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EDITORIAL

Spiritual Unity in the Bond of Peace

Jeremy M. Wallace, D.Min.¹

Albert Einstein is credited with saying that “Peace is not merely the absence of war but the presence of justice, of law, of order.” His sentiment is similar to what I’ve heard a number of times from the pulpit: “Peace is not the absence of conflict, but the presence of wholeness.” Although life and ministry may often feel like a consistent exercise of “putting out fires,” we know that its significance is much grander than that. What we are to contend for in this “present evil age” (Gal. 1:4) is a particular kind of existence, qualitatively like that of the “age to come” (Mk. 10:30). As Christ’s living Body on earth, we seek to walk in the fullness of the Holy Spirit, we contend for the fullness of God—abundant Kingdom life—to manifest in, to, and through us.

The Pertinence of Peace

Isaiah foretold that Messiah would be the “Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6). This “peace,” of course, is a familiar Hebrew word: *shālôm* (שָׁלוֹם). Throughout the Hebrew Bible, *shālôm* is a key concept, a central term, a significant notion. Lexically, it has “maintained its place in Mishnaic, rabbinic, and modern Hebrew.”² Few would dare to dispute it plays a crucial role within a Judeo-Christian worldview. Its numerous occurrences in the Hebrew Bible alone suggest it is a subject of immense importance. G. Lloyd Carr informs us that *shālôm* occurs 250 times in the Hebrew Bible, 213 of which

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²Merrill F. Unger and William White, Jr., *Nelson’s Expository Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1980), 283.

in separate versus. Roughly one out of five of its uses denote some kind of “absence of strife.”³ But Carr reminds us, like Einstein, that peace “means much more than the mere absence of war;” it also denotes “completeness, wholeness, harmony, fulfillment.” Unger and White tell us it can also mean “welfare” and “health.”⁴ *Shālôm* is a relational term, often signifying “a state in which one can feel at ease, comfortable with someone. The relationship is one of harmony and wholeness, which is the opposite of the state of strife and war.”⁵ It is more than merely a relational term, however. It denotes a relational covenant. “In nearly two-thirds of this occurrences, shalom describes the state of fulfillment which is the result of God’s presence.”⁶ Thus, the peace that we crave is the very peace that God provides. It’s no wonder that the source of peace is called our “Prince of Peace.”

Togetherness

If 2020 and 2021 have taught us anything, it’s that *shalom* is what we need, individually and societally. But it’s what we’ve *always* needed. The apostle Paul implored the Ephesian church in the following manner: *“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”* (Eph. 4:1-3 ESV, emphasis added). As members of the Body of Christ, we are ever reminded of our need to exhibit behavior in keeping with our ecclesial calling. I speak here not of a public

³ R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 2 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 931.

⁴ Unger & White, 283.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 283.

⁶ Carr, in Harris, Archer and Waltke, 931.

perception of how we “do church” but of how we consistently exemplify to our communities and our culture what it means to *be the Church*. Considering the turmoil, unease, and pain our nation (and denomination) experienced in 2020, the FSF Executive Committee wanted our January conference to address a topic relevant to the times, yet with a desire to offer a prophetic and timely conversation aimed at practical steps to do exactly what the apostle Paul states in Eph. 4:3—*maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*. Clearly this theme struck a chord with our Foursquare Scholars constituency (and beyond). We witnessed unprecedented participation in our annual conference, held virtually on Zoom, January 15 and 16 of this year. In addition to our keynote speakers (Dr. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., Dr. Doretha O’Quinn, Dr. Doris J. Sims, Dr. Rodolfo Galvan Estrada III), thirteen presenters shared papers on a wide range of topics.

