive out demons (Luke 9:40) on the mission field in dangerous places (Luke 10:1,9,17). There is a direct connection between miraculous power and proclamation of the good news. The disciples never failed to preach the gospel wherever they went. They knew that Jesus gave them authority over sick, disease, and devils so that people could be drawn to God. They never wasted the miracles by remaining silent. When God moved in the miraculous it had a dual purpose: (1) he loved the individual and wanted to minister to him/her, and (2) he loved the crowd and wanted to use the miracle to draw them to hear and receive the gospel. Do not waste the miracle. When God gives a miracle, preach the word.

The gift of the supernatural was given freely to the disciples and they were expected to give it free to those in the dangerous places they would go. No materials things of value were to be taken on the journey (vss. 9-10), but the spiritual things of greatest value were given freely because of God's love.

Jesus sent out Vulnerable Ministers

9 "Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts— 10 no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep.

Why did Jesus repeatedly state that his ministers should go to dangerous places with few material possessions? Why did Jesus tell the disciples to "Take nothing for the journey" (Mark 6:8) and go out without money, staff, extra coat, etc.? It may be in part because of the minister; Jesus wanted the disciples to learn faith and dependence on God. But could it also be in part because of the receivers? Could it be that Jesus was suggesting this method of evangelism, missions, and ministry not so much for the disciples, but so that the people to whom they came to minister would accept them in this vulnerable state?

Vulnerable mission is entering a community from a position of weakness and vulnerability rather than strength and power to reach people and plant churches through the

foolishness of preaching and the miraculous power of God. The biblical basis for vulnerable missions includes more than this passage in Matthew 10 but also the Book of Ruth, Luke 9 and 10, Philippians 2, and 1 Corinthians.

Ruth:

Ruth was poor, vulnerable, foreign, a widow, a religious outsider, from the despised Moabite people group, and an outcast. Ruth came into Bethlehem in this vulnerable state. But she was later received to the point of being highly honored and accepted by the community. Eventually her descendants became kings and even the Messiah came from her. It was her noble character and the *hesed* (unfailing love) she had for Naomi that endeared people to her. She was not a threat to the people of Bethlehem, but rather many pitied her, came to her aid, and supported her. Could her vulnerability have been a key to her acceptance in the community?

Jesus sent out the disciples:

The disciples were sent out as vulnerable men – commanded to go without gold, silver, copper, purses, bags, sandals, or staffs (Matt. 10:9-10, Luke 9:3-4, 10:4). It was to be their message and miracles that would bring people to love and follow Christ not their powerful position or wealth. They were often totally dependent upon a worthy person of peace accepting them in the city and even providing them with a cup of cold water (Matt. 10:42) for sustenance.

Philippians 2:6-8

Why did Jesus come to earth to a poor family in obscurity rather than being born in a palace to a wealthy and powerful king? The response this time would not be so that Jesus could learn faith because he had all faith. Again, could the focus of God's method be on the receivers rather than on the poor messenger? Jesus was the Son of God, yet he came humbly. He was a king yet came as a servant. He was all-powerful yet came in weakness. It was his character, words, love, and spiritual power that drew people to God.

1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5

What about the Apostle Paul? Why did he enter cities in weakness (1 Cor. 2:1-5) rather than showing his incredible credentials from the beginning (Phil. 3:4-6)? Could he have learned from his encounters with the risen Jesus (Gal. 1:12 and 19) and his discipleship under Barnabas who gave of his own possessions (Acts 4:36-37) and entered the new Antioch church in a way they accepted him (Acts 11:22-24) that the way to approach ministry is as a vulnerable person rather than as a powerful one? In 1 Corinthians 1:18–31, Paul has a discourse on the foolishness of the message of the cross according to man's wisdom. He explains that "God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him (I Cor. 1:27-29). God chose vulnerable missionaries to open roads into villages that might not accept the powerful or strong.

Paul had much power and position to recommend him (Phil 3:4-6), but he set it aside when he went into cities as a vulnerable missionary (Phil 3:7). He came with only the gospel (1 Cor. 1:23) and the miraculous power of God (1 Cor. 2:4) and worked with his hands to support himself and his team (Acts 18:3, 1 Cor. 4:12).

Other examples of Vulnerable Missions:

Joseph came to Egypt as a slave, but God exalted him to prime minister to accomplish his purpose. Daniel entered Babylon as a captive, but God exalted him to the king's advisor to proclaim his word.

Those who enter a place from a position of power and might are often met in battle and opposition. But those who enter a place from a position of vulnerability are often met with protection and assistance.

Why is this? Perhaps this is what Jesus was speaking of when he was full of joy (Luke 10:21) and said, "I praise you, Father…because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children." Jesus was teaching that it is not the wise, powerful, wealthy, and learned that will carry his message to the world, but the foolish, weak, poor, and ignorant that will succeed in doing this.

There was a time for the demonstration of power, but it was God's miraculous power rather than human strength. There was a demonstration of strong character and mighty love and devotion, but not military power, political force, economic superiority, academic credentials, or social position. Why? Jesus taught often of the servant, the last being first, and the humble. Was this only for the Christian living in his culture or could it also be for the missionary in another culture and another time?

If missionaries were to understand that Christ's instruction to go into a village humbly was for the sake of reception rather than simply developing faith or some vow to poverty, they might find valuable inroads for ministry.

When a missionary enters a village vulnerably it is not our strength that people see. If some accept the minister with open and hospitable hearts like Boaz and the workers in his field, then they may also receive our message and miracles. If missionaries were to enter a village in power those same people may reject them and reject the gospel. "New Testament writers do that too. They never talk about submission without talking about Jesus, and of the cross. Jesus' version of submission is thoughtful, strong, purposeful, and sacrificial. It involves the full and determined embrace of his Father's will (which governs everything Jesus does) and the voluntary pouring out of his life to rescue a lost world. Submission is both. It is redemptive. It is the gospel. It is a way of showing Jesus to the world."[3] This may be the reason Jesus told the disciples to enter villages taking nothing for their journey.

Worthy Persons of Peace

11 *Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. 12 As you enter the home, give it your greeting. 13 If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. 14 If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet. 15 Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.*

The worthy person of peace Jesus described is willing to receive the messenger of the God even at risk to self and family. This person of peace has faith in God that is greater than fear of culture and community. The New Testament has examples of these people of peace: the

woman at the well (John 4), the demoniac (Mark 5), Cornelius (Acts 10:25-48), Lydia (Acts 16:13-15, 40), the Philippian jailor (Acts 16:29-34), Aquila and Pricilla (Acts 18:1-3), Justus (Acts 18:7). Rahab (Josh 2), Abraham (Gen. 18), and Lot (Gen. 19) in the Old Testament are also people of peace.

A person of peace is often a person of reputation. Sometimes they had a good reputation such as Cornelius or Lydia. And sometimes they had a bad reputation such as the woman at the well, the demoniac or Rahab. God can use the bad reputation as a demonstration to the community of his power and love.

A person of peace is a person of reference. Cornelius and the Philippian jailor referred their households (*oikos*) to Christ. The demoniac (Mark 5) had such an influence that the next time Jesus came to Decapolis a crowd (multitude) came to see him (Mark 7:31-37). The woman at the well brought the whole town of Samaria out to hear Jesus (John 4). Rahab referred her household to God, and they were saved (Joshua 6:23).

A person of peace is a person of responsibility and covenant. Rahab and the spies agree "our lives for your lives" (Joshua 2:14). Cornelius stated, "Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us" (Acts 10:33). A person of peace gives his/her word to the minister and keeps it even at risk of life.

Abraham demonstrated hospitality as a person of peace when the three messengers of God came to him and interceded for his family and the righteous in the city (Gen. 18).

Lot demonstrated many elements of a person of peace when the two messengers of God came to Sodom (Gen. 19). When the vulnerable messengers came into the city, he insisted they stay with him for protection in the wicked and violent city (Gen. 19:2-3). He was a person of reputation in the city sitting at the city gate (Gen. 19:1). He was a person of reference as he saved his daughters (Gen. 19:15-16) and sought to save his sons-in-law although they refused (Gen. 19:14) and his wife although she turned back (Gen. 19:26). And he was a person of responsibility and covenant when he protected the messengers at the risk of his own life (Gen. 19:6-9). In this case as instructed in Matthew 10:23, Lot and his family had to flee to another place.

Sheep Among Wolves

16 "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.

Jesus acknowledged that he was sending the ones he loved and prayed for (John 17) into dangerous places when he said I am sending you as sheep among wolves. They were vulnerable volunteers as was he. He came to this world and humbled himself even to the extent of the cross (Phil 2:6-8). When he had all power to command thousands of angels and defeat his captors (Matt. 26:53) he submitted to their cruelty to win some. His followers were similar lambs willing to sacrifice even their lives so that others could know the love of God that they had experienced. In this way they would be innocent as doves.

Jesus instructed the disciples to be shrewd as snakes. Jesus encouraged his disciples to make wise decisions concerning their relations with their persecutors. Jesus handled his enemies in shrewd ways at times (Taxes to Caesar - Matt. 22:15-22, Mark 12:15-17, Luke 20:23-26; Widow of seven brother - Matt. 22:23-33, Mark 12:26-27, Luke 20:37-38; and Woman caught in adultery - John 8:1-11). Paul demonstrated shrewdness often before the councils by dividing them to distract attention from his case (Acts 23:6, 24:21, and 26:6-8). Jesus and Paul did not avoid all persecution, but they employed shrewd tactics at times when it was prudent. Jesus encouraged his followers to be equally shrewd in their dealings with persecutors in dangerous places.

The Spirit speaking through you

17 *Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. 18 On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. 19 But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, 20 for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.*

Jesus prepared ministers of the good news in dangerous places for the reality of arrest, trials, and persecution. He used words that were definite rather than possible such as “you will be handed over…flogged…and brought before governors” and “when they arrest you.” He said, “you will be” not “if you are”. But Jesus promised that the Spirit of the Father would not only be there with them but speaking through them in those situations. God had a plan to use the arrest of his disciples to give Spirit-inspired messages to governors and kings.

Brother against Brother

21 *"Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. 22 You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.*

Believers from other religions understand this passage in a deeper way than those living within a Christian culture. Family members see conversion to Christianity as apostasy. Revealing the convert to the authorities is an act of devotion to their god, religion, family, or culture. Missionaries to dangerous places need to develop a theology of persecution and understand how to mentor believers under persecution. Mordecai mentored Esther for a time to remain silent (Esther 2:10) and later to reveal her identity even at the risk of her life (Esther 4:8, 13-14). Jesus concludes this section with an eternal promise that transcends this life: "the one who stands firm to the end will be saved."

Flee persecution to continue to preach

23 *When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. Truly I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. 24 "The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. 25 It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!*

In the face of persecution there are three primary responses: (1) deny your faith, (2) remain and endure persecution, or (3) flee from persecution. In this situation Jesus gave the Twelve the instruction to flee to another place. Why? Perhaps because he knew some villages in Judah were not ready for the good news. Perhaps he wanted to conserve the few (twelve) workers that he had. Whatever the reason, it was the will of Jesus to have the ministers flee persecution at this time in these villages.

Jesus again stated that persecution is the reality, not just a possibility: "When you are persecuted," and "how much more the members of his household." The disciples of Jesus in

dangerous places should not expect to have less harassment than their master had. If Jesus endured the persecution through the Spirit, his students could as well.

Do not fear, but fear

26 "So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. 27 What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. 28 Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. 30 And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

Fearing God, not man, is foundational for missionaries working in dangerous places. Matthew uses a word pattern similar to the earlier 'go' passage; "Go nowhere, enter no town (vs. 5), but go rather to (vs. 6)." He says, "do not be afraid (26) …do not be afraid (28)…rather, be afraid (28)…so don't be afraid (31)." Fear will prevent one from going or paralyze one when there. If one's eyes are on the temporal, the body and this life, ministry will not be conducted in dangerous places. If one's eyes are on the eternal, the soul and heaven, then ministry will actually thrive in dangerous places. What better place to rescue lost souls than in the darkness. The missionary who truly understands the Father's power to save and his love to rescue will see dangerous places as the most promising field in which to preach the good news.

Jesus emphasized that his followers must have a worldview change: that eternal life is of greater value than this life. Peter grew from a follower who feared those who could kill his body (Luke 22:54-62) to one who feared the one who could destroy both soul and body (Acts 2:14, 4:28-30). No messenger to dangerous places will fulfill Jesus command to preach the message boldly unless he or she has learned not to be afraid those who can kill the body.

Acknowledge or disown

32 "Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. 33 But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.

Jesus takes the previous conversation another level deeper. For the missionary and for the new believer in the dangerous area Jesus requires acknowledgement of him. There appears to be allowance for a season for secret believers such as in the case of Nicodemus (John 3), Joseph of Arimathea (John 19:38), and Old Testament examples of Naaman (1 Kings) and Esther (Esther). But Jesus makes it clear that there is a time in the life of every believer acknowledges that Jesus is his or her Lord. Nicodemus grew in his boldness (John 7:49-51) and Joseph become bold (Mark 15:43) and Esther boldly shares her identity at the risk of her life (Est. 7:3-4) which resulted in many people of many nationalities became Jews because of her boldness (Est. 8:17). Paul, like Jesus, requires a similar confession for believers (Rom. 10:9-10). Disowning Christ when confronted carries sad consequences (Matt. 10:33). But as demonstrated in Peter's case, Jesus forgives even those who disown him, and they can be used again if they repent and are willing to proclaim him publicly. The Holy Spirit's infilling on the Day of Pentecost gave Peter boldness. The same Spirit gives boldness to believers today.

Peace or sword

34 "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to turn

"'a man against his father,

a daughter against her mother,

a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—

36 a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'

37 "Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38 Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

Jesus spoke a difficult truth when he stated that he did not come to bring peace, but a sword. Why does the Prince of Peace (Is. 9:6) make such a statement? Peace comes to the person's soul, yet division may come between the believer and his/her family. Jesus acknowledged this reality. Observe the thrice-repeated phrase "not worthy of me" (37 and 38).

There will be some who deny him. But there will also be some who are worthy of him. The search for the worthy person of peace (Matt. 10:11) may ideally result in the person worthy of Christ. The love of God is so strong believers choose God's love and are willing to suffer familial discord and persecution to retain it. In the case of Muslims, they exchange the scorn of the *Umma* for the joy of *koinonia* in Christ. They are willing to acknowledge Christ before men rather than offend the one they love. God will certainly reward those who lose their life for his sake.

Those who receive you will receive a reward

40 "Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. 41 Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. 42 And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward."

This pericope focuses on the person of peace who welcomes the minister of the good news. Observe the repetition:

Person of Peace: Anyone (person of peace) who welcomes you (disciple) welcomes me (Jesus),

Response: and anyone (person of peace) who welcomes me (Jesus) welcomes the one who sent me (God, the Father).

Person of peace: Whoever (person of peace) welcomes a prophet (disciple) as a prophet

Reward: will receive a prophet's reward, and

Person of peace: whoever (person of peace) welcomes a righteous person (disciple) as a righteous person

Reward: will receive a righteous person's reward.

Person of peace: And if anyone (person of peace) gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple (disciple),

Reward: truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.

Jesus repeats four times that the person who welcomes the disciple will be rewarded. Both verses containing this expression of a cup of cold water (Matt 10:42 and Mark 9:41) are speaking of followers of Christ receiving the cup of water, not the lost.

"Receiving Jesus' representatives with even a cup of cold water (10:42; Mk 9:41) probably refers to accepting into one's home the missionaries who have abandoned their own homes and security to bring Christ's message (10:11; cf. also 25:35-40). (Keener, Craig. A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1999. 332.)

In fact, in both references Jesus was stating that if someone gives the disciple ministering the gospel a cup of cold water, he will not lose his reward. Often today the authorial intent is reversed. It is taught that the minister gives a cup of cold water to the lost. Rather Jesus said that if a non-believer, seeker, or person of peace gives a cup of cold water to the missionary, they will be rewarded. "Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward" (Mark 9:41).

Jesus devotes the end of this chapter on ministering in dangerous places in the power of the Holy Spirit to the person of peace. He speaks of the rewards the person of peace will receive. The person of peace was not in the audience as Jesus was speaking. Why would he devote so much of this chapter to this person? Perhaps Jesus was helping the missionary know how valuable this person of peace will be to the spread of the gospel in these dangerous places.

Truly the missionary is dependent on the Holy Spirit for every aspect of ministry in dangerous places: from power to perform the miraculous, to the words to speak before councils, to the message to preach, to providing the person of peace that will open the community to the gospel. The missionary will see success only as the Spirit moves on individuals and communities.

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[1] David Cerullo, http://www.inspirationtoday.com/ourministries/philippines.aspx (accessed 18 June 2010).

[2] Lowenberg shares insight on a possible reason Jesus did not want his disciples going to the Gentiles. He concludes, "If His emissaries brought the good news to Gentiles and Samaritans without love and compassion, let alone without the parameters of making relationships, the message of the gospel would be tainted in its delivery (see Luke 9:54-55; Acts 10:28; 11:2-3)." Lowenberg, Doug, "Have we Missed the Main Point? The Purpose for Jesus' Encounter with the Canaanite Woman (Matthew 15:21-28) *International Journal of Pentecostal Missiology* (9:1, 2023). http://evangeluni.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/IJPM-91.7-Lowenberg-Canaanite-Woman.pdf (accessed November 27, 2024.).

[3] Carolyn Curtis James, *The Gospel of Ruth: Loving God Enough to Break the Rules*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009, 161.

The "Best of" Articles from the Past Decade

Missionary Wives of Early Twentieth Century Pentecost: Called, Competent, Challenged and Complement (IJPM 3, 2014B)

Rosemarie Kowalski*

Author's Current Comments:

While various articles and dissertations have been written on women in missions since the initial publication of this article, the theology and the experiences of the first generation of Pentecostal missionary women continue. The pneumatology of calling, empowerment, and sending remains at the core of Pentecostal missionary service, especially among those called and sent by the Spirit from disempowered or undervalued groups.

My husband and I moved to Indonesia to serve in 2014. We have personally (and with great delight) experienced the contributions and ministry dynamics of Spirit-filled single women in missions. They serve with distinction on our ministry teams and in our missions networks. Cheering them on! RDK

Introduction

Many women felt called to missions after they were baptized in the Holy Spirit in the early 1900s. Various challenges lay ahead on the mission fields for these Pentecostal women as they assumed missions leadership or partnered with missionary leaders. They left the comforts of home to spend a lifetime abroad. Wives joined their husbands to serve as a missionary couple. Single women who entered missionary work sometimes married missionary bachelors or widowers. Outstanding missionary partnerships emerged as couples increased their effectiveness by serving together. Some women died on foreign soil, leaving their husbands and children behind. Others struggled to carry on after their husbands died. In the process of becoming

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missionary leaders, wives assumed spiritual and organizational authority, experienced spiritual formation in themselves and fostered it in others and served effectively across cultures. This paper examines the call, competency, challenges, and the complementary ministry of six such married missionary women from the early Pentecostal era of the twentieth century.

Soon after the Azusa Street outpouring of the Spirit with its missionary emphasis, Pentecostals arrived on mission fields. Assemblies of God historian Gary McGee lists four types of missionaries from the early years of the Pentecostal movement: the unprepared but zealous who felt a call to missions and launched out without financial support, education, or other preparations; those without theological and missiological training who learned the language and culture while on the field and became quite effective; veterans from other denominations who received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and were no longer welcome in their own missionary agencies; and from the 1920s onward, those with a basic Bible Institute education.[1] Unlike traditional denominational missionary agencies who had begun to question their obligation to preach the gospel to non-Christian nations, the baptism in Holy Spirit and a belief in the imminent return of Christ stirred Pentecostals with an urgency to win as many souls as possible.[2] The Pentecostal experience gave women as well as men permission and empowerment to minister as God's prophets and proclaimers.[3] Anderson writes that the Spirit empowers believers for ministry, regardless of gender or race.[4] York says, "The Pentecostal movement is heavily indebted to women for the understanding and accomplishment of its vision."[5] Cox agrees:

> Either because of or despite their Pentecostal faith, women continued to lead. Barred from the pulpit, they preached in the streets. Refused ordination, they became missionaries and went to places where men were afraid to go. They became healers and teachers, writers, and editors. Without them, Pentecostalism would probably have died out long ago.[6]

In this essay, six women, representing many others, were examined through the updates in their files at the Assemblies of God World Missions archives.