Quadrum 4.1

The present issue features four articles and a book review. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. has contributed once again to Quadrum, addressing the theme of our annual conference, “Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.” Greg Dueker’s article, “Essentially One: A Trinitarian Paradigm for Church Unity,” was presented initially at our FSF conference in January. We’re grateful Greg put in the time and effort to develop his paper into the fine article in this issue. Next, Clayton Robinson provides a penetrating article on “The Healing Ministry of the New Testament Church.” This excellent piece provides for us a template for the healing ministry of Jesus through the Church, something undoubtedly, we will argue is needed now as much as ever. My article, “Jacques Maritain and the Intelligibility of Universal Human Rights,” explores Maritain’s role in the drafting of the Declaration of Universal Human Rights and seeks to demonstrate how Traditional (Thomistic) Natural Law theory can successfully account for “universal” natural rights, while alternative theories fail. Finally, Ryan Lytton’s review

of Dorothy Lee's *The Ministry of Women in the New Testament* rounds out this issue. We do hope you enjoy the scholarship this issue has to offer.

Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace

Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., Ph.D¹

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Eph. 4:1-3 KJV)

Introduction

Like most Pentecostals in her day, Aimee Semple McPherson was a Restorationist. That was the way she understood the history of the Church. Jesus had formed His Church, and on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit had come upon it to provide the Church with power. Based upon the witness of the Apostles, thousands of people soon joined them in what would become the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church that would ultimately spread around the world.

“Lost and Restored”

In their Restorationist understanding, Pentecostals have come to think about the New Testament Church as something pure, something pristine. Some might even think of that Church as somehow, perfect. Think for a moment about “Sister’s” sermon, “Lost and Restored,” which she claimed that the Lord gave to her, and which she first preached at the age of 19, in a large London hall, while waiting for the ship to take her and her husband, Robert Semple, to Asia.² Her explanation of Church history began at the top of the circle with an apple tree. It had 18 apples, nine of which represented the

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² Aimee Semple McPherson, “Lost and Restored,” in *This Is That: Personal Experiences, Sermons, and Writings* (Los Angeles, CA: The Bridal Call Publishing House, 1919), 380-406.

gifts of the Spirit mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, and the other nine represented the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. *Their* presence made the New Testament Church, a “Perfect Church.” In developing her argument, she appealed to Joel 1:4 to describe the Church’s slide into darkness. According to her schema, this was a period marked by apathy, compromise, and apostasy.

That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten;
and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm
eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the
caterpillar eaten. (Joel 1:4 KJV)

At the bottom of the circle, the Church had entered the so-called, “Dark Ages.” Once the Church had lost everything, “Sister” saw in Joel 2:25, the Lord’s intervention that provided the explanation for the remainder of the Restorationist story. The Lord spoke to Israel through the prophet Joel upon their repentance, saying,

I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the
cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my
great army which I sent among you. (Joel 2:25 KJV)

Sister then argued, as other early Pentecostals did, that the restoration of the Church began with Martin Luther re-discovering the doctrine of justification through faith.³ John Wesley followed Luther by restoring the Church’s emphasis on sanctification.⁴ William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, did not compromise, but proclaimed the Gospel to the poor.⁵ The “latter rain” began to fall with Evan Roberts and the Welsh

³ “Lost and Restored,” 395.

⁴ “Lost and Restored,” 398.

⁵ “Lost and Restored,” 399.

revival as well as Pandita Ramabai's work among young widows in India, in the ninth tree.⁶ By the time we get to the tenth tree, we have come nearly full circle. Baptism in the Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues has returned, and in her words, "the gifts and fruits are again appearing upon the tree."⁷ "Let us get back to Pentecost," she challenged her audience, "and on to the fullness of Pentecostal power and glory recorded in God's word, for Jesus is coming soon, very soon, for His perfect waiting church."⁸

Like "Sister," Frank Bartleman was also a Restorationist. Listen to how he summarized Church history in the final sentences of his book on *How Pentecost Came to Los Angeles*.

We are coming around the circle, from the early church's fall, back to primitive love and unity, in the 'one body' of Christ. This is doubtless the church for which Christ is coming, 'without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.'⁹

Four Snares

As a Pentecostal Church historian, I find much in this theory of Church history with which I can resonate. At the same time, I find myself conflicted. There are other ways to explain Church history, and as one whose training focused on the first six centuries of the Church, I must say that the Restorationist perspective does not fit all the data. "Sister's" understanding was based upon four things that she named as the "snares" that led the Church into the Dark Ages. She summed them up as (1) formality, (2) coldness, (3) organization, and (4) building up walls between us, and others.

⁶ "Lost and Restored", 400.

⁷ "Lost and Restored", 405.

⁸ "Lost and Restored", 406.

⁹ Frank Bartleman, *How Pentecost Came to Los Angeles: As It Was in the Beginning* (Los Angeles, CA: F. Bartleman, circa 1925), 167.

While many Pentecostals would agree with her list, I would refer us back to the Church that we meet in the New Testament. There we find a church composed of real people! It was also a church full of real pastoral and theological problems. The New Testament writers challenged them repeatedly.

Remember with me, Ananias and Sapphira, and their hypocrisy of claiming that they had given all their proceeds from the sale of their property to the Church when they had not (Acts 5:1-11). Think of the argument between the Hellenist and Hebraist widows that the Apostles had to settle, over who got the best treatment (Acts 6:1-7). Remember the debate over what to expect of Gentiles who had become Christians (Acts 15:1-2, 5-7). Even though Peter had initially stood with Paul and Barnabas, supporting their acceptance of Gentile converts without expecting them to be circumcised, he backslid, and in a very painful confrontation, Paul called out the failure of Peter and those who supported him, as an attack on God's grace (Galatians 2:1 - 3:1).

The fact is that nearly every epistle in the New Testament addresses yet another division among those who called themselves disciples, believers, or followers of Jesus. To the Philippians, where Euodia and Syntyche were engaged in a vicious argument, Paul wrote,

Make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. (Phil. 2:2-5 NRSV)

And what can we say about the Church in Corinth? Paul began his first letter to that congregation, chastising them for having factions (1 Corinthians 1). There was the issue of the man sleeping with his stepmother,

an immoral act not even tolerated outside the Church. Paul reprimanded this man's supporters in the strongest of terms for their tolerance of promiscuity by other church members (1 Corinthians 5:1-5). There was the issue of Christians who were suing other Christians in secular courts. Just because it was legal, did not mean that it was right (1 Corinthians 6:1-12). There were those who committed certain immoral sexual acts, including but not limited to using prostitutes (1 Corinthians 6:13-20). There were those who ate food offered to idols, consciously offending others by their actions and becoming stumbling blocks to their faith. Paul reminded them that "knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" (1 Corinthians 8:1-13). Some thought that since all things were "lawful", they could do what they wanted. Paul reminded them that while all things might be lawful with respect to certain foods, they were not always beneficial. "Do not seek your own advantage, but that of the other" he implored (1 Corinthians 10:1-24). They even carried their divisions over to their liturgical life. Eating at the Lord's Supper, resulted in gluttony and drunkenness, while the poor were left humiliated and hungry (1 Corinthians 11:17-34). There were those who argued about how to understand and use the charisms or gifts that the Holy Spirit had given them. Paul wanted them to understand the oneness or unity of the Body of Christ that also included diversity as evidenced in the variety of gifts they had received. He reminded them that these gifts were intended for "the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:1-31). There were those who spoke in tongues, apparently believing that it was a demonstration of their spiritual maturity, and that it did not need any interpretation. The reason for tongues in worship, he argued, was to edify the Body, and their actions did not do that (1 Corinthians 14:1-28). There were those in the congregation who wanted more order. Others believed that too much order quenched the freedom of the Holy Spirit or called their personal authority into question. Paul made clear that God is a God of order *and* of peace (1 Corinthians 14:29-31, 37-40). Finally, there were those in Corinth who questioned the resurrection. Some had concluded that it was nothing more

than wishful thinking. Paul attacked this argument head on. “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:1-58)!