Six Pentecostal Missionary Wives

Margaret Peoples Shirer

Margaret Peoples Shirer, who served in West Africa, was born in Ireland in 1897 to a religious family. She was saved under the ministry of three English women, called to African

missions when she was fifteen years old, and called to preach the following year. Because her father would not allow her to attend higher education, she began to rise at four in the morning to study scripture, memorizing and assimilating the Bible for two years. In 1917, she immigrated to Philadelphia to live near her sister. She found a small church whose Methodist lay preacher had been baptized in the Spirit and subsequently was healed of multiple broken bones. In this church, Margaret found Christian friends and sought the Holy Spirit baptism. She was home alone when she received the baptism, but it was confirmed in public with a message in tongues during a church service. Her church promised to support her as a faith missionary.

Margaret was twenty-two years old when she became a single missionary to Upper Volta (French West Africa) in 1919. Upon arriving in Africa, given the choice of hammock, bicycle, or horseback, the adventurous Margaret chose horseback. She was sent into town to buy a horse though she had not ridden before, and the spirited unbroken animal threw her "off about three times, but I learned to ride him." She hired a "horse boy" to tire out the horse each day before mounting the horse to travel.[7] Her later decisions showed the same spirit of invention and spunk. She never feared to ride her bicycle through jungle trails at night, and in later years, traveled alone to remote villages by motorcycle.

Margaret began ministry by finding a place to stay and a shelter for her horse.[8] As soon as she learned the language, she began to preach in nearby villages. She translated the gospel of Mark because it was the shortest book and preached from it. Her horse boy was converted and went to his village after three years with her. She went to preach in his village after he shared the gospel and found thousands of Africans waiting to ask questions about the gospel.[9] (She was in her mid-twenties at this point.)

During her first furlough, about 1925, Margaret was ordained by Ernest Swing (E. S.) Williams, her pastor in Philadelphia. She spent three months in the United States and nine in France, learning French because the French were taking over Upper Volta. On her return to Africa, she met fellow missionary Lloyd Shirer and fell in love.[10] Margaret waited until her wedding dress was shipped from her sister at home before she and Lloyd were married in four languages: Bamb, Moré, English, and French.[11]

The Shirers had a son and daughter in their first term.[12] They opened missions stations in Gold Coast, the first Assemblies of God missionaries to Ghana, starting at Yendi. Her respect for indigenous customs earned her many open doors.[13] From their base in Ghana, around 1938-9,

Lloyd and Margaret went into Nigeria to minister after the outpouring of the Spirit there. They pastored a church in Washington, DC, before resigning in 1947 to go back to Africa for the last time. During Lloyd's subsequent moral failure, Margaret kept the family together and stayed with him while he worked for several African governments.[14] After he died, she preached and recruited young missionaries in the USA well into her eighties.

Lou (Farthington) Page

Lou (Farthington) Page served in Fiji. She was a schoolteacher from New York before her marriage to Albert T. Page in 1913. They became Assemblies of God missionaries and had four children. For the first four years, they lived in extreme poverty.[15] Their fifth year, Lou taught school to Indian children. In exchange, parents of her students provided decent food and a house.

Albert died of influenza in December 1918 and Lou succumbed three months later. The children were thirteen months to six years old when their parents died. A single missionary cared for the children until their relatives from Australia came for them. The youngest daughter died in Australia within a few months, but the older three children were separated and sent to live with relatives in New York.[16] The siblings did not know their parents were Assemblies of God missionaries until 1986, just before Lloyd and Olive took a trip to Fiji where Olive had been born.[17] By this time, they were in their late sixties and early seventies.

Jessie (Jennette Arms) Perkins

Jessie (Jennette Arms) Perkins was born in 1862 on a farm near Bridgeport, Wisconsin. She sensed the call of God to missions while engaged in a dressmaking and millinery business. She enrolled in Lucy Rider Myer's Deaconess Training School and felt called to Liberia.[18] Perkins served a total of six terms in Liberia, beginning her missionary career with the Methodist Episcopal board in 1895 and returning to Liberia in 1900 for a second term.[19] Within three months, only two of their party of ten missionaries survived or remained on the field. Jessie married the other survivor, widower John M. Perkins, in 1903 and became a Canadian by marriage. She regained her United States citizenship in 1937.

Both Jessie and John were baptized in the Spirit during their furlough in 1906,[20] so they returned to Africa as Pentecostal faith missionaries on Christmas Day, 1908.[21] The Perkins

became members of the Assemblies of God around 1918. They were known as hard workers who served nearly forty years in Liberia during long terms.[22] They established the first Assemblies of God mission station in Liberia and started an elementary education program with other missionaries. John served as field superintendent in Liberia, but Jessie's ill health forced their return to the United States in 1935. Jessie continued to recruit others to become missionaries, though she was blind for three years before her death in 1941 in Pasadena, California.

Abigail (Chant) Slager

Abigail (Chant) Slager was a missionary to North China. She was born in 1889. After being baptized in the Spirit, she ignored warnings that she would die before reaching the field due to her poor health to arrive as a single missionary in Mongolia in 1910. She was nineteen years old. She married Netherlander George Christian Slager in 1914. Their first term in Shanghai and Ningpo lasted until 1917. The Assemblies of God ordained George in 1918. The Slagers opened a mission station in 1920 in Chuhsien, Chekiang Province, in North China.[23] The couple had no children and had to leave behind the Chinese orphan daughter they had adopted when they fled rebel insurgents in 1927.

The Slagers served two more long terms in Tsingtao[24] before being interned by the Japanese from 1942-1946. The Swiss consulate negotiated their return to the United States in 1947. They worked for a year in Holland and then assisted at a retirement home in Seattle, WA, before retiring in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Margaret Kelley

Margaret Kelley**,** born in Magnolia, North Carolina, married George M. Kelley in 1910. They went to the interior of China as Free Will Baptist missionaries later that year. Their credentials were recalled due to doctrinal differences with the Baptists after two years, and they became affiliated with Pentecostal centers in Cleveland, St. Louis, Chicago, and Detroit. They were ordained as missionaries through the Pentecostal Assembly of the World in 1915 and went to South China. Subsequently, they became Assemblies of God missionaries and translated the Fundamental Truths into Chinese.

The Kelleys opened up the interior of China to Pentecostal missions, pioneering unreached areas and building churches. They were not permitted to have public services for a year due to opposition from the Chinese, while the American consul took up the matter with "Pekin."[25] They prayed for a leper whose stubs of fingers were completely restored. The miraculous healing opened up ministry in a small village where they were living in a "house of dead men's bones [where] Chinese used to go to worship their ancestors." Their son, born in 1918, was a great curiosity to the Chinese.[26] From a small beginning in unsanitary conditions, they built a church and school for about fifty children with funds from the villagers.[27] They were worn out from their hard work by the end of the decade. Four missionary families lived with them at one time. To accommodate the necessary hospitality, they purchased land and endured a long trial during several years of a drawn-out building process.[28] Life was difficult but they continued to pioneer in several areas of China.

When Margaret died in 1933 of smallpox, George became increasingly uncooperative and divisive in his relationships with other missionary coworkers. After several appeals from other missionaries, his Assemblies of God missionary papers were revoked. He continued as an independent faith missionary.

Ruby (Fairchild) Nicodem

Ruby (Fairchild) Nicodem met missionary Frank Nicodem during classes in a Bible Institute. After Frank set off for India, she followed with single coworker Sarah Coxe. E. N. Bell personally endorsed her missionary application.[29]

Ruby and Frank married in 1920 in South India. He had started a home for orphaned and abandoned boys in Barraich, but they moved to Rapaidiha, North India, in 1926 to take over a mission station and orphanage for boys from an aging single missionary, Lillian Denney.[30] Located on Nepalese border, the mission was ideally situated to reach Nepalese workers who migrated to and from India in search of work.

The Nicodems loved children and had six of their own within fourteen years. Frank constructed an attractive and functional orphanage for street children. During their first furlough, Frank was ill with the flu and had to cancel all meetings, remaining confined to bed and unable to eat.[31] Later in their ministry, Ruby sent appeals to supporters for money to bring the family home for a much-needed furlough, but her requests resulted in limited funding. Frank and Ruby

left their three older boys in school in India while a younger son and two daughters returned to America with their parents so Frank could regain his health. Ruby carried on Frank's dream to relocate families displaced by conversion onto their own land after Frank's death in 1938.[32] Ruby remained in missions as a widow, raising their six children. After her final return from the field, Ruby married Louis Petersen. She died in Springfield, Missouri, in 1973.[33]

Called

Why go into missions? The Pentecostal Church felt compelled to share the gospel with all the peoples of the earth.[34] Responding to the baptism in the Holy Spirit, Pentecostal missionaries were thrust into cross-cultural harvest fields with an urgent Pentecostal eschatology of Christ's soon return. Margaret Peoples (Shirer) was called to be a missionary immediately after being saved and her Pentecostal experience confirmed that call. Abigail Slager recognized her genuine call to missions, despite warnings due to very ill health. She had been healed of pleurisy during her teens, when her parents prayed. She was saved at age 17, baptized in Holy Spirit, and called to China. After arriving in 1910, she fell ill with pneumonia. After nearly dying, she miraculously recovered in response to missionary prayers.[35] She suffered poor health in the Japanese internment camp after she had already served China for years in fair to frail health.[36] She spent thirty-seven years in the Chinese interior and north.[37]

The role of women in culture was transformed by their inclusion as prophets and fully empowered members of the Church. Harvey Cox notes that when the Spirit is poured out in the Church, "women almost always seem to play some leading role… they participate fully, even in churches where the pastor is a man. They sing and testify, prophesy and heal, counsel and teach."[38] William J. Seymour maintained that Christ was God of all the nations and genders.[39] Though the Pentecostal movement was never completely egalitarian, the result of the early theology was to open the door for women in ministry. Schools run by missionaries, including or designed for girls educated future wives and mothers, influencing the next generation through women who could read and gained skills beyond what their culture normally taught them.[40]

Those who experienced Pentecost at Azusa Street had various racial backgrounds and mixed educational training. On their missionary applications, it was not always apparent whether the women would be successful or not. Ruby Nicodem listed her average grade in Bible College as 95%, so she was an exceptional and gifted student. However, Christ- like service was also

incarnated in relatively uneducated women like Margaret Peoples Shirer, called to African missions when she was fifteen.[41] Margaret appeared to be the ordinary daughter of an Irish farmer, with only a grammar school education. Her application indicated that she was a hard worker, holding two jobs daily as a domestic servant. She knew no language besides English, could not play a musical instrument, and her Bible training was informal, consisting of "a persistent study of the Bible since saved."[42] She learned about Africa through the literature of the Africa Inland Mission, but when she received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, she applied to the Assemblies of God missions committee. She did not know of anyone she had won to Christ, listing her results of personal efforts to bring others to Christ: "Sorry to say not much as far as I know. I've always worked with others."[43] Her call was strong and personal and she completed her first term as a single missionary. When she married, she continued to preach and teach.[44] In spite of the lack of obvious promise on her application, Margaret – like many other missionary women – became a gifted linguist, translator, and informal anthropologist through her observations and writing.

Competent, with Signs Following

Pentecostals emphasized the missionary nature of God and believed literally that Jesus' promise of healing and miracles gave spiritual tools to his Spirit-filled Church.[45] The Spirit had been poured out to empower a Pentecostal proclamation, confirming the Word with supernatural manifestations and gifts.[46] Melvin Hodges, writing several decades after the Pentecostal revival at Azusa, observed:

> Pentecostal outpourings, whether in the homeland or abroad, have always produced converts with flaming zeal and sacrificial spirit… The emphasis on the present-day working of miracles and the healing of the sick has been the means in the hand of God of awakening whole communities and convincing unbelievers of the power of God.[47]

Those who were baptized with the Spirit believed the Pentecostal revival ushered in the end times and hastened the return of Christ.[48] The driving force behind a Christian's willingness to leave the comforts of home, suffer great hardships and perhaps death, and put their family at risk, was the hope of saving many souls before Christ's return.[49] The early Pentecostals read scripture with a view of being in the end times, participating in the breaking in of God's Spirit for one more worldwide revival and harvest of souls. Pentecostal periodicals sent out hot rhetoric

about the urgency of the Last Days and the need to support missionaries on the front lines of spiritual battle. Such sent-out ones were God's vanguard, storm troopers who would proclaim the Good News just before the rapture of the Church. Just like other soldiers, they expected comrades in arms to fall around them while they fought on.[50] Missionary suffering and hardship were considered a privilege rather than an unexpected occurrence.[51]

Some of the earliest Pentecostals went to a foreign field with a one-way ticket, believing Jesus was returning so soon that they had only a short time to serve, and sharing the gospel was worth any sacrifice. Entire families relocated into unfamiliar cultures. Women as well as men could be used by God in such desperate times, called, empowered, and prophesying in the power of the Spirit.[52]

Pentecostals believed they were returning to the fervency of the early Church, but they were

> interested in the future. Their theology was radically eschatological. The Last Days were nigh. What they needed, at least in those first boisterous years, was not just a way of speaking *to* God, but a way of speaking *about* God, to carry the message to the whole world… The Lord, after all, might return tomorrow, or even tonight. There was no time for the arduous toil required to master a foreign language. If they did not hasten to the fields, untold millions of Chinese and Africans would perish in their sins with no chance for repentance.[53]

Tongues or glossolalia were initially considered empowerment to speak a foreign language without preparation or study.[54] Missionaries were disappointed by the failure of the gift of tongues to provide such an easy transition. However, the time needed to learn the language allowed them to study the culture and begin to incarnate the gospel into the new setting.

> "It did not take long for tongues—construed as the ability to speak foreign languages and expected as the only infallible sign of Spirit baptism—to assume a less commanding place in Pentecostal belief. [It gave those] who did not have the strength or the fluency to pray with their own words" direct access to God through the Spirit. [55]

What Pentecostal missionaries found difficult to understand was the indifference of people at home. The desperation of some missionaries, seeing the fields ripe for harvest without enough coworkers, and unfinished work sending people to a Christ-less eternity, was heart wrenching. At missions conferences and on furloughs, they pleaded for others to sacrifice comforts and complacency to reach the lost. If people would not go, missionaries appealed for generous supporters so representatives could work effectively on the field. Periodicals like the

Latter Rain Evangel, the *Weekly Evangel*, the *Christian Evangel*, and the *Pentecostal Evangel* showcased the constant lack of money and other resources and channeled missionary appeals to North American readers.[56]

Spirit empowerment meant access to divine guidance. Pentecostals set off for foreign lands, sometimes without a clear plan and without more than a general region or country in mind. They trusted that the Holy Spirit would reveal the place and take them to people who needed the gospel. God honored their faith in extraordinary ways.

> Those Africans are great dreamers, and God does surely speak to them through dreams." John Perkins, under the prompting of the Spirit, persuaded the ship's captain to stop on the coast, against all regulations. "God had told [the missionaries] to disembark there. So [the captain] put their party in a surf boat and beached them at Garraway where [a local African] Jasper Toe met them with his face all aglow." God had told Jasper to wait at that spot for missionaries and take them to his village when they arrived. "When they heard his story they were certain that God was leading them to Barroba... This miracle was a great [assurance] to John Perkins and his party as the story of Peter and Cornelius[57]

In Jasper's village of Newaka, healings followed preaching, and thousands came to see what was happening.[58]

Missionaries already serving with non-Pentecostal mission boards found themselves at odds with their denominations after experiencing their own Pentecost on the field or during furlough. John and Jessie Perkins served their first term with the Methodist Episcopal Church. They experienced Pentecost during their furlough and were not permitted to return, so they went on their second term as faith missionaries without denominational or mission board backing. Six other Pentecostals went along, to be met by Jasper Toe at Garraway.[59]

The prayers of supporters for missionaries provided a vital partnership for protection and positive results on the field. Missionaries expected those at home to intercede with prayers "in the Spirit" for specific requests and "groanings that cannot be uttered" for unknown needs.[60] After five years of abject poverty and few opportunities for ministry, the Pages recruited Pentecostal intercessors for Fiji from home. Almost immediately, they reported that they were opening a new station, and that white shopkeepers and planters had asked for meetings. They connected the break-through to prayer support.[61]"

Hardships were attributed to spiritual warfare. Missionaries pleaded for missions education about demonic attacks before young missionaries arrived on the field.[62] Widow Ruby

Nicodem wrote supporters about a frightening Satanic attack that left her shaken but thanking God for his superior power.[63] Shirers wrote,

We had another public burning of fetish objects. Three more have been saved, several babies have been dedicated to the Lord, and many have been prayed for having all kinds of diseases…. We pray that all that is found in the Scriptures may be manifested to these primitive people who depend on their fetishes for help until the light of Christ shines in upon their darkened souls.[64]

God's supernatural intervention was expected since the coming of the Lord was at hand.[65] As they preached, Pentecostal missionaries and their converts experienced signs and wonders. Kelley reported tongues and interpretation as well as prophecy at the South China missionary convention in December 1919.[66] Spiritual manifestations of healing, prophecy, and visions also regularly appeared in missionary updates.[67]

Challenged

Missionary wives left their families and community support networks at home for isolation and loneliness among people they did not know. Many lived with severe deprivation, lacking basic necessities of shelter, clothing, and food while trying to carve out family life and ministry. Pages worked hard in Fiji without seeing many results for nearly five years.

> The first four were spent in different part of the island as doors opened. Our living was exceedingly poor, sometimes reduced to $1.00 per week. Trials were many and at times we could not appear in public owing to our scanty and worn out attire. Our dwelling places of the past were grass houses and often the rain would pour in on us in bed, but things have been greatly changed of late.[68]

The family was given a free, fourteen-year lease on a small house, conditional on Lou establishing a small school, which began with twenty-four Indian children. Thereafter, scores were saved and healed.[69]

Finances were often insufficient to maintain a normal life, not to mention for the possibilities of ministry missionaries wanted to do. Faith missionaries sometimes lived in insufferable conditions and poverty.[70] Wives often lived in half-finished homes and among unfinished projects while the men left for missionary service.[71] The Slagers wrote about flooding that tumbled their mud fences and the brick walls of their rooms. Thief protection as well as weather protection was sorely needed.[72] Three years after starting to build a larger home to

accommodate missionaries and workers living with them, the Slagers wrote, "We are going on slowly with the building. The roof and about three- quarters of the brick wall are already completed. Almost no work has yet been done on the interior of the building. This will still take considerable time and expense. Please continue to remember this need in prayer."[73]

Abigail must have learned patience, especially since she was frail physically. There was no money to build the house they so desperately needed, so materials they had purchased lay on the ground for over four years, waiting for funds to pay builders. Before their home could be completed, rebel soldiers ruined it.[74]

Experienced missionaries like the Kelleys in China, asked that support first be given to missionaries on the field, rather than to those just beginning missions service.[75] Many veterans lived in inadequate housing, often in dangerous conditions.[76] Still, most tried to sound upbeat and optimistic when they wrote home, as did the Perkins from Liberia: "Expenses here are naturally quite heavy. But it is simply marvelous how the Lord, in spite of war and famine, continues to supply our needs."[77]

A woman's care for her family often demanded hard manual labor. Sarah Dowie described Lou Page's chores when she came to care for the children after Lou and Albert died of influenza in Fiji: "Carrying water a long way, splitting wood, doing all the washing, cooking and housework. The washing is something startling in all this heat."[78] Farm skills came in handy. Both Perkins had experience in physical labor and running a farm household.[79] Married women were less dependent than singles on others to repair and build for them. Lloyd Shirer was a handyman of some repute, constantly in demand by fellow missionaries.[80]

For tidy North Americans, daily life in the villages and towns was a great adjustment. Morrison wrote from Liberia: "There is filth and disease on every hand, but God is abundantly able to keep what we commit into His hands."[81] Furlough could be an equal shock; returning home to American luxuries created a disconnect between missionary life and missionary supporters:

> It is most difficult to describe the difference between living in a fine new house in America having all modern equipment with living or trying to live and eat and sleep in a low mud hut in Africa, filled with darkness and smoke, to say nothing about goats and chickens and sometimes plenty of insect life.[82]

Suffering was commonplace.[83] During times of danger and hardships, missionaries depended on the Holy Spirit to direct them and the protection of the Spirit to keep them safe.