The Apostle, John, informed Gaius, whose actions filled him with joy, that the congregation in which Gaius was a part, had a significant problem in a man named Diotrefes. In 3 John, we read,

I wrote to the church, but Diotrefes, who loves to be first, will not welcome us. So when I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, spreading malicious nonsense about us. Not satisfied with that, he even refuses to welcome other believers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church. Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God. (3 John 9-11)

There are many other accounts of selfish, sinful behavior by the followers of Jesus in the New Testament. I would suggest that if the New Testament represents the “Perfect Church,” it was perfect only at the moment that the Holy Spirit came upon them on the Day of Pentecost and then, only viewed through the blood of Jesus Christ. In many respects, the Church through the centuries has not changed substantially. We might think that the Pentecostal revival would change everything. Surely, if we are now, as “Sister” pointed out, part of the Church represented in the 10th circle, we are an almost perfect Church. The gifts and the fruit of the Spirit would be nearly complete throughout the whole Church. We would not find selfishness and sin in Foursquare, or the Assemblies of God, or the Church of God in Christ, or in any other Pentecostal denomination. Yet, we know that this is not the case.

Like every other church, Pentecostals have their share of problems. Remember, “Sister’s” four criticisms of the Church that led it into the Dark Ages were (1) formality, (2) coldness, (3) organization, and (4) building up walls between us and others.

Some might argue that each of these charges are true for Pentecostals today. Many of our churches exhibit a formality today that they did not exhibit at the beginning. Some would argue that many Pentecostals have lost their fervor, their fire, perhaps by identifying as Evangelicals. We have certainly organized ourselves. Even while certain Apostles lived, they and their designated associates appointed bishops (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Timothy 3:17).¹⁰ There were also deacons, elders, presbyters, widows, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, each group of which had specific functions to fulfill. Organization, as such, was not a problem, so long as they worked for the good of the whole Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:7).

We have also built walls around our respective churches. Frank Bartleman harped on this issue more than any other issue. The final chapter of his book on *How Pentecostalism Came to Los Angeles* was an appeal for unity. “God’s people are shut up in denominational coops. Like chicks, they must get their food only in these, their own coops”.¹¹ For some, the lines were drawn over sanctification. For others, it was because of racism. Still others broke over issues of trust and property ownership. For still others, it was the accusation “organization” and the “loss of fire”. For others, it was the claim that God had called *them* to become the center of the restored Church. And these are not all the reasons for our sectarianism.

¹⁰ Eusebius (*Church History* 5.20.5), quoting Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 3.3.4), tells us that Polycarp knew John the Apostle, that he had been part of the Johannine community when John was quite old, and that it was John who had appointed him to serve as the Bishop of Smyrna. Papias (AD 70-155) served as Bishop of *Hierapolis* in Asia Minor. Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 5.33.4) tells us that he had heard the Apostle John preach. Although we have no evidence that the Apostle appointed him as a Bishop, it is possible that he did.

¹¹ Frank Bartleman, *How Pentecostalism Came to Los Angeles*, 166.

When I look at Paul's words in Ephesians 4, however, I see something different. He knows the difficulties that all churches face, and he tells them that they need to "walk worthy" of their vocation or calling as Christians. They are to do so with humility, meekness, patience, and love so that they might maintain "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace". I do not believe that he is speaking of spiritual unity here. He wrote to real people. He wrote to real churches. These people and these churches had mailing addresses. Many of the churches were small enough that they met in the homes of specific individuals. He was not thinking that only God knew who was or was not a Christian. Paul wanted all of them to live up to their calling. Give public evidence that they were all one, in the Spirit.

Evaluating the Movement

So, how has our Pentecostal Movement fared? Let us look very briefly at Azusa Street. William J. Seymour led a vibrant congregation on whom God sent a powerful revival that lasted three years. It was a local congregation of real people, just like the New Testament congregations. Most of these people were baptized in the Spirit. They spoke and they sang in tongues. They worshipped and praised the Lord with all their hearts, but they were far from perfect. They had an experience that they believed brought authenticity to the message of the Gospel. They began proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit with signs following. So, Pastor Seymour invited his mentor, Charles Parham, to visit Los Angeles, to embrace the revival, and to hold a citywide crusade among all the new Pentecostal churches in the city. When Parham arrived, however, he took the pulpit and condemned "Seymour's" revival in the strongest of terms. When God looked at the revival at Azusa Street, Parham declared, "God is sick at His stomach."¹² Parham criticized Seymour for allowing

¹² Charles William Shumway, "A Study of 'The Gift of Tongues'," unpublished A.B. thesis, (Los Angeles, CA: Faculty of Theology, University of Southern California, 1914), 178.

certain people of whom Parham disapproved, to serve in leadership position at the Mission.¹³ He criticized Seymour and his workers for the methods that some used to lead people into baptism in the Spirit.¹⁴ He condemned Seymour for allowing the mixing of races and genders, especially in prayer, breaking down what Parham viewed as healthy societal norms and godly decorum.¹⁵ Charles Parham criticized Seymour for allowing the African American worship style to dominate at the Mission, and he ridiculed Seymour's white members for adopting the African American style of worship.¹⁶ Finally, he condemned Elder Seymour's leadership abilities because Seymour laid hands upon people that Parham would never have approved, and sent them out as evangelists and missionaries, thereby, according to Parham, disgracing the very cause of Christ.¹⁷

The people of Azusa Street rose up against Parham. They locked the doors against him, and he was not allowed to return. As a result, Charles Parham attempted to found a new Apostolic Faith church, just blocks from Seymour's Azusa Street Mission. He also informed reporters.

We conduct dignified religious services, and have no connection with the sort that is characterized by trances, fits and spasms, jerks, shakes and contortions. We are wholly foreign to the religious anarchy, which marks the Los

¹³ [Charles F. Parham], "Leadership," *The Apostolic Faith* [Baxter Springs, KS], 1.4 (June 1912), 7-9.

¹⁴ [Charles F. Parham], "Baptism of the Holy Ghost," *The Apostolic Faith* [Baxter Springs, KS] 1.8 (October 1912), 9-10.

¹⁵ Charles F. Parham, "Free Love," *The Apostolic Faith* [Baxter Springs, KS] 1:10 (December 1912), 4-5.

¹⁶ Untitled Item, *The Apostolic Faith* [Baxter Springs, KS] 1.8 (October 1912), 2, 6-7; Untitled Item, *The Apostolic Faith* [Baxter Springs, KS] 2:1 (January 1913), 6-7.

¹⁷ Untitled Item, *The Apostolic Faith* [Baxter Springs, KS] 2:1 (January 1913), 6-7.

Angeles Azusa Street meetings, and expect to do good . . .
along proper and profound Christian lines.¹⁸

Then he took about a hundred members from Seymour's work, clear evidence of the almost, but not yet "Perfect Church"

Consequently, Seymour and the congregation broke fellowship with Parham and formed the "Pacific Apostolic Faith Mission" with Azusa Street as its headquarters. Pastor Seymour appointed Florence Crawford, to serve as Azusa Street's State Director, responsible for developing new congregations in California in fellowship with Azusa Street.¹⁹ By the summer of 1907, things had begun to change at the Mission. They held a large camp meeting in the Arroyo Seco that runs between Pasadena and Los Angeles. Pastor Seymour was on a tour, preaching in a series of cities across the US, encouraging others to establish their missions. While Seymour was absent, Florence Crawford returned to Los Angeles, where she connected with Will Trotter at the camp meeting. He had been the head of the Union Rescue Mission. When he received the baptism and spoke in tongues at the camp meeting, the Board of Directors fired him. Florence Crawford invited Trotter to move to Portland and help her establish a new headquarters for the Apostolic Faith Movement in Portland, Oregon. By the following May, she had convinced Clara Lum to leave Seymour and the Azusa Street Mission, taking along *The Apostolic Faith* newspaper, and most of the addresses of its subscribers. She then contacted the missions she had influenced while she was working for Seymour, and convinced them to switch their allegiance from him to her. You can imagine the damage that she and Clara Lum did to Seymour and the Azusa Street Mission in the process. More evidence of the not yet, but nearly perfect Church?