Many were courageous adventurers by nature and enjoyed retelling the challenges they had faced. For example, fearless Margaret Shirer set off on her bicycle one evening to pray for a child. Darkness fell and a tropical downpour began as she was in the hut. She put a lantern on her bike handles and set off for home but became lost. "That gives a very peculiar feeling to one in the heart of Africa, to realize you are lost in the darkness, with wild animals all around you and no natives passing that hour of the night. So I stood there in the midnight darkness and thought, 'What shall I do?'" She looked for a light, prayed for guidance, and followed a faint beam to a native hut, where she asked for directions. ''He told me to go a certain distance "this way" and a certain distance the "other way," till I would come to the main road that led to the station. I thanked him and was off, pushing my bicycle till I came to the main road and finally I reached our home." She used the experience to illustrate the lost-ness of humanity and the need to find the light of the gospel.[84]

Natural disasters included encounters with wildlife. A driver ant army overran the missionary compound and attacked the missionary poultry aviary in Liberia. John Perkins and six 'boys' burned them, but they almost reached the house itself.[85] Margaret Peoples (Shirer) sent an early, curious request to supporters: "The white ants have destroyed my Bible and so I must have a new one. Will you please send me one?"[86]

Many missionary women experienced healing for themselves and their families, along with healings for others. Missionaries from North America were unaccustomed to tropical heat and humidity. Ill health and exhaustion were common. A few, like Margaret Peoples Shirer, became sick shortly after arrival, but grew quite resilient to illness through the years. Other missionaries succumbed within weeks or months of arrival, susceptible to malaria and tropical fevers due to a lack of immunity or the frailty of stressed bodies. "The hardships endured by early missionaries can scarcely be imagined. There were staggering losses of life due to the trying climate, tropical diseases, lack of supplies and primitive means of transportation."[87] With so many missionaries dying, countries like Liberia became known as the "white man's graveyard."[88]

Missionaries were dependent on supporters for money for health-mandated vacations, medical treatments, and traveling to and from furloughs.[89] Ruby Nicodem lived with a sick husband on the field. When she married Frank in 1920, he had rheumatism and a weak heart.[90] His heart was healed until a bout of typhoid fever in 1922 weakened him again.[91] When Frank

had to return to the United States in 1934, desperately ill after eight uninterrupted years on the field, Ruby appealed in vain to supporters through the *Latter Rain Evangel* for enough money to bring all the children back to the States with them. They had to leave three sons behind in school in India when they began their two- month homeward journey in 1934.[92] They returned to Indian in late 1935, but Frank continued to have health challenges until his death in 1938.

Another fairly regular occurrence was the death of fellow missionaries on the field.[93] The most traumatic loss was the death of a spouse or child. Children were often felled by disease and illness, and the bravery and courage of parents determined to carry on ministry in the face of loss is heart wrenching.[94]

When their husbands died, widows had to decide whether to go home or stay to do the work they to which they had been called.[95] The decision was more difficult when they had children to look after. Lou Page asked for prayers for guidance and strength when husband Albert died of Spanish influenza while on a trip to ordain a native worker in Suva in 1918. The Indian who was accompanying him had died one day earlier; both were buried before news came back to Lou.[96] She was not able to keep the station going alone, overwhelmed by travel requirements and four small children. Lou was still seeking God's will about returning to the States when she died three months later of influenza, aged thirty-three.[97]

Ruby Nicodem remained in India with her six children and ran an orphanage after her forty-year-old husband died (after two months of intense suffering of endo-carditis or heart and liver complications.) Her oldest was seventeen, her youngest almost seven.[98] She carried on Frank's dream of founding a Christian community on about a hundred acres where displaced converts could farm to provide for their own families.[99]

Other missionaries lost all they had built and collected during times of national upheaval or through crime. The Slagers were determined to stay true to their call and evangelize even during political conflicts and wars, and rejoiced in the suffering they faced.[100] They reported that fellow missionaries in North China watched bombs being dropped near their house, took on their backs everything they could carry, and left the rest behind to walk from their village to Shanghai. On the way, the missionaries and fellow travelers dodged Japanese planes dropping bombs.[101]

Travel also took its toll on the health and strength of missionaries. They were curiosities in new areas, and endured the close examination of those they set out to serve.[102] To reach a new

area of Pentecostals, Shirers traveled over nine hundred miles from Gold Coast to Nigeria with their house-trailer.[103]

The Complementary Leadership of Pentecostal Missionary Wives

Women missionaries engaged in evangelism, hospitality, translation, social services like health and education, and wrote appeals to supporters. The foreign culture freed them to lead in ministry in ways that the home church might not have permitted.[104] They supported and partnered with their husbands' ministries while running their households. When their husbands were ill, wives added the men's ministry responsibilities to their own. For example, when Frank Nicodem took their four older children to the cooler climate of the hills to recover from blackwater fever, Ruby stayed behind with their baby and managed the boys' home.[105]

Keeping relationships and ministry life in balance required constant personal effort. The stress of living with others, being under constant scrutiny, meeting high expectations, and staying humble in the face of ascribed spiritual authority could lead to imbalanced life and spiritual weaknesses.[106] One of the most pressing spiritual challenges was keeping peace among missionaries. With strong personalities and entrepreneurial characteristics of missionaries, interpersonal harmony required ongoing effort.

Sometimes, separation by distance helped, but often missionaries were forced together and disagreements were inevitable.[107] When everything went smoothly, missionaries were grateful for the harmonious relationships.[108]

Cox writes that the early Pentecostals were not ecumenically minded, working hard to discard 'old wineskins' of existing denominations for the new work of God.[109] In 1923, George Kelley noted that God had helped them "to work amicably with the missionaries of other denominations."[110] Later, disagreements between Kelley and other missionaries created chaos and unrest among Chinese converts.[111] After Margaret died, a missionary coworker appealed to the Assemblies of God missions department for help because of a rocky relationship with Kelley, "Sister Kelley has been released from it all. We believe her heart was right. They say she was a woman of prayer. [George] will miss the restraint of her prayers."[112]

A couple in missions could double their effectiveness, and Cox attributes the rapid spread of Pentecostalism partly to the work of women, empowered by the Spirit, set free for ministry and proclamation.[113] Margaret Kelley told supporters: "When Mr. Kelley went out to

take Bibles to the Chinese, I was a mother, and I said I didn't go to China just to rock a baby, and I prayed and gathered in the dirty children."[114] Lloyd and Margaret Shirer co-pioneered stations in Ghana (Gold Coast) and were building their fifth station by 1939.[115] Similarly, James and Esther Bragg Harvey worked in India in joint ministry.[116]

Evangelism was the primary goal of most Pentecostal missionaries, but many also provided social services.[117] The Slagers distributed one hundred fifty gifts of rice and meat for Christmas, donated by Chinese Christians.[118]

Most husbands recognized the impact of their wives' ministry, and praised them to supporters.[119] Margaret Shirer was called to evangelistic missions, and even into her old age was known as a great preacher. She alternated preaching in church with her husband,[120] and recounted that God would give her words of knowledge through parables, African proverbs, and stories that highlighted scriptural truths.[121] She continued to visit villages to preach on her own, even after she was married, according to updates from fellow missionaries. She challenged those who were in Catholic areas with "the true gospel."[122] Margaret also ran a Sunday school for children on the mission station and hosted incoming missionaries. Meanwhile, she continued to translate scripture, helped standardize the spelling of the Dagbani language, and wrote a grammar and dictionary. Eventually, she translated Matthew, Mark, Acts, Ephesians, and 1 Peter.[123]

The mission station had its precedents in outreaches by Nestorians and others.[124] In 1910, Perkins wrote about "our mission family of fifty boys," just over a year into his second and her third term in Liberia.[125] By mid-1911, they reported,

> We have about sixty-six in the mission now, and more coming all the time. The work is very heavy, and we would surely be glad of reinforcements… We are still in the mud house but expect, God willing, to move into our new mission house this week even if it is not completed.[126]

The Kelley family and four other missionaries lived together in an unfinished, unsanitary house for years, even after a purchasing property to build early in 1918. Appeals for funds continued at the end of 1919.[127] The editor of one periodical also appealed for help from supporters:

> The Evangel family has done well during the past six months in helping Br. Kelley to start this home; now let us make a special effort to help him finish and properly furnish it. In the past we have sent our new missionaries out to S. China and because of the lack of a proper missionary home, they have had to live in damp, leaky, unsanitary native houses,

> and many of them have undermined their health, and many have paid the toll of our neglect in early deaths.[128]

Sometimes missionaries would "go native,[129] and sometimes they continued Western traditions in their homes. Mrs. Perkins maintained a Western household, producing a sigh of relief from her husband: "I reached home alive, and was so thankful to sit down to a real table, covered with a clean tablecloth where I was not afraid of finding undressed fish and white grubs with red heads."[130]

The women were accomplished organizers. Not only did wives manage their own families, but they were often expected to live among or host other missionaries and take in strangers. When travelers arrived, missionaries would house them and help them settle in. New missionaries might stay for months while their own stations were being constructed.[131] The Slagers reported offering hospitality to various traveling missionaries in North China,[132] as well as caring for destitute Chinese orphaned girls and women.[133] Three months pregnant with their sixth child, Ruby Nicodem reported on a convention they hosted at their station: "We had from sixty to ninety native people to look after, as well as twenty-two missionaries, and we found our hands full."[134]

Wives learned nursing skills and could take care of many basic illnesses because there was no other help available. They worked tirelessly to care for others, especially in desperate circumstances.[135] In Liberia, Margaret Shirer was known for her care of women and babies, but men with sores and complaints came for care as well.[136]

Some women were educators, bringing the skills from a teaching career to the field.[137] The extreme poverty of the Page family's first four years in Fiji ended when Lou, formerly a schoolteacher, opened and taught in an Indian school.[138] Kelleys emphasized reading skills and education as well: "We are standing for every Chinese who is saved being able to read the Bible for himself. Everywhere we have a mission station, we have a little day school… If China is ever to be evangelized, the Chinese themselves are to be the leading factor in it."[139]

Margaret Peoples Shirer was the first Westerner to understand the Moré language.[140] She joined village women at their grain-grinding station and gradually learned the language. From there, she formed an alphabet, taught the Mossi tribe to read, and began to translate scripture. "Margaret taught reading classes, and as the pages of the Bible were printed by mimeograph, the

delighted Mossi read by lantern light until the oil ran out. Then they used cornstalk torches to keep reading. Today a strong national church exists in that area."[141]

Many wives functioned as amateur anthropologists, writing updates to supporters from a woman's point of view.[142] Another contribution was an understanding of the role of indigenous women, who often were the first to listen to the gospel message. Eugene Nida says evaluating the position of women in society required consideration of their treatment, legal status and rights, public activity, and their type and extent of work.[143] Often wives had better access into the homes where women worked and raised their families.

Missionary wives were keen observers and participants in culture and kept excellent notes. Ruby Nicodem wrote many insightful observations of life in India before and after Frank died. She noted how Indians worshipped idols, their home life, and the caste system's stranglehold on the culture.[144] The closed country of Nepal was opened to Western anthropologists and other observers through updates like those from Ruby.[145] Similarly, Abigail Slager wrote from Shanghai about the Chinese New Year, describing the details of the Chinese celebrations, along with hints of loneliness, a sense of isolation, and a heartfelt burden for those around her.[146]

Childbearing and child rearing in the tropics could be daunting and draining. Missionary wives ran households where people came and went, while feeding their family and sometimes hosting crowds of missionaries during conventions. It could be difficult to manage a household, even though some had multiple servants. Margaret Shirer, always interested in education, homeschooled her own children with Calvert, a standardized curriculum from the States.[147] After their furlough about 1933, the children stayed behind in the United States while Lloyd and Margaret returned for a third term. The separation was difficult for the whole family.[148]

The Nicodems had six children between 1920 and 1931. Four were under the age of six when they took over a home for street boys in Northern India. When Frank Nicodem nearly died of blackwater fever in 1930,[149] their fifth child was a year old. Ruby cared for the children and managed the boys' home. Their whole family was missional. Even the children were willing to sacrifice to minister to locals during famines and other disasters.[150]

Children fell ill, died, or were in harm's way. The Slagers had to leave behind their adopted Chinese daughter during the rebellion of 1927.[151] Frank Jr., the elder son of Ruby and Frank Nicodem, was enveloped in lightening. The rafter of the porch roof above him split and

the stone step on which he stood broke in two. He was unhurt.[152] Both Shirer children were spared from permanent disability by God's healing power.

After Margaret and her nine-month old Marguerite were struck by lightening, the baby revived after a half hour of fervent prayers by natives and missionaries. The Shirers' six-year-old son sustained injuries and broken bones after falling from a tree and required a month's hospitalization. Margaret prayed over him when he came home, and he was completely healed.

Entire cultures experienced social change as a result of missionary presence and proclamation. Cannibals and violent tribes became more peaceful.[153] Even non-believers admitted to the power of the gospel to transform society, and governments began to recognize the advantages brought by the gospel.[154] The Shirers were asked by the government of Gold Coast to set up a new station among the Konkomba, a violent warring tribe.[155] Margaret Kelley, speaking at Stone Church, Chicago, during a furlough, reminded Americans of the government's open door in China, if they were only willing to go.[156]

Family structure itself was changed as missionaries presented an egalitarian view of women and men equal in God's eyes. In China, George Kelley observed the changes in family life: "The father becomes a father indeed. The family that was separated by sin is reunited. The concubines have been let go. The family altar has been set up. Is it worthwhile to preach this Christ? Yes! Re-echo Yes."[157] Similarly, Ruby Nicodem noted the difference in marriage between Christians who had grown up with missionaries and marriages of unbelievers.[158]

The welfare of children was also directly affected as cultural practices changed.[159] Missionaries, burdened by the plight of orphaned and abandoned children, opened orphanages and homes to care for them.[160]

In later years, missionaries moved toward administrative and supportive roles within the local churches.[161] The Nicodems planned their ministry and training to produce social change and provision into the future.[162] They bought land from a native estate, put a thorny hedge and fence around it to protect domestic animals and repel wild animals, and gave each family its own tract of land to help them survive when their culture expelled them for their faith. Ruby carried on this vision after her husband died, settling five families onto the acreage and supervising its use.[163]

Conclusion and Summary

Missionary wives were called to proclaim the gospel. Most considered their call to missions as personal and important as God's call on their spouses. Amid severe challenges, they competently opened fields and helped maintain missionary projects alongside their husbands. They raised children, often ministering to orphans and abandoned children alongside their own. Their hospitality and care for the personal needs of others were vital to the survival of missionaries and the practical demonstration of the gospel to indigenous peoples.

Their courageous legacies continue to demonstrate the power of the Spirit working through women. They brought to life the prophecy of Joel that women as well as men would be used by God to prophecy as they crossed culture barriers to minister throughout the world.

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[1] Gary McGee, "This Gospel Shall Be Preached: The Beginning Years for Assemblies of God Missionaries," *Assemblies of God Heritage* (December 1, 1986): 6.

[2] Wilhem Andersen, *Towards a Theology of Mission: A Study of the Encounter between the Missionary Enterprise and the Church and Its Theology*, IMC Research Pamphlet No. 2 (London, UK: SCM Press Ltd., 1955), 23. Reporting on the World Missionary Conference in Jerusalem 1928, Anderson writes that the confidence of traditional Protestant missionary agencies was shaken. "No longer… was the right of Christian Churches to carry on missionary operations in the non-Christian world taken as something in itself self-evident… Behind this formulation of the problem one can trace the influences of the 'comparative religion' school of thought. Is Christian faith, perhaps, only one particular form of that mystical experience of the divine which is the common ground of all religions?"

[3] Acts 2:18.

[4] Ray S. Anderson, *Ministry on the Fireline: A Practical Theology for an Empowered Church* (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Seminary Press, 1993), 92. "We can expect the Promise of Pentecost to become more and more evident as racial, sexual and cultural distinctives are superseded by the new order of ministry inaugurated by Jesus in the power of the Spirit. Historical precedence must give way to eschatological preference." Also, 96. Regarding women's leadership of churches: "If the Spirit of the resurrected Jesus is present in the contemporary church, anointing and calling women as well as men to the office of pastoral ministry, then this is surely an apostolic ministry as commissioned by Jesus as the living apostle."

[5] John V. York and Stanley M. Horton, *Missions in the Age of the Spirit* (Springfield, MO: Logion Press, 2000), 152. "Since women are baptized in the Holy Spirit and receive the various *charismata*, Pentecostals throughout the world recognize and appreciate their service. This is true even among those Pentecostals who do not formally credential women as ministers. Thus, opponents attempting to discredit the Pentecostal movement have disparagingly referred to it as a 'women's movement.'"

[6] Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of the Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Reading, CA: 1995), 138.

[7] Adele Flower Dalton, "Interview with Margaret Peoples Shirer: Upper Volta, 1976," (Springfield, MO, n.d.): 4. En route to Africa, she met three like-minded others on a stopover in Liverpool England, Mrs. Jenny Farnswork, Mr.

and Mrs. Leeper. Together they traveled to Sierra Leone and onward to Upper Volta (Burkina Faso). "Being young, for me everything was fun. In the daytime, I talked with the people on my side of the boat, watched the people play in the water... We were on these boats for 21 days, down the Niger. Then we changed boats and went from another town, 3 days, to a place called Mopti...Now, real travel began." It took twenty-eight days of all-day travel to reach the outpost of Ouagadougou. Margaret reports, "[After sundown,] we would set up camp, light fires, and do our cooking." Natives nicknamed her "Madame Horse's Tail" because her hair was so long.

[8] Ibid., 3.

[9] Ibid., 4.

[10] Ibid., 6.

[11] Ibid., 8.

[12] Ibid., 7.

[13] Ibid. For instance, Margaret always showed respect to village chiefs, going first to talk to them when she entered a village. She would wait for the chiefs to call the people together. Then she would preach.

[14] Ibid., 12. Margaret greatly admired and supported Lloyd: "My husband was a man of many talents. He could do almost anything. He was the one who started printing in Ghana."

[15] Lou Page, "Update," *Weekly Evangel* (April 6, 1918): 11. The family lived in a straw hut, water dripping through the roof, with clothing so tattered that they could sometimes not go out in public.

[16] Olive Page DeLano, "Return to Tomorrow," *Unknown periodical* (1986).

[17] Sarah L. Dowie, "Sister Lou Page Asleep in Christ," *Pentecostal Evangel*, (May 3, 1919): 4.

[18] H. B. Garlock, "Letter to Rev. E. L. Phillips, Africa Secretary, 1968" (Bakersfield, CA); Noel Perkins, ed., "Good Night Here -- Good Morning Up There," *Pentecostal Evangel* (March 29, 1941): 9.

[19] George M. Kelley, "Sainam, South China," *Weekly Evangel* (December 8, 1917): 10.

[20] "Reaching Liberia for Christ," Unknown (March 1977).

[21] "With Signs Following," Unknown (1941): 172.

[22] For example, they served five years from July 1922 to August 1927 and six years from October 1929 to October 1935.

[23] George and Abigail Slager, "Personal letter, January 8, 1932" (Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God Missions Archives).

[24] The terms lasted from 1930-37 and 1939-41.

[25] Margaret Kelley, "Preaching and Living the Gospel in South China: Mrs. George Kelley, of Sinam, S. China, at the Assembly at Knoxville, Tenn.," *Pentecostal Evangel* (September 8, 1923): 2-3. "When God gave us a definite call to China, He made it clear that our work was to be back in the interior. We knew nothing about the needs or conditions in China. When we first landed there, there was not a Pentecost station outside of Hong-kong. There were some missionaries there, but they had never gone inland. When we landed in Hong-kong, the Lord made it clear that

we were to go inland. There were open doors in the interior, but there were many adversaries…. We studied the language in order to get a working knowledge of it, and we began to pray with sick people. They have great respect for the Americans; they think we know everything."

[26]Margaret Kelley, "Sai Nam, S. China," *Christian Evangel* (January 11, 1919): 8. "He is the wonder and admiration of the Chinese. When we came home from the coast they were so delighted to see the baby, [and] gave a feast in its honor."

[27] Kelley, "Preaching and Living the Gospel."

[28] George M. Kelley, "Missionary Home in South China," *Christian Evangel* (January 25, 1919): 11. "We are obliged to make our home large enough to accommodate those who may come and live with us. Already some have written us of their intention, saying they hope to join us soon. As of now with us besides our immediate family, four other missionary co-laborers and we need the home immediately."

[29] E. N. Bell, handwritten note on Ruby Clarissa Fairchild, "Application for Endorsement as Missionary, June 11, 1919," (Springfield, MO). "Splendid for her age, and as she is to marry a missionary, though she is young, I endorse her going. ENB"

[30] Ruby Nicodem Petersen, "Frank Nicodem, February 18, 1954: Biography by his Widow," Department of Foreign Missions (Springfield, MO). Also, Frank Nicodem, "A New Boys' School in India," *Pentecostal Evangel* (August 21, 1926): 11-12. Frank ministered in a boys' home with twenty-eight orphans by the end of 1919, forty-five by the middle of 1920. The boys' home usually had forty to seventy-five boys in it. Frank suffered with rheumatism and weak heart even before he married, but lived another eighteen years.

[31] Editor, "Pray for these Missionaries," *Pentecostal Evangel* (December 8, 1923): 11.

[32] Ruby Nicodem, "Back to the Land," *North India Field News* (1939): 6-7.

[33] Editor, "Obituary for Ruby Nicodem Petersen," *Pentecostal Evangel* (October 21, 1973). Their children remained active in church and ministry, and son Frank later became treasurer of National Association Evangelicals.

[34] DeLonn Rance, "Fulfilling the Apostolic Mandate in Apostolic Power: Seeking a Spirit-Driven Missiology and Praxis," in *38 Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* (Eugene Bible College, Eugene, OR: March 26-28, 2009), 5. "The gospel is God's agenda, God's ministry of revelation and reconciliation… This gospel thrusts the Church into the apostolic mandate as the purpose of ministry. The Church is a people called for His purposes. Mission, then, becomes the continued ministry of Christ in the world in the power of the Spirit." Melvin L. Hodges, *The Indigenous Church* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Pub. House, 1953), 136. Hodges affirmed the role of a missionary as an apostolic calling: "The ministry of the missionary is one of great importance, since he is an ambassador for Christ and is sent as God's representative to the people. He must remember that above all else he is a servant, and should never consider that race or control of finances entitle him to exercises lordship over the assemblies… The missionary should never consider that he is permanent in any one place, but ever have his eyes on the regions beyond, seeking to make the assembly in each place a self-supporting and self-propagating unit. He will, of course, like the apostle Paul, find it necessary to exercise a spiritual oversight for the new assemblies until they are fully established…"

[35] Abigail C. Slager, "Divinely Healed for Service in China," *Missionary Conference, May 16, 1918* (July 1918), 21. "The Lord spoke to a sister and told her to come over to where I was lying, and as she did so a shaft of power came down from above and went through my being. I immediately sat up and began to sing that chorus, "Victory, victory, precious blood-bought victory." It seemed I sang it for hours... I forgot all about the pain and suffering, and though unable to speak above a whisper a moment before the power of God so quickened my body that I was a new creature. If I had been looking to an earthly physician my life would have been gone, for the nearest physician lived about three hundred miles distant, but our Physician was right at hand."

[36] Abigail Slager, *First Medical Examination of Furlough: History* (Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God Missions Archives, 1947). Her physician recommended against her return because she was suffering from so many illnesses.

[37] Slager, "Divinely Healed," 21. “I went forth to China as a young woman. The Lord spoke to me and separated me from my parents and loved ones in Canada. I had a very frail body and some tried to discourage me and said I would not live to see China, but my Heavenly Father said, “The Lord thy God in the midst of Thee is mighty.”

[38] Cox, 125.

[39] Douglas G. Jacobsen, *A Reader in Pentecostal Theology: Voices from the First Generation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 80. “The leaders of the Azusa mission believed that God was unfettered and could freely speak through anyone regardless of age, gender, race, or class. The Azusa revival belongs to God, and no one had the right to silence those through whom God chose to speak… At Azusa, everyone was on equal ground, and the glue that held them all together was Spirit-inspired love.”

[40] Cox, 137. “Women have become the principal carriers of the fastest growing religious movement in the world. Eventually this is bound to have enormous cultural, political, and economic implications. There is considerable evidence that once women join Pentecostal churches they learn skills they can utilize elsewhere.”

[41] Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Connections* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 22-23. Writing on cross-cultural servanthood, Elmer explains the model of Christ followed by many Pentecostal pioneers: “Neither the opening nor the closing scenes of Jesus’ life suggest anything but a life of humble service… In between these two scenes are hundreds of others than suggest a kind of towel [servant] mission: seeking the lost, performing miracles, touching the poor and marginalized, casting out demons, doing good, teaching kingdom values, nurturing people, praying, fasting, and other activities showing his service to humankind. His life was given to carrying the towel, the symbol of humble, obedient and, ultimately, suffering service.

[42] Margaret Peoples (Shirer), “Application for Endorsement as Missionary,” Foreign Missions Committee of the General Council of the Assemblies of God (November 11, 1919), 3. Margaret studied scripture for two hours in the morning as a teenager, memorizing and learning from four to six o’clock to build a solid foundation for missionary evangelism and translation.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Dalton, 8. "Even after my husband and I were together, I went into these villages by myself. We were both missionaries and he was very wise to know that I was more than a housewife. He knew that I was a missionary as well as he was and he wasn't going to stop me. Any time that we went preaching [they had a Ford by this time] . . . he would drive to the farthest town. He would let me off at the first town, and someone else at the next town, or vice versa, so that we were preaching in several places. I always had someone trained to take care of my children when I was away."

[45] Jn 14:10-20

[46] Andrew Lord, *Spirit-Shaped Mission: A Holistic Charismatic Missiology*, Studies in Pentecostal and Charismatic Issues (U.K.: Paternoster Press, 2005), 37. “The Pentecostal movement has a natural emphasis on the Holy Spirit understood as essentially the *missionary Spirit*. It is the Spirit that empowers and sends Christian disciples in mission and this is what the early history of the Pentecostal movement testifies to… a classical understanding of *missio Dei* focused on the Spirit. It is an experience of God the Holy Spirit that empowers and sends disciples out in mission and Pentecost is the prototype: a ‘baptism in the Spirit’ that generates mission.”

[47] Hodges, 132.

[48] Jacobsen, 64. “This revival was the culmination of all previous revivals, completing the restoration of gospel truth that had begun with the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century… This was not just one more revival of faith and trust in God; this was the beginning of the great end-time revival that would usher in the return of Christ.”

[49] Anderson, 138. “The eschatological vision of Matthew 25 sees all nations gathered at the glorious throne of the Messiah, from which will be selected those who have responded to the apostolic witness.”

[50] J. Stephen Jester, "Azusa Stree Redux: Renewal for Twenty-First Century Pentecostal Missiology," in *38th Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* (Eugene Bible College, Eugene, OR: 2009), 5-6. “The short-life expectancy [of Pentecostals due to the imminent return of Christ] was worth the price of the urgent task. Missionary graves can be found in many countries throughout the world, evidence of the ultimate sacrifice.” Also, 12. “Some [missionaries] paid the ultimate price for their missionary passion, but in death they sowed seeds of eternal life to their persecutors.”

[51] Rom. 5:3; 2 Tim. 1:8, 2:2-5, 9, 4:5; 2 Thess. 1:5; 1 Pet. 4:12; Rev. 1:9. Before that glorious day at the throne of God, suffering and pain, as prophesied by John in Revelation, were to be expected. Cox. 83. The millennial outlook of Pentecostals, “its insistence that a radically new world age is about to dawn [was] the kind of hope that transcends any particular content… Thus despite the fact that the early pentecostals’ belief in the imminent and visible Second Coming of Christ seemed to be controverted at one level, the tenacity of primal hope has made their message more contemporary with every passing year.”

[52] Allan Anderson, *Spreading Fires: The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), 92.

[53] Cox, 95.

[54] Klaus Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions*, Lynx / Regnum Studies in Evangelism, Mission and Development (Oxford: Lynx Communications, 1994), 117. Charles Parham intended to train missionaries in his Bible course in Topeka, and he saw the gift of tongues as “the speaking of real foreign languages, which gift would enable missionaries to preach immediately and effectively in every foreign country.” Cox, 95. Tongues, initially considered God’s short-cut, became the means of expressing worship and needs to God when they could not be expressed in human language.

[55] Cox, 87. “The practice of tongues… has persisted because it represents the core of all Pentecostal conviction: that the Spirit of God needs no mediators but is available to anyone in an intense, immediate, indeed interior way.”

[56] J. M. Perkins, "The Call for Missionaries," *Pentecostal Evangel* (December 30, 1933): 9. George and Abigail Slager, "Untitled Update," *Pentecostal Evangel* (November 25, 1922): 27. From China, the Slagers pleaded, “We earnestly desire to see other Pentecostal missionaries come to this part of China to preach a full Gospel to these needy people…Please pray especially for laborers to be sent to these needy places. There are many missionaries, comparatively speaking in Shanghai and other coast cities, but so few in the interior. We have prayed and earnestly desired other missionaries to come here for some time but thus far none have come to stay any length of time except Miss Rediger a young missionary who is our co-worker.” Lloyd Shirer, "Interesting News from the Gold Coast, W. Africa," *Pentecostal Evangel* (February 6, 1937): 11, 16. The Shirers pleaded for missionaries to set up new stations as well as replacements for those on furlough in Gold Coast.

[57] Garlock, 2.

[58] Unknown manuscript, (Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God Missionary Archives).

[59] H. B. Garlock, "Jasper's Ship Comes In," *Missionary Challenge* (October 1945); 11.

[60] Rom 8:26

[61] Albert T. and Lou F. Page, "Unnamed Update," *Weekly Evangel* (April 6, 1918): 11. George and Abigail Slager, "The Chuchow W. Che., China Report." (Chuchow, North China), 2. Slagers wrote, "Please pray that God will establish and enrich the believers in the Word, in the Baptism and the gifts of the Spirit, with a burden for the salvation of their people. Pray also for the supply of the needs of the work in general, including faithful and capable native helpers." Also, Slager, "Untitled Update." Missionaries especially needed prayer when their field proved resistant to the Gospel message and change, like China was: "We praise God for those who have yielded and accepted the Lord Jesus, but we need a continuance in prayer as well as in preaching for those on whom the gospel has made little or not impression. 'Prayer changes things.'

[62] Albert T. and Lou F. Page, "Update," *Christian Evangel* (July 27, 1918): 10. "Much of our trials and troubles, we believe, were more to lead us into the light, as how to fight against the awful Satanic powers which grip the minds and bodies of these people… Ignorance on the part of missionaries of Satanic power as revealed on the foreign field will cause them much trouble and sorrow. Schools at home, we believe, should pay attention to instructing missionaries in a special course on Satanic wiles, etc." The modern equivalent in Pentecostal theology can be found in Anderson, *Ministry on the Fireline*, 178. "Christopraxis is the critical intersection of the new humanity of Christ with the structure of humanity in this world. What ideological praxis sees as primarily a struggle between an inhuman social order and a humans social order is understood through Christopraxis to be a power encounter between the old, unredeemed human order and the new, redeemed order with Christ himself the authority (*exousia*)."

[63] Ruby Nicodem, "Holdup Staged by Satanic Power," *Pentecostal Evangel* (September 28, 1940): 8. After a visit to (with special permission) to visit a Rani (queen) just across the border in Nepal, a sadhu (holy man) climbed on the bumper of Nicodems' car. The law required a life for a life, so if the man was run over, Ruby would be accused of murder. She and her Indian coworker Andrew had to drive backwards a half mile on winding mountain roads until they reached the palace, to obtain permission to pry him off. The man ran across the field, met the car again around another bend, and jumped back on. After a second trip to the palace, palace servants tied him up until Ruby and her coworker could drive away. "How we did thank God for His protecting power as we realized anew the terrible forces of darkness that we are facing in this land!"

[64] Frank Shirer, "Fetishes Burned Publically," *Pentecostal Evangel* (November 3, 1934): 10.

[65] Cox, 110. Also Jester, 9. "Pentecostals believed God would act and expected their praying would result in miracles, healings, and conversion of the lost.22 All these things were signs, manifestations of God's kingdom here and now, a glimpse of the glory of another realm, alive within each believer, creating a community truly reflective of Christian unity (Col 1:27)."

[66] George M. Kelley, Untitled update, *Christian Evangel* (December 13, 1919): 13.

[67] Slager, George and Abigail, "Unknown update," (n.d.). "Mr. Yui felt all the messages were for him… [he] was one of those who came forward [to the altar]. As we prayed with him the power of God fell on him and prostrated him. He afterward arose and told the people he had seen in a vision, God the Father and Jesus beside Him (Acts 2:17, 7:56) and the angels of God rejoicing because he had come to true repentance."

[68] Page, "Untitled update."

[69] Olive Page DeLano, "Return to Tomorrow," *Unknown periodical* (September 9-22, 1986): 25.

[70] George and Abigail Slager, "Untitled update," *Latter Rain Evangel* (July 1924): 19. "We are very crowded in our present quarters, there being a chapel, school, five missionaries, two children and a family of eleven Chinese all occupying a few old Chinese buildings, some of which we have remodeled in order to use them at all. We hope to build on the recently purchased land soon. The cost of erecting the two much- needed buildings will be about $5,000 (U. S. money.) Please untie with us in prayer for the supply of this need."

[71] Mrs. Vernon Morrison, "Twenty-Seven Natives Baptized," *Latter Rain Evangel* (May 1927): 14. Mrs. Vernon Morrison wrote from Liberia: "We are living in a new plank house which is only about two-thirds finished. In a week or two, Mr. Morrison will be leaving for an extensive trip, at which time he will preach… he may be gone three or four weeks."

[72] George and Abigail Slager, "Damage by Rains" *Pentecostal Evangel* (August 23, 1924): 10.

[73] George and Abigail Slater, "Progressing in Chuchowfu," *Pentecostal Evangel* (August 21 1926): 11.

[74] George Slager, "Chuchowfu, North China," *Pentecostal Evangel* (March 19, 1927): 10. "Our chapel, schoolrooms, our partially completed new foreign house, in fact, almost every available space, except for the small house we live in, has been repeatedly requisitioned and filled with soldiers… we had over one hundred of these soldiers in our new house for ten days recently. During the time they were here they damaged and stole at least $150.00 worth of our property besides the indescribable filth and disorder they left behind… The Knowintang Army is intensely anti-Christian and anti-foreign… Naturally it is a terrible strain, but it is remarkable the rest and peace of mind we are experiencing in Him these days. We have no place of real safety to flee to. The 91st Psalm is very precious to us…" describes closed mail route, assurance of Jesus' soon return."

[75] George M. Kelley, "Wise Counsel, and Good News from Sainam," *Weekly Evangel* (January 12, 1918): 11. "It is wisdom indeed to take care of the old missionaries first, then send new ones afterwards. We are, some of us, just existing, as it were, and we are not able to do much work for the simple reason we are financially unable, although we have a working knowledge of the language. The new missionary that comes out must spend a number of years in studying before they are able to do much real work. Then to send new missionaries out to study the language for two or three years, when we have missionaries here who have a working knowledge of the language, but who are not able to work for the lack of finances, seems to me very unwise. We have missionaries now living in quarters that would not be good enough for cattle at home. One of the native workers lives in this same house, and he has the asthma so badly that at night he is compelled to prop himself to half sitting posture. This is caused form the damp room. If the native feels the dampness like this, what of the foreigner." George Kelley reports that they were able to purchase a plot of land they had sought for six years. (Chinese made many excuses not to sell to foreigners.)

[76] George M. Kelley, "Untitled update," *Christian Evangel* (September 6, 1919): 11. "For many years they have had to live in a house with the hot sun beating down upon them, with no ceiling to protect from the dirt and dust, and no proper partitions to allow any one to speak above a whisper without being heard in the adjoining apartment. Just recently the heavy rains have flooded their station again, and as the waters are abating the odors are almost unbearable. Bro. Kelley writes, 'The Lord is blessing the work. We have one convert in the adjoining province working for the Lord and devoting his entire time to preaching. We have a convert at one of our stations who is giving all her time to preaching Christ.'"

[77] Letter, by John and Jessie Perkins, 1916, Report of the Base Station, Garraway, Cape Palmas.

[78] Dowie.

[79] John Perkins, "A Busy Day in Africa," *Latter Rain Evangel* (August 1930): 22. "I arose at 4 a.m. and after some time for devotion I started in. It being breadmaking day, I lit the fire for Mrs. Perkins…As we were expecting to make jelly the next day, I had to superintend the picking of guava and other fruit so as to be ready to start work early the next morning."

[80] Lloyd Shirer, "A Prosperous Journey: French Sudan Party Nears Destination," *Pentecostal Evangel* (March 28, 1925): 10. Soon after his arrival, he reported fixing the missionary car: "I tore the rear end out and found several pieces broken, among them the bearing for the axel. I telegraphed to Bamako for the needed parts."

[81] Morrison. Also, John Perkins, "New Chapel Dedicated, Liberia," *Pentecostal Evangel* (April 27, 1935): 11. During a time of ministry reverses, when Liberians were turning back to idolatry and questioning the efficacy of the

Christian faith, “Mr. J. M. Perkins of Liberia requests that we pray definitely for Mrs. Perkins, who is very tired and run down in health. Mr. and Mrs. Perkins have spent many years in Africa.” The Perkins had been in Africa for thirty-three years, at this point.

[82] John and Jessie Perkins, "Grateful Missionaries," *Pentecostal Evangel* (February 22, 1936): 6-7.

[83] Lord, 69. “By the Holy Spirit the disciples bring the blessings of the ‘heavenly’ kingdom to birth in the world today. This is a mission that reflects that of Jesus and hence is also characterized by a suffering that includes a yearning over situations where blessings are not in evidence.”

[84] Margaret Shirer, "Shall We Give Them the Light: Stone Church Convention Speech," *Latter Rain Evangel* (August 1937): 20.

[85] John Perkins, "One of the Africa Missionary's Foes," *Pentecostal Evangel* (August 3 1935): 8.

[86] Margaret Shirer, “Fruit from the Sudan,” *Pentecostal Evangel* (November 10, 1923):13.

[87] Christine Carmichael, "A Look at Liberia," *Pentecostal Evangel* (March 22, 1964): 9. Also, George and Abigail Slager, “Undisturbed,” *Pentecostal Evangel* (August 8, 1925): 11. “The weather is very hot these days. This means unrestful nights followed by days bathed in perspiration for us. We are unable to obtain cold drinking water as all water used for drinking purposes in China must be boiled… Ours in an example of the common lot of many other missionaries in the interior of China… the intense heat on the plain.”

[88] Christine Carmichael, "Liberia," *Pentecostal Evangel* (September 21 1969).

[89] George Slager, "Building Needed," *Pentecostal Evangel* (July 24, 1926): 11. “We have been on the field over seven years without a furlough and it is needed very much, but have not written before of this need because of our present building needs—i.e., we desired funds for the completion of the building first and funds for furlough after…. As we realize how our hands are tied, financially, being unable thus to hasten the work of building; and now as the warm weather is upon us and re realize anew how worn out our bodies are, we at times seem pressed beyond measure.” Editor, "Need Help to Come Home," *Pentecostal Evangel* (July 25, 1936): 6. The editor appealed often for money on behalf of faith missionaries. For instance, Stephen Vandermerwe and his wife were both ill in South Africa, but lacked funds to come home for rest and medical treatment.

[90] Frank Nicodem, "Untitled Update," *Pentecostal Evangel* (June 26, 1920): 12.

[91] Editor, "Untitled Update," *Pentecostal Evangel* (September 2, 1922): 13.

[92] Ruby Nicodem, "An Appeal to Mothers," *Latter Rain Evangel* (February, 1934): 2. “We both are very much in need of a furlough; my husband’s desperate need is making it imperative that we face the possibility of leaving at least three of the boys here. Only a mother’s heart can know what this means, and I want to appeal to you mothers at home to pray that either the money shall come in for their fare or that God will do a miracle and give me grace and courage to leave my little ones behind. Prayer changes things.” In this case, it changed Ruby’s heart, and Nicodems left three children behind in India on April 8, 1934.Also Ruby Nicodem, “To Mothers Who Read the Evangel,” *Pentecostal Evangel* (January 13, 1934): 11. Editor, “Missionaries Returning,” *Pentecostal Evangel* (October 12, 1935): 6.