¹⁸ "Apostolic Faith People Here Again," *Whittier Daily News* (December 14, 1906), 1.

¹⁹ Nils Block-Hoell, *The Pentecostal Movement: Its Origin, Development and Distinctive Character* (New York: Humanities Press, 1964), 48.

Then in 1911, William Durham left Chicago to minister in Los Angeles. He had been baptized in the Spirit at Azusa Street. He was trusted. But he brought a teaching on sanctification that was inconsistent with Azusa's position. While Pastor Seymour was on another extended trip, Durham began a set of services at Azusa Street. Because he was known as a dynamic preacher, many people who had begun in Azusa Street and left to form or join other congregations, returned to the mission to hear him. When it finally became clear to the Board that Durham was preaching a new position on sanctification, they summoned Seymour back to town. Seymour listened and then spoke with Durham, explaining that Durham had violated the Mission's trust. He informed Durham that he could hold one last service at Azusa Street, but then he would have to leave.

Being confident of the outcome, Durham took the pulpit and set out to poll the congregation about whether or not they wanted the revival to continue with *him* at the helm. Pastor Seymour kept quiet, with little choice in how to handle the matter without creating a very ugly, public incident. An overwhelming number of hands quickly launched skyward in support of continuing the revival under Durham's leadership.

Following the service, Pastor William J. Seymour gathered the members of his Board and consulted them on what they should do. Durham claimed that they were all "men of his own color," who Seymour enlisted to "stand with him".²⁰ Durham's statement is clearly a self-serving apology for his actions that involved both character assassination and racial bias in an unvarnished attempt to paint Seymour as an extremely selfish man and himself as a martyr figure. Durham was completely unwilling or unable to entertain any self-critical thoughts.

When William Durham returned to the Mission planning to continue his meetings, he found the door "locked and bolted." He quickly charged

²⁰ William H. Durham, "The Great Revival at Azusa Street Mission – How It Began and How It Ended," *Pentecostal Testimony* [Los Angeles, CA] 1.8 (circa July/August 1911), 4.

Seymour with “scheming and planning as to how he could get possession of the building, if he could not get the work.”²¹ As a result, Durham established his Full Gospel Assembly, once again, just blocks away, where within less than one month, Frank Bartleman claimed that 400 people, most from Azusa Street, gathered there for the evening meetings throughout the week, and as many as a thousand people visited the church on any given Sunday. The number of people left at the Azusa Street Mission was negligible by comparison, and most of them were African Americans. Bartleman quipped, Azusa Street was “deserted.”²² According to Durham, Seymour had been exposed so that “all men [might] see what manner of man he has come to be.”²³

The revival that hit Azusa Street lasted three years. Within those first three years, however, Pastor Seymour had to face two major attacks by “friends”, Charles Parham and Florence Crawford. He had respected them. He had trusted them. Parham took some of his people, and he publicly criticized him in the Mission and in the Los Angeles area press. Florence Crawford decided that she no longer needed to work for William Seymour but would launch out on her own. She took more people and several congregations from Seymour and claimed that the center of the revival had left Los Angeles and was now with her in Portland. Her theft of the

²¹ William H. Durham, “The Great Revival at Azusa Street Mission – How It Began and How It Ended,” *Pentecostal Testimony* [Los Angeles, CA] 1.8 (circa July/August 1911), 4. Durham exhibits no sympathy or understanding for the fact that not only had he violated Seymour’s ministry, he had for all intents stolen Seymour’s home out from under him. Both William Durham, in “The Work of God in Los Angeles,” *Pentecostal Testimony* [Los Angeles, CA] 1.8 (circa July/August 1911), 10 and Frank Bartleman, *How Pentecost Came to Los Angeles: As It Was in the Beginning* (Los Angeles, CA: F. Bartleman, c. 1925), 146, give the date that Seymour took his action to padlock the door.