[93] John Perkins, "On and Off the Trail," *Pentecostal Evangel* (July 26, 1930): 10. When a missionary from Scotland died, “Mrs. Perkins directed the splitting of the plank and the making of the coffin.”

[94] Brother and Sister Dixon, "Through Fiery Trials," *Latter Rain Evangel* (July 1911): 15. Soon after Dixon’s arrival in Canton, daughter Gertrude, aged three, and son Wendell, aged four and one-half, died of diphtheria within sixteen days of each. They were buried near Canton. "Our arms feel quite empty and our hearts will sometime ache in spite

of all we can do. But we are doing all we can to be brave, and He giveth more grace... And then our hearts cry out to God, 'What wilt Thou give unto us seeing we are childless? If we may be have souls now, we are quite willing to wait until the resurrection of the just for fuller rewards, if so be the will of God.'"

[95] Noel Perkins, "The Needs of Nicaragua," *Pentecostal Evangel* (June 2, 1927): 10. Missionary deaths were commonplace in Pentecostal historical updates. For example, missionaries Schoeneich wrote from a dangerous political situation in Nicaragua that fellow missionaries, the Radleys, were ill, and had recovered. When Schoeneichs went to visit, they found the husband had died of blood poisoning, leaving his wife behind. She returned to the States after his death. Lucile Booth-Clibborn, "A Letter from Sister Lucile Booth-Clibborn," *Pentecostal Evangel* (September 13, 1924): 10. "In the midst of my own overwhelming grief and sorrow, my heart is going out in prayer and sympathy to others at home to whom the death of my beloved one will come as a dreadful shock and stunning blow. May the god os all comfort and grace enable us to bow our heads in submission to the wisdom of the mystery of His ways, giving us grace to press on undaunted in Him. "You can imagine the terrible blow this has been to us, for just nineteen days after we arrived at our destination Ouagadougou, the place to which we felt God had called, and opened up the way before us brining us to our desired haven, my dear husband was called up higher. It is certainly beyond our poor, weak, human comprehension, so we can only accept the wisdom of God's divine leadings with unquestioning confidence, trusting and believing that the "corn of wheat" which has fallen into the ground shall bring forth much fruit unto the praise, honor and glory of our God."

[96] Lou F. Page, "Nadroga, Fiji," *Christian Evangel* (February 22, 1919): 10. "Please pray for me. I am left all alone with four little children. The conflict has been great, but thus far I have had victory thru the Blood. I intend to stay on here until I am sure of the Lord's leading, and meanwhile shall do all I can for the spread of the gospel. I have just received a consignment of Bibles since my husband passed away, and now I will try to get them distributed."

[97] Lou F. Page, "Unnamed update," *Christian Evangel* (March 8, 1919): 10. Sarah, a single missionary who came to care for the children until relatives could take them to Australia, apparently also died of influenza. Also DeLano, 2.

[98] Ruby Nicodem, "Nicodem, Mrs. Frank, Ne Fairchild, Miss Ruby Clarissa," Missionary file (Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God Missions Archives).

[99] Ruby Nicodem, "Settling Christian Families on the Land," *North India Field News* (July 1939). "Through the native estate we have been able to obtain land at a very reasonable rate, just three miles from our mission compound, and right on the edge of the Government jungles. Families who have come out of heathenism are given a chance to settle on this land and work the soil... Our present plot of ground covers... about a hundred acres."

[100] George and Abigail Slager, "Perilous Days in China," *Pentecostal Evangel* (May 14, 1927): 4-5. Slagers escaped the city in a boat in 1927, leaving behind their adopted daughter. Dangerous journeys, details. In March, anti-foreigner sentiments against foreigners in the International District of Nanking, bullets fired, American warships fired on "the mobs were looting and marching... as soon as the war ships opened fire, the mob began to flee... Immediately 200 British marines and 150 American marines were landed." All refugees were evacuated to steamers which left for Shanghai. "Up to the time we left our station at Chuchowfu, our school rooms, chapel, and new house were requisitioned by [soldiers] much of the time. They damaged, wantonly destroyed and stole a considerable amount of our property. Our loss up to the time we left was probably $500.00. Saints in olden times took joyfully the spoiling of their goods. I used to wonder how they could do it, for I like to take care of my things. Now I understand it... being crucified with Christ." Prayed for Christ's soon return. "God has His own way of weaning His people from the things of the world so that they will long for His return. He is coming! Hallelujah!" Also, Martin Kvamme, "From Japanese-Occupied Territory," *Pentecostal Evangel* (July 31, 1943): 11. "The Slagers are camping out, as also the friends in Shanghai... They could have evacuated but felt it was the will of God for them to stay. We honor them for that decision, for the future actions of the Japanese were most uncertain...Whatever the future holds, you may be sure that Mr. and Mrs. Slager will give a good witness and will embrace any opportunity to speak a word for the Master." Subsequently, they were interned during WWII by Japanese. Mr. Slager (name?) was confined with other Americans for several months, in 1943 allowed three hours out of the house for errands, exercise. Both were eventually imprisoned.

[101] George C. Slager, "War Horrors in China: As Related by a Missionary," *Pentecostal Evangel* December 18, 1937. "How we thanked the Lord for deliverance from danger, for just as we came into the safety zone some Chinese, walking along the same road over which we had just come, were machine-gunned… Since coming to Shanghai we have been hearing the roar of cannon, the purr of machine guns, the explosion of bombs and the sputter of anti-aircraft guns almost incessantly. It is quite a strain." Also, Kvamme, "Territory," *Pentecostal Evangel* (July 17 1943): 11. In her first letter to her mother in four years, Abigail wrote, "We are fairly well, but thinner than when you last saw us. [George had lost fifty pounds and Abigail fifteen during internment, according to their medical exam on furlough, August 28, 1947.] We are surely thankful that the war is over. The time of our release from here is not yet decided, but we expect it will be soon. We shall likely be returning to Tsingtao, although we have no home to return to. Others occupy the flat we rented formerly. The Japs took most, if not all, of our furniture shortly after they interned us in October, 1942. On December 17, 1941, Japanese Navy officers came to our home and took George off, leaving me alone for nearly five months… For nearly three years, we have been interned together. However, when all is considered, we have fared better than many others in the world today… We live in a room 12 X 9 feet. All our worldly goods are packed in with us. There are community kitchens, and dining rooms of a sort. Many of us have done extra cooking on stoves made of bricks and tin cans—when we had anything to cook. Red Cross parcels were given to us last winter. They augmented our supplies. However, our food supplies have increased of late. We have had liberty to move freely about in the camp daily until 10 p.m. We have appreciated this liberty. The Lord has surely been good to us. We do not regret any experiences we have passed through." Also, Mr. and Mrs. George Slager, "Untitled Update," *Pentecostal Evangel* January 12, 1946. After a warm reception back in Tsingtao on September 25, they reported "Although we are certainly thankful to be free once more, we believe it is God's will for us to carry on here again, for a time at any rate. We have had little opportunity for visiting stations so far, as conditions here are not yet normal by any means. But there is hope that they will be better soon."

[102] John Perkins, "Three Days in a Heathen Town," *Latter Rain Evangel* (August 1910): 21.

[103] Lloyd and Margaret Shirer, "Modern Miracles," *Pentecostal Evangel* (February 25, 1939): 9. Margaret spoke at women's assemblies and asked for testimonies, most of which were about divine healing.

[104] Cox, 125.

[105] Frank Nicodem, "A Letter from Brother Nicodem of India," *Pentecostal Evangel* (July 12, 1930): 11. Ruby wrote her husband of the difficulty in obtaining supplies: the market was closed due to cholera and she had to let their helper go, taking care of about seventy boys and her eighteen-month-old baby. "Last night the sand flies were so bad that one just couldn't sleep even when it did get a little cooler toward morning."

[106] Jim Bryant, "Letter, November 7, 1976," (Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God Missions Archives). Margaret Peoples-Shirer experienced the trauma of an unfaithful spouse. She stayed with Lloyd when they lost their missionary appointment after his moral failure, and they worked for government in Ghana, Congo, and Haiti, losing touch with the AG. "Margaret… is a terrific preacher… [She] stayed with him all through the years and kept her home together… [After Lloyd passed away, Margaret held meetings in churches in Springfield, MO.] She is a beautiful Christian lady who deserves any recognition we may give her."

[107] John and Jessie Perkins, "Off Again for Africa," *Pentecostal Evangel* (September 7, 1929): 11. Oblique reference to the need for missionary cooperation in an update from the Perkins: "Above all pray that a fresh anointing and enduement of power from on high may be given to us all for the work there, that peace and harmony and co-operation may prevail among the workers, and that the Lord will send a mighty revival…"

[108] J. M. Perkins, "A Great Convention in Liberia," *Pentecostal Evangel* (April 25, 1931): 10-11. "Brother and Sister Schwartz had everything in readiness, and the compound looking fine. From the very beginning peace and harmony reigned, so that there was scarcely a jar throughout the eight days we were there."

[109] Cox, 74. "Many people who became Pentecostals joined the new movement from other denominations, so were not eager to cooperate with them. They had left them for what they considered to be good reasons, and now they had also been rejected by them."

[110] George M. Kelley, "The Call of China: George Kelley, of Sainam, S. China, at the General Council," *Pentecostal Evangel* (October 20, 1923): 3. “We are not quarreling with the Baptists or Methodists, but each is separated to a different part of the province. If the Holy Spirit leads us to go to some other place we are free to go, but we prefer not to build on another man’s foundation.”

[111] W. R. Williamson, "Letter, January 30, 1932" (Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God Missions Archives). A long stay in China changed the Slager’s relationships with fellow missionaries. By 1932, letters of complaint from the Assemblies of God district in South China to Noel Perkins, head of Foreign Missions in Springfield, MO, were detailing a lack of cooperation and division among missionaries caused by Kelleys. Mr. Slager overrode decisions made by other missionary and his lack of support for unified discipline among the Chinese churches created havoc among converts, who played missionaries against each other to secure the decisions they preferred.

[112] Mattie Ledbetter, “Letter to Noel Perkin” (Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God Missions Archives), 2. After Margaret had died, Mattie Ledbetter appealed for help because George was dividing the work, pitting the Chinese Christians against other Assemblies of God missionaries. “Sister Kelley has been released from it all. We believe her heart was right. They say she was a woman of prayer. [George] will miss the restraint of her prayers.”

[113] Cox, 121.

[114] Kelley, “Preaching and Living the Gospel,” 3. “The love of God enabled us to love [the children]… We taught them to read the Bible. From the beginning our work has been evangelistic. You cannot educated them into Christianity, but you have first of all got to get them saved.”

[115] Lloyd Shirer, "Letter, March 9, 1939" (Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God Missions Archives), 1.

[116] James A. Harvey, "Sowing the Gospel Seed in India," *Latter Rain Evangel* (February, 1917): 17. Esther was an accomplished speaker and wrote extensively, especially for the Latter Rain Evangel. James wrote supporters about the “wife and I,” partners in evangelism and selling Gospels on the trains, especially to Nepalese workers returning home from India.

[117] Slager, The Chuchow W. Che., China Report: 1. “The character of the work has been evangelistic from its inception. An endeavor has been made to reach all classes with the Gospel message. A special line of work was conducted for the women and children (mostly under the direction of a single missionary, Miss Rediger.)

[118] George and Abigail Slager, "Feeding China's Poor," *Pentecostal Evangel* (February 27, 1926): 10.

[119] Perkins, "Three Days in a Heathen Town." 21. John wrote about his partnership in evangelism with Jennie: “After we had showed [the Liberians] a goodly number of pictures [of the life of Christ on a screen], they begged us for more. The next morning we spoke of going on to another town, but they would not heart to that, so during all the time we spent there the majority of people remained in town, following us about, filling the house where we stayed almost continually and listening with rapt attention to all we had to tell them. First one of us would talk and then the other. After a searching Bible lesson on the secret sins of the heathen, they began to confess their sins, and poured out some awful confessions.”

120 Margaret Shirer, "Teaching in the Gold Coast: New Book Printed," Pentecostal Evangel (July 28, 1934): 10. "This month we have finished printing a little book in the native language... It is a simple story, easily understood by the natives, beginning with the creation, the fall, and the promise of the Saviour. The story is then told of His coming, His life, death, resurrection, His coming again and the judgment. There are twenty-nine boys in the reading class and they are now eagerly reading the new book. “We have a separate reading class for the Konkomba boys, taught by the native evangelist, under our supervision. The need is great for a young couple to work among the Konkomba Tribe. They are untouched by either civilization or Mohammedanism, which would make it much easier for them to receive the gospel message. Their language has never been reduced to writing, but this could be done.

We are trying to translate a few choruses into their language, and how they like it! Every Sunday Mr. Shirer and I take our turn in holding services for them in their new church."

[121] Margaret Peoples Shirer, "Out of the Chicken Coop," *Women in Touch* (January 1978). Margaret may have been the better preacher in her family. On his missionary application, Lloyd mentioned that "three or four souls" had been saved in five years of street preaching. He was a handyman, roofer, and furnace repairman, and Margaret highly admired him for his skills. He proved very useful in repairing and building not only at the Shirer mission stations, but also for other missionaries.

[122] Wycliffe Smith, "The Cry of the Mossi," *Pentecostal Evangel* (October 22, 1927): 8.

[123] Lloyd and Margaret Shirer, "Yendi, Gold Coast," *Pentecostal Evangel* (November 25, 1933): 7, 15. "We spent nearly the entire month on translation work as the boys who are saved are so anxious to get the Scriptures in their own language." Also, Department of Foreign Missions, *Field Focus (Ghana)* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1992).

[124] Robert Gallagher, "What Pentecostal Might Learn from Nestorian Missions," in *38th Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* (Eugene Bible College, Eugene, OR: March 26-28, 2009), 10. "[Nestorian] monasteries were not only centers for prayer, worship, copying Scripture, and missions but also functioned as schools, inns, and medical facilities."

[125] J. W. Perkins, "A Living Sacrifice," *Latter Rain Evangel* (March 1912): 3-4.

[126] J. M. Perkins, "An Entire Town in Africa Recounces Devil Worship," *Latter Rain Evangel* (August 1911): 17.

[127] Margaret Kelley, "South China Missionary Home," *Latter Rain Evangel* (March 1919): 16. About forty workmen were employed on the job, but work slowed as money ran out. Inflation added to the cost as well. Also George Kelley, "Untitled update," *Christian Evangel*, (November 29, 1919): 12.

[128] Kelley, "Missionary Home." Footnote added by editor of the Evangel. George Kelley, "Missionary Notes," *Christian Evangel* (October 5, 1918): 10. Kelleys reported that a "flood has been in the house for three weeks, and on account of this flood water there are many sick in the town and surrounding country. Some of our missionaries here have been tested in their bodies and have had to fight the fever which is almost inevitable here in this unsanitary place. We look forward to the time when we will have a sanitary home here in Sainam." They needed a few thousand more dollars to complete the project. Margaret Kelley, "Souls Won Thro' Patience and Love in China: Practical Results Count in the Mission Field," *Latter Rain Evangel*, May 1917 May 1917. Kelleys also did jail ministry: "We kept [a released prisoner] for several days to instruct him more fully in the Gospel, but he was very anxious to get home and tell his people about this wonderful teaching that had brought such a change in his life." The Kelleys lived on "buffalo street, right where twice a week they buy and sell buffaloes, and at night we can't sleep for the noise at the slaughter-house next door. They kill them by tying something over their nose and mouth until they smother, and the noise is frightful. We have felt embarrassed when telling strangers that we live at the buffalo market. But God is faithful, and again he has told us that He gives us all that we trust him for."

[129] T. M. L. Harrow, "Report of the Mission: From 1908 to 1916," Letter (Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God Missions Archives). "Here at the town of Newaka the people compelled us to "sit down" with them and… cleared us a hill near by their town, and built us our first mission house of materials brought from the surrounding forests – bamboo undressed country plants, and thatch or leaf for the roof. The native women plastered the walls with cow dung." Three months later, the Perkins and other missionaries came up from the coast. "The nine of us, practically strangers one to the other, found ourselves "at home" among the heathen."

[130] John Perkins, "A Trip to a Cannibal Tribe," *Pentecostal Evangel* (August 1, 1931): 8-9.

[131] H. B. Garlock, "Brother and Sister Garlock in Gold Coast," *Pentecostal Evangel* (May 7, 1932): 15. For example, the Garlocks, fellow missionaries to Shirers, arrived at the mission station in May and expected to stay with them through the rainy season until they could establishing themselves in another location.

[132] Slager, The Chuchow W. Che., China Report, 1.

[133] George and Abigail Slager, "Untitled Update," *Weekly Evangel* (January 13, 1917): 12. "They have left the work in Shanghai… and have now taken charge of the orphanage work… There are about fifty people in their home which is one open for destitute Chinese girls and women. The ask for prayers for this institution, and for themselves." Abigail Slager, "Missionary Items: Ningpo, China," *Weekly Evangel* (May 5, 1917): 11. "We have thirty-six orphan girls now, besides the inmates of the Aged Widows' and the Rescue Home, making a family of over fifty in all, to be fed, clothed and ministered to. Please remember us in prayer that we may continue faithful to our blessed Lord in all things until he comes."

[134] Ruby Nicodem, "From Our Letters," *Latter Rain Evangel* (July, 1931): 22. She added, "The little chapel just seemed to be filled with the glory of God… On the last day we had a precious water baptismal service… before we left the place, instead of seven there were twenty-two who had obeyed the Lord in baptism… We do not class them as Christians until they proclaim it openly to the world through water baptism."

[135] Noel Perkins. John Perkins said of Jessie: "She has never been known to refuse a difficult task. On four different occasions in answer to calls from sick missionaries she has started out in the darkness over trails which were almost impassable even in daylight. For twelve long weeks while I was suffering with that dread disease, malaria, Mrs. Perkins scarcely left my bedside. She loved especially to work among the women and girls of Africa, where she was known as a real mother."

[136] Lloyd Shirer, "Recent Progress in the Gold Coast," *Pentecostal Evangel* (November 20, 1948): 11.

[137] Carmichael, "A Look at Liberia.," 10. "Because most of the converts were illiterate, the early missionaries started an elementary educational program. This continues as an integral part of our work. The oldest and largest school, opened in 1931, is the Feloka Assemblies of God Mission School." Liberia: "In 1932 a school was opened in Newaka to provide elementary education for girls and to train them to be efficient homemakers and wives for the pastors. More than 100 girls attend this school [by 1964]."

[138] Yvonne Carlson, "Someone Remembered: A Story of Fiji's Pioneer Missionaries," *Pentecostal Evangel* (December 31 1989): 21. In return for Lou Page's pedagogy, the family received a place to live and food to eat.

[139] Kelley, "Preaching and Living the Gospel."

[140] "Mossi" http://www.everyculture.com/wc/Brazil-to-Congo-Republic-of/Mossi.html (accessed January 7, 2010). "The Mossi language is Moré. It belongs to the Gur group within the Niger-Congo language family. Like many African languages, Moré uses pitch (how high or low a tone is) to distinguish meanings. Also, as in other African languages, a verb form shows whether its action is continuing or happens only once." Department of Foreign Missions, *Upper Volta,* (Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God Missions Archives, June 1981). Margaret Peoples (Shirer) wrote: "I cried myself to sleep every night, praying, "Lord, what shall I do' One morning at 2 o'clock God said to me, 'Have I ever failed you?'…In our village there was a place where eah evening the women went to grind their grain between two stones. I got some stones and grain and went to grind with them. As I listened to their conversation, I began to understand what they were saying, and I wrote down everything I heard. When I had enough words I wrote little stories in Moré in order to teach the women to read. Then I translated…"

[141] Adel Flower Dalton, "Then and Now: Eight Decades of Foreign Missions," *Mountain Movers* (January 1991): 8.

[142] Slager, *First Medical Examination of Furlough: History* (Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God Missions Archives). Work was "mostly evangelistic, also teaching women and children." Some, like Harvey and

Schoonemacher, were excellent writers who became well-known in their own right as speakers. Abigail Slager worked as an evangelist, but also taught women and children. She did quite a bit of writing updates and stories, including articles for an unknown publication: "Yuan-Hwa, a Chosen Vessel" (April 1949) and "Timothy" (October 1949).

[143] Eugene Albert Nida, *Customs and Cultures: Anthropology for Christian Missions*, 1st ed. (New York,: Harper, 1954), 116.

[144] Frank Nicodem, "India Not Civilized," *Pentecostal Evangel* (June 24, 1922):12. Frank Nicodem observed a young boy burning to death when his clothing caught fire and no one nearby would help put out the blaze. Such "inhumanity" caused Frank to write a letter about the lack of "civilization" in India.

[145] Ruby Nicodem, "One from Nepal Hears the Master's "Come Unto Me,...I Will Give You Rest"," *North India Field News* (January 1940). Nepalese were constantly passing from mountain homes into the Indian plains. Ruby describes standing at the gate watching them carry baskets, through the "third largest gateway into India. Some of them will work during the winter months and earn a few dollars to take back into Nepal with them." She describes fruit, their reaction to cars, native evangelists and their struggles.

[146] Abigail C. Slager, "Interesting Letter from Shanghai," *The Weekly Evangel* (April 1, 1916): 12. "Today is the Chinese New Year… I have written the foregoing with the prayer that it will give you some insight into the idolatry that abounds in this land. All their worship seems like child's play to us, but it is not so to them. They are much in earnest in their worship… God has encouraged us much in Himself of late. With a deeper realization than ever before, we can say with Paul, 'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I…' We have been having some very good meetings with the Chinese. We mean to continue in this blessed way of taking up our cross daily to follow Him who suffered to redeem us unto himself, and not only us but also these poor darkened people among whom we live. Pray for us that the Word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified even as it is with you."

[147] Dalton, "Interview with Margaret Peoples Shirer: Upper Volta" (Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God Missions Archives). Margaret was a very strict teacher. When the school bell rang and she entered the room, her children stood out of respect for their teacher.

[148] Margaret Peoples Shirer, "How We Flew Home from Africa," *Pentecostal Evangel* (December 5, 1942): 8. The children had been left behind in the USA with their uncle for five years before a warm family reunion in 1942. "The next day our children took us through the streets of the little town where they have lived the past five years so that we could meet their boy and girl friends, and to show these friends that they really had a daddy and mamma."

[149] Frank Nicodem, "Restored to Health," *Pentecostal Evangel* (April 12, 1930): 13.

[150] Frank Nicodem, "India," *Pentecostal Evangel* (May 4, 1929): 11. The Nicodem children were willing to go without food to help feed the hungry: "Many of [the people in the famine relief camp] are people that we have known for years, and to whom we have many times preached the gospel. Now they are in a sense looking to us to see just how far our religion is practiced… There are many cases in which we are forced, being Christians, to give food, for some come to us who are too far gone to work. There will be many such in the near future, and it is hard to turn them away [during this famine]. We are suggesting here that we go without certain meals. Our boys, too, are always ready to take part in anything like this. In this way we shall have a little to give to those that come, but what is this among so many."

[151] Slager, "Perilous Days in China," 5.

[152] Frank Nicodem, "Miraculous Protection," *Pentecostal Evangel* (June 13, 1936): 8.

[153] Perkins, "A Trip." "I am just back from Dorobo, where I dedicated a new chapel last Sunday. We call Dorobo a cannibal tribe: for they used to be very fond of human flesh, and shortly before we came to this part, they had eaten a

man. Now two of our best workers are from this tribe, and many of the people are Christians. Praise the Lord. The gospel of Christ is still the power of God unto salvation to all who believe."

[154] In contrast, British, French, and Dutch colonial governments initially resisted missionary advances because missionaries tried to prevent exploitation of indigenous peoples.

[155] Shirer, "Interesting News," 11. "This tribe fights among themselves considerably. Each dry season when work is slack, clan will fight clan, or family fight family. To try and maintain peace the government has mounted police patrolling among these people. One district commissioner said to a missionary "Missions have always preceded governments in bringing peace to such war-like tribes. Why doesn't your mission open among these Konkombas?" …the answer is in the hands of the Pentecostal people in America. The support of a couple would be $100 a month, and a station would have to be erected which would cost $1,000."

[156] Kelley, "Souls Won," 24. "The Vice President of China said to Mr. Mott when he was making a tour, 'Go back to America and urge the church to enter these open doors. Two thousand walled cities are waiting for the Gospel. Urge the church to enter these open doors now. Five years from now may be too late.' The doors are open now, but I fear with the Vice President of China that five years may be too late. If we do not take in the Gospel, other things will get in, [sects] and all kinds of false doctrines, and we cannot reach them when they have given up their heathenism and accepted something else We lose our opportunity."

[157] George M. Kelley, "Do Missions Pay?" *Weekly Evangel* (February 16, 1918): 10. "We have seen such great changes that you would hardly recognize it as the same place we went to thirteen years ago. At first, men and women would not come together. The man would go on ahead and the wife follow with the burdens. The women were the slaves of the men. The only way we could reach the women was to go into their homes and preach the gospel, and today our congregation is made up of men and women. Now husbands and wives come and sit together and sing praises to the Lord Jesus Christ."

[158] Ruby Nicodem, "Wilt Thou Go with This Man?" *North India Field News* (January 1941). After husband Frank rescued a baby from the dead breast of her mother, little Flower was given to another missionary to raise. Frank rescued a young boy ten years later, and the two met and were to be married. Ruby wrote: "I felt God had truly led us to His choice. I talked with her first to see if she would be willing to consider the young man's suit, and found her so shy that I feared she would never answer me, but after a long time she lifted her blushing face to mine and asked me just one question... "Will he beat me?" Poor little girl, only too well she knew the lot of so many young brides in this country. We assured her that he was a real Christian and would love and care for her, so she agreed to meet him. We left them together for a little while; when we went back into the room they were reading the Bible and their faces were beaming as they told us that they would like to be married in a month's time. Today this young couple are still with us, working on the compound...once more we have had cause to thank God for the results of the laid-down life of our loved one..."

[159] Kelley, "Preaching and Living the Gospel," 3. "You have heard how they would bind the feet of the babies and break the bones of the feet, so that women weighing 125 or 130 pounds had beet only two inches long. Now no longer in South China do they bind the women's feet; but that is only the beginning, and changes are brought about every day through the preaching of the Word of God."

[160] Frank and Ruby C. Nicodem, "Does It Pay?" *Pentecostal Evangel* (September 13, 1930): 10. "Several years ago when we came to India, and God laid it upon our hearts to take in and care for the little orphan boys of this land, we found that there was considerable opposition on the part of dear ones at home. They told us that Jesus was coming so soon that it would not pay to take in these poor little ragged, hungry, dirty, diseased boys; but that we should spend our time in evangelizing this great country." After ten years, Frank and Ruby reported on two of their boys who "have felt His call upon them for service among their own people... and have consecrated their lives to His service… Has it paid? Yes, thank God, a hundred times over for every heartache, for every sacrifice. Today we can feel that we have feet going in many directions throughout India, and souls that are on fire with the love of God and eager to spread the good tidings….Our older boys are going out from us one by one… They are our children in the Lord and they certainly have become very dear to our hearts… We still have over seventy boys."

[161] Lloyd and Margaret Shirer, "Nigeria, March 1943," Missionary update (Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God Missions Archives). “In Nigeria the missionaries’ task is not to form assemblies, to preach and work in a certain area until a group of believers is gathered together. The churches are there, the workers are there but very ignorant of many fundamental matters. The missionaries must be an organizer, an executive, a teacher. The people are anxious to be taught.” They appealed for a strong staff of missionaries, a Bible school and staff, and a printing plant.

[162] Nicodem, "Back to the Land," 6. "All of us as missionaries have at some time or another had men on our compounds for whom we have made jobs of drawing water, cutting grass, etc. simply because we have nothing else to offer the man who lost every means of making a living when he accepted Christ... How is our indigenous Church in India to become self-supporting if the individual must always be financially dependent on the missionary?"

[163]Ibid., 6-7. “[The husband] builds his own three-roomed house from sun-dried bricks, which he also has made with his own hands. Wood for the roofs and doors and windows is given us free from the Estate but the sawing is one item we had had to help with as it is one of the most expensive items. Each man is encouraged to plant both shade and fruit trees… Four years ago when it became necessary for me to take over this branch of the work, I felt very inadequate for the task and with trembling asked the Lord to enable me to settle one family a year... today we have five fine Christian families... We give these families financial help only the first year until they have their first harvests, then they are expected to carry on and bring in their tithes to the local Church here."

Who Is First? A Cultural and Exegetical Study of Family to Communicate Biblical Principles Regarding Familial Obligations for Indian Hindu Culture (IJPM 5, 2017)

Renée Griffith [Grantham]*

Introduction

The following study presents a biblical understanding of the importance of family to people from Indian Hindu culture who have recently relocated to an urban, middle- class city in the Midwestern United States, with emphasis on the responsibility believers have to the family of God.

Familial obligation for Indian Christians is important cross-cultural exploration for Indian Hindus who place a high value on family. In particular, this tension regarding familial obligations increases when Indians become a part of the family of God and their extended family does not. Eastern Hindu views on family differ significantly from those of a Western Christian. However, the degree to which Indian Hindu culture esteems family paves the way for a richer, more biblically-aligned understanding for both earthly families and the family of God.

The research began by contacting an Indian Hindu family who, having recently moved to America, shared their personal and cultural histories through a series of 2-hour interviews from June 2015 through July 2015. During these interviews, the importance of family emerged as a recurring theme.

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(2024 Update: Renée Bernadette Griffith Grantham received her Master of Divinity in 2019. She married Mark Grantham May 10, 2020. She entered the presence of her Heavenly Father on April 15, 2024.)

Studies in anthropology are foundational for cross-cultural communication of biblical truths because missions is inherently interdisciplinary. Cross-cultural ministry not only operates on the theological level, dealing with sin, but also on the anthropological level, dealing with drastic differences in culture which profoundly separate groups of people on internal and external levels. Understanding both the universal human plight and the unique cultural condition of a people group are necessary for communication to occur. Anthropological findings are necessary to separate the forms of biblical expression from the message itself, since the gospel cannot be equated with any one earthly context—even with those found in the Bible.[1]

To analyze the cultural traits of Indian Hindus, the most helpful theoretical perspectives for research and analysis have been those of anthropologists Mary Douglas, Gert Hofstede, Sherwood Lingenfelter, and Michael Rynkiewich. Their theories on the social factors of grid and group as translated into social games, on collectivism within the family and the state, and on dimensions of national culture have guided the following cultural analysis of the Indian people. These anthropological perspectives determine the differences in the elements of culture between the interviewer and interviewees, identify cultural biases, and serve as a basis for constructing the biblical message about family in a manner relevant to Indian culture.

The research conducted herein is suitable for use in the life of a church, small group, or by individuals who wish to engage Indian Hindus living in America in a meaningful way. As churches become increasingly multi-ethnic, being equipped with a cross-cultural understanding is no longer an option reserved for a few but a necessity for all believers.

Cultural Interviews and Analysis

Interviews

In the summer of 2015, an Indian Hindu family of three completed their first six months of living in America. On a 3-year contract, the family will live in Missouri while the husband works for a stateside engineering company that employs both Americans and Indian nationals. Still in the early stages of adjusting to a new culture, this family—two parents in their early 30s and a three-year-old son—were the first members of their family to leave India and settle in another country. In a series of cultural interviews occurring in June and July 2015, Akhil Kunju and his wife, Darshana,[2] shared personal histories before and after marriage, cultural differences

between Indian states and between Indian and American culture, and life priorities as shaped by culture and religion.

The first interview opened with an invitation to freely share about Indian culture, and Darshana immediately responded, "In India, there are two types of families: a joint family and a nuclear family. After marriage we had a joint family, and we think this is better. Here in America, we have a nuclear family."[3] After delineating the difference in which joint equals extended family and nuclear equals only the parents, the couple explained that a joint family is preferred "to pass on tradition. Because parents must work and grandparents stay at home, grandparents are the ones to pass on tradition to children. So, we learn what is Indian tradition through grandparents—through family."

The couple continued their discourse by explaining the importance of family: "Father and mother are first god," Darshana asserted. "We come from them, and they care for us, and in India, we honor them in everything." Akhil added, "We consult parents for all major decisions. For example, I wanted to start a new job, but I had to ask my father first, and he and my brothers and family, they all agree that this is a good decision, and I have his blessing and receive money." Acting outside of the parents' will is out of the question. People may choose to do it, but they would be violating their role in the family.

"Parents are important through all of life, not just childhood," explained Darshana. "In India, there are two types of marriages: arranged marriages and love marriages. Ours was a love marriage," she smiled, "but we still need parents' blessing first." At this point, the conversation turned from general to specific as Akhil shared his story.

> My parents had arranged marriage for me. I was supposed to be married to a doctor in our village, a woman who was twelve years older. But before I knew what my parents wanted, I met Darshana, and we fell in love. When I found out about my arranged marriage, I told my parents, "I cannot marry this doctor because I love someone else," and they would not accept it, so we did not do anything. Because we cannot get married without parents' blessing, we waited. We waited for two years. It was very hard; it was so long. Finally, we took a risk to get a marriage license, and my parents, they saw that we were serious, and they accepted our relationship. With their blessing, we all planned the wedding."

The conversation occasionally veered toward religious and geographical aspects of India, including the location of important Hindu temples and the climates of various Indian states, but it kept coming back to the extended family's involvement in marriage. The couple began the next

interview by opening their wedding album and explaining the elements of a traditional Hindu wedding, starting with rituals intended to honor and thank the parents for raising them. A traditional Hindu ceremony, lasting nearly four hours, begins with the new couple touching the feet of the parents in gratefulness for preparing them for married life.

When asked what the most important moment of her life thus far has been, Darshana cited the first time she met her husband's family: "I did not want to leave. I cried after first visit because they treat me like their own daughter. I look to Akhil's oldest sister as my mother."[4] Akhil clarified: "Darshana did not have a good family, and she did not learn tradition from them. She learns from my family, and they are her family now." With that, Darshana shared her story.

Her grandmother had a son and a daughter, the daughter being Darshana's mother. Shortly after Darshana's birth, her mother died, and when Darshana turned twelve, her grandmother sent her out from her village to a boarding school in a large city: Darshana was not an asset to the household because she would eventually marry and leave the grandmother's house since culture dictates that she belongs to her future husband's family. Darshana would visit her grandmother on holidays, but they never grew close because the son and his family took priority. When she and Akhil began a serious relationship, neither wanted to risk pursuing marriage without the blessing of family because they would be isolated from family on both sides. As soon as Akhil's family accepted the marriage, thereby accepting Darshana, she was welcomed as a valid family member for the first time. "That is why my cultural traditions are from Tamil Nadu, where Akhil is from, not from Kerala, where was my birth."

The couple explained that they define themselves in relation to the group: "When I introduce myself, I say, 'I am Akhil's wife and my son's mother," Darshana explained. "And when I introduce," Akhil interjected, "I say, 'I am son of my father, from this family, and village, and state, and my profession."

Darshana was quick to identify what matters most to her in life: "Family, of course. Akhil, his family, my son, my grandmother. Then my friends. Sometimes I ask God for a sign, to know if something is good or not, and I ask Him for things for my family and friends." Akhil echoed his wife's priorities in part. "Family is most important to me. Then my profession." Akhil's family supported the move to America, although saddened by the distance. "It is only temporary, and we can use Skype every week to see grandparents." The couple concluded the interview sessions by

displaying their wedding jewelry and promising to share more photos and items from India at a future meeting.

Analysis

The operative definition of culture for the purpose of this research is a combination of explanations from missiological anthropologists Paul Hiebert and Michael Rynkiewich; that is, culture is an integrated, coherent way of mentally organizing the world in order to innovate and change themselves as their environments change.[5] A cultural analysis will then utilize anthropological research to identify the ways in which the Kunjus mentally organize their world, especially as regards their emphasis on family.

The ways in which cultures understand the concept of self in relation to the parts and responsibilities of family can be organized into a cultural dimension termed by social psychologist Geert Hofstede as Individualism versus Collectivism, with each at opposite ends of a quantifiable spectrum. This and five other cultural dimensions have been qualified and measured, but only this dimension will receive attention in this study because it measures the concept of self, which is directly related to a culture's emphasis on familial obligations.

In the Individualism versus Collectivism index, Collectivism is a closely-knit relational system in which members, integrated into groups from birth, derive their identity and offer lifelong loyalty in exchange for protection.[6] Extended families, such as the Kunju family, fall into this category. In contrast, individualism places responsibility for welfare on the self, fostering personal preferences, and taking responsibility for one's own choices, not the choices of others. Adults are not encouraged to live as dependent on their extended families.[7]

In these groups to which members belong for life, determined by nature rather than voluntarily chosen, the worst offense is a breach of loyalty; therefore, group members foster mutual dependence.[8] As seen in the Kunjus' response to how they define and, therefore, introduce themselves, their orientation to self centers on a "we," rather than "I," viewpoint: This was evidenced when Darshana explained that she introduces herself by naming the people or groups of people to whom she is connected: her husband, her son, her husband's family, and her native state. Akhil's explanation that all major decisions—including money, moving, and marriage—are only made pending family approval places Indian culture further up on the collectivism index.

On a scale from 0-100, India's collectivism score is 48.[9] This rather median score can be explained by the tension that Hindu religion exerts on the understanding of self. Whereas collectivistic Indian family culture does not see a self apart from the group, Hinduism stresses the fruit of each individual's choices, called karma, which has consequences for the next life, whether good or bad.[10] Individual choices bring each Hindu either closer to or further from their ultimate goal of moksha, or liberation from the cycle of rebirth and death.[11] Thus, for the Indian Hindu, spiritual destiny is determined by personal choices, not the choices of the group.

Related to the cultural dimension of collectivism is what social anthropologist Mary Douglas terms, "group," referring to the ways in which people define their identity and relationships to the extent that they are socially incorporated.[12] Group is not merely a designation defining people in reference to who they are not. To the contrary, it is a system to which an individual belongs, either with weak ties, serving a functional purpose and dissolving after the goal is achieved, or strong ties, forging a lifelong bond, as is common in Indian culture. According to Douglas' model, Indians are strong- or high-group, meaning that associations and relationships are permanent and involve lasting social obligations. These lifelong bonds are evidenced by the measures taken to give honor to the bride's and groom's parents in the traditional Hindu wedding ceremony, by the absorption of the bride into the groom's family after marriage, and by the role of Indian grandparents in the socialization of children.

The other social factor Douglas deems "grid" to describe the extent to which a society defines its rules for social expectations.[13] Strong- or high-grid societies place more restrictions on the roles of individuals, while weak- or low-grid societies make fewer distinctions. Indian culture is high-grid, due in large part to the remaining yet waning influence of the Hindu caste system. Although now outlawed, the caste system previously organized society into five classes, each of which had distinct roles and stringent rules about associating with people from other castes. While India is moving toward a weaker-grid society with a more-competitive environment, its history and tradition lend themselves to a hierarchical system in which a few people hold power at the top and most people operate in the middle- and lower-levels of society.

Missiological anthropologist Sherwood Lingenfelter also addresses grid and group tendencies, organizing them into a maximum of five "social games" that people play when interacting in all spheres of daily life.[14] By placing "grid" and "group" on perpendicular x-y axes, respectively, Lingenfelter creates a graph on which the combined degrees of "grid" and "group"

place cultures in one of the following four quadrants: Hierarchist, Authoritarian, Individualist, and Egalitarian.[15] Because Indian culture is, as discussed above, high grid and high group, it lands in quadrant I, or the Hierarchist social game.[16] The Hierarchist game emphasizes group accountability and sharp social distinctions while a small number of individuals fill societal roles of power.

The hierarchical culture from which Indian Hindus come has clearly defined rules and roles for members of society. Hierarchical society functions on the understanding that the people at the top of the authority structure are the experts and can be trusted.[17] A distinct top-down flow of authority exists, and because the people at the top are the ones who distribute resources and legitimate action, inequality is not only customary but preferred.[18] On a family level, the people in power in high-grid Hindu society are the parents. The goals in a system with this distribution of power are to create and preserve harmony and, as such, confrontation is to be avoided.[19] This is done through sustaining interpersonal relationships, with each person fulfilling prescribed roles in society and religious life. Safeguards are put in place to diminish such conflict, including group approval before major decisions to curb any individual tendencies to differ too widely from the group or make choices unforeseen to the group. Conflicts are often muted through subtle communication because direct conflict is seen as dishonorable.[20] Mutual acquaintances may mediate and restore peace to both parties.