²² Frank Bartleman, *How Pentecost Came to Los Angeles: As It Was in the Beginning* (Los Angeles, CA: F. Bartleman, c. 1925), 146.

²³ “William H. Durham, “The Great Revival at Azusa Street Mission – How It Began and How It Ended,” *Pentecostal Testimony* [Los Angeles, CA] 1.8 (circa July/August 1911), 4.

Mission's paper spread untruths about what had happened, and the theft of a mailing list made it impossible for Seymour to continue to correspond with many of his former subscribers. William Durham's attack, which came five years after the beginning of the revival, brought an even more substantial loss to Azusa Street. Importantly, I think, all three, Parham, Crawford, and Durham, were white. Is it any wonder that three years later, the members of the Mission would vote to exclude all but people of color from holding offices in the Azusa Street Mission?

So what is my point? If we are honest when we look at the Church through our eyes, the Church is far from perfect, and after 2000 years, we Pentecostals have taken our place in that imperfect Church. We continue to fight, and we bicker, and many of the issues we saw in the examples I provided from the New Testament, or that I could provide from Church history are still with us today. So are the suggestions that the apostles made that were intended to help us to "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace." As Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he exhorted them to walk in four different ways.

- Walk worthy of the vocation or calling wherewith ye are called...
- Walk with all lowliness or humility and meekness...
- Walk with longsuffering...
- Walk with one another in love...

The Apostle John gave similar advice:

If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7)

The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also (1 John 4:21).

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love (1 John 4:7-8).

Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another (1 John 4:11)

We have lived through an extraordinary year. It is a joy for us to be able to count on the Lord's presence even in this new year of pandemic trauma, social unrest, and political turmoil. He is the one sure point in whom we place our hope and from which we derive our strength. But we have been asked to do our part as well.

Keeping the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace

Paul's command is, "Keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." So how do we do this?

First, we are to live in *humility*. A humble person is not proud or arrogant. A humble person is meek. Moses was said to be the humblest or meekest person who ever lived (Numbers 12:3). Moses always sought only what was good for the people of Israel. Humble people are not selfish or ambitious, seeking to build up their own reputations. Instead, they regard others as being better than themselves.

Second, we are to be *gentle* people. We are to develop quiet spirits. Paul told the Christians at Thessalonica that those who are gentle are like nurses who take care of their own children. They nurture them. They hold them. They caress them. They speak softly to them. They love them. We are to lead a life worthy of our calling by manifesting gentleness in the way we interact with others.

Paul's third hint comes in the form of *patience*. Do you remember Paul's hymn to love in 1 Corinthians 13? It says that "love is patient." Patience is something that requires endurance. It does not easily give up. It is filled with hope, because patience is something that must wait until the

time is ripe. It must not rush. Often, patience is associated with suffering in the Scriptures. It comes at great cost. But in the end, it is a valuable resource. Humility. Gentleness. Patience.

Fourthly, we are encouraged to *bear with one another in love*. Jesus told His followers, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another” (John 13:34). This is not always an easy task. It takes time and energy to bear with one another in love. Yet, the Apostle tells us that we are to bear with one another. We are also told *how* we are to do it. We are to do it in a loving manner. It is one thing to bear one another, but it is quite another thing for us to do so in a loving manner. All too often, we bear one another, but we bear one another only grudgingly. We let those whom we bear know how difficult it is for us to bear them. But the life that is worthy of our calling bears one another *lovingly*.

Finally, we are to *make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*. There it is - unity, in the bond of peace! We are to make every effort, we are to take every opportunity, we are to explore all the options, in order to maintain or preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Paul points us to aggressive action in order to assure that unity will exist. We cannot merely sit back and watch unity happen. It is not enough to *hope* that unity will somehow occur. It is something that must be cherished, nurtured, guarded, and protected. It must be carefully lifted up and sustained. It takes all the ingenuity that we can bring to the project. Unity, especially among members of the Body of Christ is something for which it is worth taking risks. And we are instructed, even commanded to do so in the bond of peace.