Indian Hindu culture is patrilocal—that is, a couple resides with the groom's family, or at least near it.[21] This was why Darshana's grandmother sent her to boarding school: Darshana's culture mandated that she eventually leave her mother's household, and since her uncle's wife and child lived with the grandmother already, it was an extra financial burden to support someone destined to leave and join another family unit. Thus, for an Indian Hindu woman, one major shift in identity is from birth family to marital family, though both are forms of collectivistic identity.

Summary of Findings

The preceding anthropological analysis provides explanation for why the Kunjus demonstrate a deep respect for family, especially parents, treating them as "god[s]," in Darshana's words. Akhil and Darshana value filial obligation above all else, sacrificing personal preferences for the will of the whole family. In Indian Hindu culture, honoring one's family, especially one's parents, fulfills a duty to the parents and to the self, keeping individuals on

track to enter the new life cycle as a higher life form.[22]

The Bible has much to say about honoring family, in some ways akin to the honor called for in Hindu culture, although the reasons for giving such honor and the expressions thereof, differ. If the Kunjus accept Christ while their extended family in India remains Hindu, the Kunjus in America will belong to two families—one earthly, one spiritual—which must both receive honor. Indian Christians' membership in two families creates tension when the families hold opposing viewpoints on the same topic— a tension exacerbated by the intentional avoidance of conflict emphasized in Indian high- group, high-grid culture. To navigate situations in which the expectations of both families conflict, the Kunjus must understand where their greatest obligations should lie.

To inform the Kunjus' understanding, the following biblical study drawing on texts from Exodus, Deuteronomy, and Matthew clarifies God's command for parental respect, the reality of membership in God's family, and appropriate behavior when one's earthly family is in conflict with one's heavenly family.

Researcher's Cultural Bias

Identifying personal preference for social order and comparing it to that of Indian Hindus' preferences is crucial before a biblical examination of the topic of family because it alerts me to the cultural lenses I wear while reading Scripture. My cultural bias, according to Lingenfelter's social games, is individualistic authoritarian, also called low-group, high-grid. This differs significantly from an Indian Hindu's high-grid, high- group social game and, consequently, affects my understanding of family and obligations to the family of God.

As an individualist, I hold that each person can determine his or her own way of life apart from any group.[23] As such, I value my family, but I also prize mobility, and I maintain connection with minimal obligation to my nuclear family, much less my extended family, who mutually agrees to amicability but to no lifelong, obligatory services on their part or mine. Any assistance or care I show to family members, or they to me, is completely voluntary rather than required. Individualists value truth-telling and expressing how they feel, and I confront family members directly if I have an opinion which differs from theirs.[24] My family relationships are more binding than my friendships in the sense that family is the one group which I did not choose and to which I will always be related on earth, but obligations therein are sparse, save that of honoring parents. As

an adult, I honor my parents as an individualist by providing spiritual support and inviting them to share in significant moments. I have no familial history of newlyweds living with in-laws, of having no opinion different from that of the group, nor of grandparents being the chief figures in transmitting cultural history, as are customary in Indian family culture.

As an authoritarian, I do not believe in collective considerations for each decision I make.[25] My priority in decision-making is my own good rather than the good of the group, although I do not intend my choices to be to the detriment of my family. Consequently, my understanding of the power structure within a family is that I do not, as a rule, submit my wishes to parental approval and let their word be the final say on my choices. I inform my parents of events in my life and ask for their input, not so much for approval but for the sake of inclusion, because I care that they know how my life progresses.

My cultural bias leads me to view family ties as far less binding than they are in Indian culture. Family does not have such binding ties for me as it does for those in Indian culture. Additionally, my culture does not place a significant emphasis on honor, so I need to study the original context of Bible verses regarding honoring parents because I have little in my culture that provides an example resonating with this topic. Because choices are a personal matter and approval is not needed from all members before making a decision, I need to make great effort to understand the hierarchical family structure in which Indians are entrenched since it is foreign to me. As I study the passages of Scripture related to earthly families and the family of God, I must remember that, like Indian culture, the family cultures of the Old and New Testaments were much more collectivistic and hierarchical than my own, making the family unit substantially more important to all facets of life.

Exegetical Study on Family and the Family of God

The Bible speaks of two types of families: earthly families and the family of God. Proper treatment of both families, and parental treatment in particular, first receives definition in the Old Testament. The earliest directives humanity receives regarding treatment of parents comes from the fifth commandment: “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you” (Exod. 20:12).[26] Whereas the first four commandments pertain to our conduct in relation to God, this is the first of six commandments regulating our treatment of others. The first word of this commandment is honor, a verb which in

Hebrew means "heavy" or "weighty" and is used elsewhere in the Old Testament in reference to God's glory.[27] Proper treatment of parents is respecting the authority God has given them in the household: to honor them is to recognize their position as a gift from God.[28]

> Exodus 20 opens with the words, "I am the Lord [Yahweh] your God," by which God defines himself and clarifies His relationship with humanity. After this declaration, He utters ten commandments by which people are to relate to Him and one another. He gives of himself first, and people respond in kind—first to Him, and then to one another. This is a recognition of His role as Creator. This intentional ordering of God-first, people- second is the same pattern people should follow for filial obligation. In Exodus 20, God established the proper posture children must take with their parents in that God should always be honored first.[29]

Honor is no light matter for a member of God's family. Just as honor is treated seriously, dishonor is held with as much repugnance as honor is with esteem. Leviticus and Deuteronomy list curses and severe punishments ending in death for those who dishonor their parents.[30] As a result, many Jewish interpreters of the Torah have considered the fifth commandment as the most important.[31]

The fifth commandment, the first commandment God gave His people to govern their conduct with others, addressed the family unit. While people in Western cultures frequently quote this commandment to children, in its original context it was a directive for adults with living parents. It was through the example of adults honoring their parents that children learned to do the same.[32] From the outset of God's covenant with His people, He clearly intended His people to carry a lifelong obligation of honoring their parents.

In both the Israelite culture of Jesus' time and the ancient Roman culture which ruled it, any slack on allegiance to family was far more dishonorable than it is today. However, in Matthew 12:46-50 and Mark 3:31-35, Jesus clearly fails to place His physical family first.[33] In these passages, Jesus offers explanation about the true nature of His family at the expense of offending the culture. He asserts that his "brother and sister and mother" are "those who do the will of [His] father who is in heaven" (Matt. 12:50). In other words, He affirms that His true family incorporates those who do the will of His Father, regardless of biological ties.[34] This distinction between physical family and spiritual family was unheard of for the Judaism of Jesus' era, which employed ethnic terms for spiritual realities, most often with the term "brothers" meaning both Israelites and children of God.[35]

In the time of Jesus, family ties were defined by hierarchy: the duty of wives, children, and slaves was to obey the father.[36] Thus Jesus' statement of His true family, while being unarguably culturally objectionable, remains, at the very least, understandable since family members operated in relation to the father. By doing the will of the Father people do not make themselves part of Jesus' family, but rather doing the Father's will identifies people as family members.[37] It is with this identification that Jesus recognizes His true family, making this passage less about his earthly family and more about what it means to be His disciple.[38] To be a Christian—to be a disciple—is to do the will of the Father.[39]

In Matthew 12 and Mark 3, Jesus no longer speaks to the crowds about His disciples but as His disciples.[40] Here they are offered an invitation to become His family. By speaking in such divisive terms and re-defining family, however, Jesus does not lessen the importance of His mother and brothers standing outside,[41] nor does He deny the validity of the family unit or the nation of Israel.[42] Instead, He emphasizes that the will of the Father takes precedence over the will of physical relatives.[43] He casts light on a new family, later to be called the church, with relationships more binding than those of blood.[44] Due to this extension of Jesus' family, it is clear that while earthly families are temporary, there exists one spiritual family, and it is eternal. In the eternal family, loyalty must lie first with the Father.[45] Jesus entered the earthly societal structure of family in order to lay the groundwork for and point to a spiritual relationship system with infinitely greater significance; He did not confuse the means with the end.[46] With the literal family, God has given us a basis for understanding the spiritual family of which we are a part through identification with Jesus.[47]

Once a member of the family of God, a disciple must view all earthly relationships in terms of the new family and its relationship to the coming kingdom.[48] In Jesus' family, the will of the Father takes priority over even the deepest human relationships, should those be at odds with the values of the kingdom of God and invite persecution. This truth is reflected in Matthew 10, in which Jesus addresses behavior and allegiance for His disciples whose earthly families are not part of the family of God.

In Matthew 10:35-37, Jesus explains that the kingdom of God may divide earthly families whose members are not all of His family. Jesus, in this passage, warns His disciples about family strife and cautions against misplacing their loyalties to avoid it.[49] Conflicting values regarding familial obligations relationships bring on societal persecution, especially in the hierarchical,

patriarchal family culture to which Jesus spoke.[50] Allegiance to Jesus' family can "set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law" (Matt. 10:35): aptly-chosen examples, given that brides lived with the groom's family during Jesus' time.[51]

According to Matthew 10:37, those who do not love their family less than they love Jesus are not worthy of Him—a point made in the cross-reference of Luke 14:26, which employs "hate" in most English translations. Originally hyperbolic rather than literal, Jesus' use of "hate" is not meant literally, but rather emphasizes the contrast between the allegiance due to the Father and that due to earthly families, phrasing all the more striking to an audience that viewed respecting parents as the highest social obligation.[52] Indeed, honoring family is, in Judaism, only second to honoring God himself.[53] Matthew here clarifies the meaning, asserting that the danger lies in loving one's earthly family more than Jesus.[54] In the face of persecution, Jesus' disciples can maintain confidence in the placement of their loyalties because they are part of a family to which He, too, belongs.[55]

When faced with opposing obligations to two sets of families—one's earthly family and the family of God—Jesus says one must choose which to obey. In Matthew 10:37, Jesus exhorts His family not to honor parents at the expense of honoring God. If God is dishonored by one's treatment of parents—that is, by obeying their will over and above the dictates of Scripture insofar as to cause one to sin—one must determine whose allegiance is worth following: that of the temporary or eternal family.[56]

Scripture's Message to the Kunju Family on Familial Obligations

The message of Scripture to this people group about family is three-part. First, the Kunjus should continue honoring their parents because God, in Exodus 20:12, commands children of all ages to honor their parents for all time. This is something the Indian Hindu culture, in general—and the Kunjus in particular— already do well. Conversely, dishonoring parents is a sin with earthly as well as spiritual penalties, which is also already reinforced in the Kunjus' culture. The Kunjus can rest assured that God takes honor very seriously. The message of the fifth commandment to the Kunju family is one of affirmation of the honor they already show to their family. Loyalty to parents, and loyalty to the father, in particular, such as is practiced in Indian Hindu family culture paves the way for an understanding of the loyalty due to God as Father of the

Christian's true family. A collectivistic culture is more accustomed to deferring to parents' wishes, even when it means suppressing personal preferences, than is an individualistic culture.

The second and third parts of Scripture's message to the Kunjus pertains when the Kunjus have accepted Christ. The following is existing reality but only becomes the Kunjus' reality at salvation: Matthew 12:46-50 states that they have a truer family beyond their physical family. This spiritual family is lasting while the earthly family is limited to blood relatives and ends at death. The Kunjus can know that God has placed people in earthly family units to better understand how they should fulfill their duties in Jesus' family, and that earthly families can be viewed, in a sense, as a means to an end— the end being the eternal family of God. Jesus did not come to deny the validity of the earthly family but to join them into a greater and lasting family—into Jesus' own family. The Kunjus are identified with this family as they do the will of their ultimate Father. To be a disciple of Jesus is to be part of His family. Because the Kunjus, upon salvation, are part of two families, they can honor both since the commandment to honor earthly parents and the stiff penalties against dishonor are still in effect as moral laws.

Matthew 10:35-37 tells the Kunjus that if their extended family does not know Christ, conflict with them is inevitable. When the conflict is such that the Kunjus cannot honor both families simultaneously—that is, when there is a moral conflict in which to obey the earthly family would be to sin against God—the Kunjus must obey their true parent who is the Father of their ultimate family. Harmony is disrupted when they do not honor earthly parents, meaning a main goal of a hierarchical society is not achieved. The Kunjus will want to preserve—or rather, restore—harmony and may avoid conflict by acquiescing to the demands of their earthly in-group. By remembering that the temporal family serves, in a sense, as a symbol of the ultimate family, the Kunjus can know that they are still fulfilling their duty of giving honor to family if times arise when they must obey God to the exclusion of culture.

For Indians to accept the biblical understanding of family, they must broaden their collectivistic concept of identity to the group to include both families. They can continue to live out lifelong familial obligation according to a hierarchical power structure in order to obey their ultimate family—their spiritual one—over and above their earthly family. This shift in understanding of family cuts at the heart of Indian identity: to what group do Indian Christians belong first and foremost, and to whom do they live in lifelong obligation, if not exclusively to

their earthly families? The answer lies in the reason that Jesus came for Indian Hindus: to ransom them into their true family, completing their identity.

Contextualizing the Message for Indian Culture

"Indian culture loves story," explained Darshana, her three-year-old son crawling on her lap. "It is how we pass tradition and teaching to our children. If we want to teach something, we tell a story."[57]

If I were to communicate the tri-partite truths about family detailed in this essay, I would tell a story. I researched some of the earliest recorded Hindu stories for illustrative parables specifically dealing with treatment of parents by their children. The Sanskrit epic poem, the Ramayana, tells the story of Prince Rama's quest to free his wife, Sita, from the clutches of a demon king. It focuses thematically on dharma, which in Hinduism is divine law, loosely translated as righteousness and encompassing a higher morality involving deep respect for and devotion to parents.[58] To explore dharma, the Ramayana includes several short stories depicting a series of ideal relationships between people, including that of children to their parents. One such story is "Shravan, the Dutiful Son," summarized below.

Shravan was the only child of two blind parents. He served them faithfully through childhood and into his adult years. When they grew old, they expressed the desire to pilgrimage to all the holy sites of Hinduism. Shravan could not afford transportation for the three of them, so he secured a basket to each end of a bamboo pole, placed one parent in each basket, and then put the pole on his shoulders. For years he faithfully carried his parents from one pilgrimage site to another. One day, as he drew water from a lake to quench the thirst of his parents, the noise he made by the water caught the attention of King Dashratha, who was hunting in the nearby forest. Thinking the noise from the water was an animal, Dashratha shot an arrow in the direction of the sound, and it pierced Shravan's chest. Shravan cried out, causing the king to approach and, to his horror, realize his mistake. With his dying breath, Shravan explained his quest to King Dashratha and asked that the king look after his parents. Then Shravan died, and the king went to Shravan's parents and to tell of their son's death. They were overcome by grief and cursed the king with putrashoka, grief that comes from the loss of a child.

In the original story, the moral is that children of any age should honor parents until their last breath to be considered a dutiful and in right relationship with the universe. In the re-

telling, the moral is for children of any age to honor both parents and God to be considered dutiful and in right relationship with one's true family. I alter details, including the addition of the character named "Yeshu," to re-define what it means to be a dutiful child in the biblical sense of honoring the two families to which Christians belong.[59]

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1 Paul Hiebert, The Gospel in Human Contexts: Anthropological Explorations for Contemporary Missions (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. 2009), 31.

2 All interviews were confidential; the actual names of the interviewees are withheld by mutual agreement and have been changed to protect anonymity.

3 Akhil and Darshana Kunju, interview by author, Springfield, MO, June 28, 2015.

4 Akhil and Darshana Kunju, interview by author, Springfield, MO, July 5, 2015.

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Towards a Missiological Approach to Carceral Ministry (IJPM 9, 2023)

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Follow Up to Original Article

Despite the rise of mass incarceration and increased theological reflection on social justice, Pentecostals and missiologists have remained largely silent on criminal justice issues. Among Pentecostals, Estrelda Alexander has highlighted the lack of reflection towards issues such as police violence, while Peter Althouse has offered what remains the only distinctly Pentecostal response to mass incarceration. A similar void exists among missiologists, although interdisciplinary scholars such as Jason Sexton and Linda Barkman have begun that conversation. In particular, they caution against traditional mission methods towards inmates given that the church is already present in prison.

Beyond these few prophetic voices, however, discussions of criminal justice among Pentecostals and missiologists tend to occur only in passing and always in relation to broader issues of social justice, missionary safety, and foreign development. This lacuna in the scholarship is particularly remarkable given the recent explosion of criminal justice theologies in almost every other context, including within the Catholic, Anglican, and Baptist traditions. But this absence of critical engagement should also be viewed as an opportunity. Pentecostals should be encouraged because criminal justice is a natural extension of the discussions that are already taking place regarding social justice issues. Missiologists should likewise be motivated because criminal justice systems exist in almost every mission context. Moreover, as mentioned in my own article, criminal justice deserves our attention if for no other reason than because it impacts millions of people every day. Accordingly, as the Church continues to consider its relationship with the carceral, Pentecostals and missiologist would do well not to lag behind those

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conversations but rather take stock of how their own perspectives might bring insights into developing a Pentecostal missiology of criminal justice.

Abstract

The United States criminal justice system impacts millions of people every day. There are over two million people incarcerated, over four million people in community supervision programs such as parole and probation, over one million victims of crime annually and millions more employed in law enforcement, court operations, corrections, legal services, and reentry programs.[1] Although Christians have long recognized the need to minister to these individuals, there has been little focus on developing what we might call a theology of carceral ministry.[2] In this paper, I discuss the potential for a missiological approach to carceral ministry grounded in the indigenous church principle. First, I overview the criminal justice system and current ministries within that system. Next, I outline the basic elements of the indigenous church principle. I then discuss the benefits of applying the indigenous church principle to carceral contexts. Finally, I conclude by noting some practical limitations of such a proposal.

Introduction

I am a former criminal prosecutor. I am also a Christian. Over the years I have reflected deeply on how the church should operate within the carceral context to build up those who have oftentimes been forgotten (prisoners), neglected (victims), and/or misunderstood (correctional staff) by society—indeed, even by the church. This paper represents, in part, the fruits of that reflection, and places a particular emphasis on practical steps that the church can take to bring about Christ-centered change within the criminal justice system.

The Criminal Justice System

In the United States, the criminal justice system operates at the federal, state, and local levels. At each level, the government is tasked with supervising individuals serving sentences for criminal offenses. The government exercises this role in two contexts: facilities (prison and jail) and communities (parole and probation).[3] In this paper, I use the term "carceral ministry" to encompass all actors within the carceral community—not only those who are inmates and under

community supervision, but also other actors in the criminal justice system, such as victims, correctional staff, and community partners.[4]

Carceral Ministry to Defendants

Defendants who are inmates in facilities have access to chaplains and support staff for spiritual formation and growth. While chaplains should be commended for their work, several practical limitations exist which hinder their effectiveness. First, chaplains are employees of the government, not the church. Indeed, chaplains are hired as part of the prison staff and are thus trained, first and foremost, as correctional workers.[5] As such, chaplains naturally serve in competing roles as prison employees against being prisoner advocates. For example, while a chaplain may offer counseling to defendants under the privacy of clergy-penitent privilege, the chaplain may also feel compelled to disclose certain aspects of those conversations as employees of the prison, especially when a prisoner conveys the presence of an imminent risk of harm to themselves or others. Similarly, while chaplains may seek to develop trust and rapport with inmates, that confidence is often undercut by institutional policies, such as the requirement in some facilities for chaplains to carry pepper spray.[6]

Second, chaplains generally do not reflect the communities they serve. According to the most recent available data, the overwhelming majority of state prison chaplains are male (85%), white (70%), middle-aged (82%, 50 or older), and graduate degree holders (62%). Most inmates, in contrast, lack a college education (87.3%), are under 45 years old (68%), and are only nominally majority white (57.9%).[7] From the defendant's perspective, such stark demographic disparity engenders additional suspicion and reservation towards chaplains, further impeding any progress that defendants could make. From the chaplain's perspective, the question arises whether that person can meaningfully relate to the prison populations served.

Distinct from defendants in facilities, defendants in community programs enjoy relatively greater access to religious support than their counterparts in prison. Individuals on parole and probation are not limited to the chaplain staff who are employed by correctional institutions and are thus at liberty to attend churches, serve under pastors, and fellowship with communities of their choosing, all more easily. As one might suspect, those in community programs naturally gravitate towards churches in communities that reflect their own backgrounds. This does not mean that defendants in such programs are without obstacles or barriers to (re)establishing their

faith; rather, it simply means that their accessibility to appropriately tailored religious support is greater than it is for inmates confined to prisons.

In addition to these traditional religious resources—chaplains on the inside and churches on the outside—a third group exists which perhaps provides the greatest source of spiritual support to both groups of defendants: volunteer faith-based organizations. In the age of mass incarceration where states have reduced or eliminated funding for job training and educational programs, volunteer faith-based prison ministries have grown exponentially throughout the country.[8] Educational institutions such as the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, which has over twenty extension sites, offer college degrees in prison as well as a myriad of programs specialized in spiritual formation.[9] Likewise, non-profit organizations such as Prison Fellowship, Kairos Prison Ministry, and Horizon Prison Initiative support not only prisoners but also their families, the correctional staff, and the victims of crime through ministry, counseling, education, job training, and re-entry services.[10] As discussed further below, these programs are integral towards developing a holistic vision for carceral ministry.

Limitations on Religious Exercise

Notwithstanding the availability of religious support in and outside of prison, defendants seeking to exercise their faith within the criminal justice system must operate in a structure of controlled freedom. For inmates in facilities, federal and state laws generally prohibit government infringement on the exercise of religion. In 2005, for example, the Supreme Court unanimously ruled that federal law prohibited an Ohio prison from imposing a "substantial burden on prisoners' religious exercise," unless the burden furthered a "compelling government interest."[11] In 2015, the Supreme Court applied that precedent in determining that an Arkansas prison could not enforce a "grooming policy" that would prohibit a Muslim inmate from growing a one-half inch beard for religious reasons.[12] Yet, despite these protections, inmates still face severe restrictions in practicing their faith. For example, inmates must generally request and obtain approval to meet with a chaplain, secure religious books, wear religious clothing, and partake in a religious diet. Within the state jail system, a survey for over 700 chaplains reported that requests for religious texts are denied up to 17% of the time and requests to meet with faith leaders are denied up to 29% of the time.[13] My purpose here is not to question the policy

rationale behind these limitations but simply to shed light on the practical limitations inmates face to practicing their faith within the criminal justice system.

Defendants under community supervision face a distinct set of barriers in exercising their faith. Probation curfews are commonplace and can significantly limit one's ability to attend church services, vigils, conferences, and retreats. Violent offenders in many states have limited access to the Internet, possessing an email address, and even cell phones, which may hinder their communication with a local church as well as their spiritual growth. Beyond those points, repeat offenders are frequently granted supervised release on the condition that they move away from the hometown that led them to a life of crime. This stipulation is particularly common in drug cases. While the purpose of this last requirement is to insulate defendants from the cycle of recidivism, it also runs the risk of closing them off from faith-based support that might be familiar to them. Consider the following standard parole condition in New York:

> A releasee will not be in the company of or fraternize with any person he knows to have a criminal record or whom he knows to have been adjudicated a youthful offender except for accidental encounters in public places, work, school or in any other instance with the permission of his parole officer.[14]

Under this requirement, defendants who return to their hometown following a period of incarceration can have their parole revoked merely by contacting a childhood friend who also happens to have a criminal record. Worse yet, defendants might unwittingly violate parole by attending a church filled with other ex-offenders. Such stringent requirements effectively require parolees to relocate to avoid reincarceration and attended churches with no members of similar backgrounds. Again, the point here is not to question these regulations but simply to recognize the circumstances that defendants face because of their involvement with the criminal justice system.

Ministry to Other Actors

Up to this point we have focused exclusively on one actor within the criminal justice system: defendants. Indeed, access to chaplaincy services in prison is generally limited to defendants serving sentences. What this point means, however, is that analogous services are not commonly available to victims of crime, correctional staff, and community partners.[15] This defendant-exclusive approach to chaplaincy within prison is problematic for several reasons.

First, the approach closes off opportunities to incorporate faith-based restorative justice practices anchored in the biblical principles of forgiveness, redemption, and restoration, because such programs require the participation of other individuals in addition to the defendant. Second, the degree to which faith-based groups outside of prison are prepared and capable of dealing with the stress and trauma associated is with one's involvement in the criminal justice system, particularly for victims of crime, remains an open question. Thus, victims of crime have much to gain from engaging in restorative justice programs that bring them in direct contact with those who have been accused, convicted, and sentenced for crimes. While this is certainly a challenging proposal, it is precisely for this reason that the church, guided by the Holy Spirit, must maintain a strong presence in the carceral context. As I will argue below, a missiological approach to carceral ministry grounded in the indigenous church principle may serve as a launching point to address these concerns.

The Indigenous Church Principle

A missiological approach to carceral ministry makes sense given the strong connections between carceral ministry and traditional missions. In the traditional sense, both forms require the church to move from one place to another. Both require learning new customs, cultures, and traditions. Both have inherent risks and limitations. Both require contextualizing the gospel to meet the needs of the people being served. And both must be open to serving not merely one group but the entire community as well. In the same way that missionaries to the Middle East minister to both men and women, rich and poor, so too should carceral missionaries include defendants as well as other actors within the criminal justice system. And, just as missionaries to Latin America convey themes of hope and liberty in expressing the gospel, so too should carceral missionaries express the Gospel through similar themes of empowerment. The question remains, however, what missionary model best fits within this vision. While several models have significant merit, I argue that the indigenous church principle allows for a holistic approach to carceral ministry that fosters a space for authentic self-empowerment at the individual level as well as a collective harmony at the community level.

The indigenous church principle can be summarized by the three-self formula which calls on missionaries to establish churches that are self-governing, self-propagating, and self-supporting. This formula arose in the nineteenth century largely in reaction to the growing

paternalism of Western missionaries existing and serving within non-Western or "indigenous" churches. During this period, Western missionaries largely mimicked the authoritative approaches of Western politics towards non-Western countries. For example, all too often Western missionaries would establish churches in non-Western countries only to install their own leaders, impose their own Western customs and practices, control all funding, and direct all administrative activities. Unsurprisingly, and as a direct result of this paternalism, newly established churches frequently fell into a cycle of dependence on Westerners for leadership, direction, and money in ways that mirrored the political and economic dependence of foreign nations on Western superpowers.

In response to this Western paternalism, missionary pioneers such as Rufus Anderson, Henry Venn, and John Livingston Nevius called for a new missionary model that empowered rather than subjugated indigenous churches in the mission field. Anderson, for example, recognized that churches in the New Testament had their own leaders even in the early stages of the church-planting process.[16] Viewing this New Testament paradigm as normative for the contemporary church, Anderson grew concerned with paternalistic leadership models in the mission field and sought to ensure that Western missionaries did not merely establish churches but also trained and installed indigenous leaders as well. Venn, in turn, focused largely on the importance of financial self-support.[17] In that regard, he counseled Western missionaries to promote a spirit of self-responsibility and self-support in newly-established churches so that they too could become fully and confidently autonomous.[18] Nevius developed the views of Anderson and Venn with what is commonly known as the "Nevius Plan."[19] For example, Nevius rejected the traditional model of using foreign funds at the beginning stages of a missionary endeavor, and instead stressed the importance of financial independence and self-reliance at the onset of each missionary project.[20]

While the indigenous church principle, as embodied by the three-selfs formula, grew primarily out of the Western missionary movement, it was eventually promoted and embraced everywhere from China and South Korea to Africa and Latin America.[21] The indigenous church principle also crossed denominational lines, perhaps finding its strongest expression within the Pentecostal movement of the twentieth century. In 1921, Alice Luce, an Anglican-turned-Pentecostal missionary from Britain, wrote a three-part series for *Pentecostal Evangel* that explained the three self-formula through the lens of Paul's missionary journeys.[22] That same

year, the General Counsel for the Assemblies of God—the largest Pentecostal denomination in the world—issued a missionary statement declaring that it would actively seek "to establish self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing native churches."[23] Several decades later, Melvin Hodges, a Methodist-turned-Pentecostal from the United States, authored a series of influential books discussing the indigenous church principle from a more robust theological perspective.[24] Unsurprisingly, with the tradition's shared emphasis on missions, Pentecostalism in general, alongside the Assemblies of God in particular, remain two of the fastest growing religious movements in the world today.[25]

Hodges provides a useful rubric for understanding the three selfs-formula as well as the indigenous church principle. For Hodges, the element of self-government is the most important because it serves as the organizing principle for all three selfs.[26] In this regard, Hodges argues that local churches do not need foreign missionaries as pastors because locals should be fully capable of governing their congregations, spreading the gospel message, and controlling their financing. For Hodges, however, self-government extends beyond merely appointing officials, as it also means agreeing on fundamental beliefs, developing policies and procedures, and developing adequate plans for the departure of Western missionaries.[27] Next in importance is the concept of self-propagation. As Hodges explains in no uncertain terms, "[a] church that does not propagate itself will soon die."[28] Here, the indigenous church is seen as the best medium for evangelism. This is because Hodges sees missionaries as essentially evangelists who bring the gospel to a new area. If the indigenous believers are truly regenerated, then they will not only have a passionate desire to share their faith, but also their neighbors will be more receptive to hearing the gospel from them as opposed to foreign missionaries. Ideally, this process will repeat itself until an entire region is evangelized. Finally, Hodges sees the third concept, self-supporting, as the means of accomplishing the prior two objectives.[29] In that regard, Hodges views self-supporting churches as a concept that is firmly rooted in Scripture. The New Testament paints a picture of all believers tithing, with none being too poor to participate. Examples abound, from the generosity of the Church in Philippi (2 Cor. 8:2–3) to the flexible standard of the Church in Antioch, where everyone gave according to their means (Acts 11:31). In short, an authentically indigenous church should be able to support itself financially, without the aid of an outside missionary enterprise.

Discussion

Modern approaches to prison ministry—a concept that is narrower in scope than carceral ministry—primarily address chaplain ministry towards the prison population. Within these parameters, prison ministry generally operates within two frameworks. First, some view prison ministry as essentially an application of liberation theology.[30] As prison chaplain Dennis W. Pierce explains,

> Liberation theologies offer liberation from the dependence system that was established during the centuries of Spanish rule and North American economic dominance. The dependence system is considered by liberation theology to be economically, politically, and culturally repressive. [Liberation theology] is designed to move the poor and oppressed out of their dependency model.[31]

Pierce extends this liberative theology in his own work with the prison population through five basic themes: (1) God liberates, (2) God loves, (3) God does justice, (4) God makes a covenant, and (5) Christ is our neighbor.[32] Each of these themes support the overarching goal of liberating the prisoner from the oppressive nature of the criminal justice system. Notably, when Pierce speaks of "justice," he is referring to justice primarily for the prisoner.[33]

A second view sees prison ministry through the lens of restorative justice. Howard Zehr, the father of the modern restorative justice movement in the United States, argues that the biblical picture of justice focuses not on retribution as historically understood, but on restoration through the concept of *shalom*. For Zehr, the question of whether the Bible promotes restoration or retribution is not a small issue but goes to the very heart of the nature of God.[34] As prison minister Joanna Hemingway explains, basic to the principle of *shalom* is the concept of "making things right for all involved," which, in her view, offers the best hope for addressing sin and transforming the criminal justice system.[35] Hemenway builds on Zehr's work and frames her theology of prison ministry as holistic ministry grounded in the principles of restorative justice.

> Restorative justice considers the needs of the crime victims, it considers the accountability of the offender, the harm he or she has inflicted as well as the harm he or she may have suffered as a result of his or her own past victimization; and it considers the impact the offense has had on the community as well as the social, economic, and political aspects within the community that may have contributed to the offense.[36]

Against this background, Hemenway offers three restorative models of prison ministry: (1) churches partnering with prison education programs, which seek to spiritually nourish and

empower the prison population (2) alternatives to violence programs, which seek to reduce violence within prisons, and (3) advocacy, which then gives the voice back to the prison population outside of the prison walls.[37] Yet, notably absent from Hemenway's approach is any direct ministry to the victims of crime or other actors within the criminal justice system.

While both models of prison ministry are commendable, they each fall short of fully empowering all the actors within the criminal justice system. For example, the liberative model addresses the needs of only the prisoner, while the restorative justice model operates only within the prison system. A broader model, which I call carceral ministry, should not only meet the needs of all actors within the criminal justice system—defendants, victims, government actors, and community program providers—but also meet them at different stages within the criminal justice process—pre-trial, corrections, and post-release. Viewing carceral ministry from this perspective allows the church to reach more people at different stages of their points of contact with the criminal justice system. In the process, carceral ministry becomes a practice that is preventative, restorative, and holistic in nature.

Pre-Trial Carceral Ministry

A missiological approach to carceral ministry must be holistic in the sense of meeting people at different stages of the criminal justice process. The mission statement of Kairos Prison Ministry summarizes this goal well, in that it seeks, "to bring Christ's love and forgiveness to all incarcerated individuals, their families, and those who work with them, and to assist in the transition to becoming a productive citizen."[38]

Examples of carceral ministry at the pre-trial stage include faith-based restorative justice services that function as alternatives to incarceration.[39] Over the past 30 years, there has been an explosion of restorative justice programs operating at the pre-trial stages of criminal cases.[40] In one model, often called "victim-offender mediation," the defendant and victim meet with a therapist. Here, the victim and defendant can express themselves in a safe space: the defendant can learn about the impact of the crime, such as physical injuries and psychological trauma, and the victim can learn about societal factors, such as poverty and addiction, that may have led to the criminal activity. In another model, organizations provide mentoring services for at-risk youth. BronxConnect, for example, has Christian mentors from over 25 Bronx churches serving over 150 youth each year.[41] Groups like BronxConnect are oftentimes the only faith-based

alternative-to-incarceration programs serving their communities.[42] That being the case, these types of pre-trial programs provide powerful and unique opportunities for the church to witness to at-risk communities in new and creative ways.

A missiological approach to pre-trial carceral ministry must also apply the indigenous church principles of self-government, self-propagation, and self-support. In terms of self-government, these programs should be operated and staffed with believing ex-offenders who can provide both spiritual and vocational counseling to help others address the circumstances that led them to interact with the criminal justice system. This approach mirrors the method of substance abuse programs, such as the faith-based program Teen Challenge, wherein former drug users serve as counselors for those seeking to break the cycle of addiction. For self-propagation, these programs must evangelize not only by communicating the gospel message to those sent to their programs, but also these programs establish new locations, reaching out to new at-risk populations and developing new relationships with stakeholders. Not only does this approach allow the church to share the gospel in areas of particularly high need, but it also enables the church to build up future ministers and staff members from the same communities being served. The self-sustaining principle is perhaps the most difficult of the three selfs to apply at this stage. Generally, pre-trial programs do not charge fees to the populations they serve since doing so would undercut the mission of the program. As an alternative, these programs should function as extensions of the churches they are affiliated with, and, in that sense, become self-sustaining. In that regard, carceral pre-trial ministry should not seek funding from the government or other outside sources since doing so may lead to complicated relationships with funders that oftentimes undercut the gospel-centered vision of these faith-based programs.

Carceral Ministry within Prison

For defendants who are not reached at the pre-trial stage, a missiological approach to carceral ministry calls for a robust and systemic approach within prison. While most forms of carceral ministry take place within prison, the prison setting nonetheless provides the largest terrain for improvement. For example, whereas prosecutorial offices and law enforcement agencies may be reluctant to partner with faith-based organizations at the pre-trial stage—given the separation of church and state—there is already a well-established history of partnership between prison facilities and faith-based organizations in the United States. These faith-based

prison partnerships have only grown over the years with the decrease in government funding for traditional prison programs.[43] Therefore, governments are looking to the church to fill more practical needs that open doors to filling spiritual nourishment within the lives of defendants inside prison walls.

With respect to self-government within prison, carceral ministry means empowering actors within the criminal justice system in permanent and meaningful ways. For prisoners this intention means not merely enabling them to receive a theology degree while incarcerated but also allowing them to become ministers, chaplains, and even missionaries. At the Louisiana State Penitentiary, also known as "Angola," there are presently around 30 inmates serving as missionaries to other Louisiana prisons.[44] Allowing prisoners to serve as missionaries and chaplains enables them to govern themselves as a truly indigenous church. Such missionary operations depend wholly on government officials granting authority and privileges to the missionaries. At the same time, we as the church should not see this pursuit as too distinct from modern cross-cultural missionary movements, in which missionaries oftentimes depend on government support to carry out programs and projects. In addition to these elevated roles for prisoners, correctional staff should also form part of the prison church to foster an atmosphere of authentic community. In a similar way, faith-based restorative justice programs within prison—in which defendants meet with their victims and other community partners—can be a mutually beneficial process, which may later serve as a foundation for early parole. In other words, a holistic approach would encourage all actors in the criminal justice system to participate in the prison church community to encourage in providing a more authentic spiritual experience.

With respect to self-propagation within prison, carceral ministry places an emphasis on evangelism that begins and ends with the prison population. Thus, all religious programming, whether theological education, restorative justice counseling, or traditional worship, must be anchored in the larger mission of sharing the gospel. With respect to self-sustenance, carceral ministry advocates for prison wages that go beyond the meager cents-on-the-dollar approach we also see today. Significantly, while carceral ministries have historically relied on outside support, that dependence has been largely attributed due to how prisoners do not presently earn a sufficient income to support those programs independently, and because other actors, such as correctional staff and community partners, have not been viewed as part of the prison church community. At the same time, we must be mindful of the biblical examples of church members

simply giving according to their means (e.g., Acts 11:31). Thus, perhaps a true form of carceral ministry requires us to reexamine whether we can reduce the cost of current faith-based programs in prison to foster a self-sustaining atmosphere. Moreover, perhaps this point of analysis requires a reexamination of whether the prison church should move beyond the prison walls to include family members and friends outside of prison. In that regard, we would do well to consider Kairos' goal of bringing "Christ's love and forgiveness to all incarcerated individuals, their families, and those who work with them."[45]

Post-Release Carceral Ministry

A missiological approach to carceral ministry at the post-release stage must empower all actors within the criminal justice system in holistic ways. Although the term "post-release" applies mainly to prisoners released from prison, there thus remains opportunities for authentic collaboration with other actors. For example, correctional staff and community partners should be actively involved in faith-based re-entry programs that begin in prison. Once the prison church model is embraced as a collaboration of all actors within the criminal justice system, this type of involvement by non-defendants should occur organically. Indeed, correctional workers should feel invested in the empowerment and success of defendants, viewing them not merely as prisons but as their brothers and sisters in Christ. Outside of prison, defendants, victims of crime, correctional workers, community partners, and faith-based organizations should encourage the establishment of "prison churches" where they can serve in positions of leadership and unapologetically embrace the carceral community as part of the body of Christ. Such church communities should then position themselves at the forefront of faith-based re-entry efforts, which would then be staffed with employees that truly reflect the communities they serve. This model creates a system in which believers both on the inside and outside of the prison walls work together for the mutual building up of the Church.

Conclusion

It is not difficult to anticipate objections to the missiological approach to carceral ministry. First, some might argue that the view of defendants, correctional staff, and victims working together is idealistic and unrealistic for the church. However, there are already

analogous collaborative approaches operating in the secular context. Inside Criminal Justice, for example, is a program that involves defendants from Queensboro Correctional Facility and prosecutors from the Manhattan District Attorney's Office.[46] The seminar encourages in-depth and respectful conversations about the criminal justice system and collaboration through the presentation of jointly authored policy proposals. In short, if defendants can work together with those who prosecuted their cases in a wholly secular context, how much more can defendants, victims, and other actors of the criminal justice system develop a sense of spiritual community when they share the same faith in Jesus Christ?

A second possible objection might be that the self-sustaining aspect of carceral ministry is untenable. It is true that the prison church generally depends on outsiders for financial support. However, meeting that need should only encourage us to push for advocacy measures that enable and empower defendants to become ministers and missionaries within prison, receive better wages for their labor, and obtain greater access to religious resources. In short, the church is already present in and outside of prison. A missiological approach to carceral ministry simply seeks to expand that vision to include all actors within the criminal justice system at all stages of the criminal justice process. By doing so we can embrace a truly holistic approach to carceral ministry that empowers the entire church community.

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