In a day when nations are at enmity with one another, when our churches are fractured and we compete with one another for members and finances, when there is animosity between us, when false charismatic and Pentecostal prophets roam the earth, when we are insensitive to the needs of others, our work towards unity requires all the creativity we can muster.

But even in a year of pandemic trauma, social and racial unrest, and political turmoil, if we live it out, we provide a compelling testimony that God has accomplished something utterly unimaginable apart from Jesus Christ. We have been reconciled to God, and just as importantly, we have been reconciled to one another.

Lord, help us to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace.
Amen.

Essentially One: A Trinitarian Paradigm for Church Unity

Greg Dueker, D.Min.¹

ABSTRACT:

Proper understanding of the unity of the Church is rooted in a wealth of biblical imagery, theological understanding, and missional experience. This article surveys the biblical foundations for unity in diversity. Using Meldenius' classic statement about Church unity as a template, the author summarizes several historical divisions and the resulting imbalances in applied ecclesiology. Further, the author contends that if the myriad of congregations, movements, and denominations are to be a healthy part of the "Visible Church," they need to allow the overflow of the love of Christ by the Spirit to issue forth in living up to their calling as the people of God. In conclusion, reflection is given on how movement towards racial equality and multi-ethnic churches can inform efforts at ecumenical unity, pointing to several ways that God's missional people can intentionally live into the unity that is found in God the Father, Son, and Spirit.

"In essentials unity; in non-essentials liberty; in all things charity." –
Meldenius (1626 AD)

Introduction

Proper understanding of the unity of the Church is rooted in a wealth of Biblical imagery, theological understanding, and missional experience and as such, it needs to be examined in Trinitarian Terms if we are to avoid the dualism of visible-invisible church unity. This issue is important to me personally because I do not want to be guilty of desecrating the altar of Christ's Church. Since the late 60s when Hippies burned the cross and altar in the Lutheran church I attended as a child, I have sensed a calling to serve and defend the true church wherever it is found. In what follows, I will first examine a biblical foundation for visible unity in diversity, second, using

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Meldenius' classic statement about Church unity as a template, I will summarize some of the historical divisions and resulting imbalances in applied ecclesiology, and third I will consider how our movement towards racial equality and multi-ethnic churches can inform our efforts at ecumenical unity, and finally, I will suggest ways that we can intentionally live out the unity we have in God the Father, Son, and Spirit. Such visible unity in truth is important for at least two reasons as affirmed by the Lausanne Covenant.

The [Lausanne] Covenant affirmed "that the church's visible unity in truth is God's purpose." Two reasons supported this evangelical stress on oneness: the first was theological, the second pragmatic. The unity of the church, said the covenant, is a gift from God through the Spirit, made possible by the cross of Christ: "He himself is our peace" (Eph. 2:14) . . . The Pragmatic reason for "visible unity in the truth" was that "evangelism...summons us to unity." How can a Christian preach a gospel of reconciliation and remain unreconciled?²

A Biblical Foundation for Unity in Diversity

Not Good

There is a significant biblical foundation for the need for unity in diversity starting in Genesis 2. In the very beginning, the only thing in creation that God said was not good was the man being alone (Gen. 2:18). God had said within the Trinitarian community of the Godhead, "Let us make man in our image" revealing something about that image that needed to be considered. God himself is relational at his very core—Father, Son, and Spirit in their

² Bruce L. Shelley and Marshall Shelley (Rev. Editor). *Church History in Plain Language*. 5th ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 524.

relationship of love are One God. We see this played out in the accounts of Jesus' baptism (Matt. 3:16-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:32-34) and Jesus' high priestly prayer (John 17). This Trinitarian view of a relational God should inform our view of the image of God in humanity and the church. It is not good that we are alone. We best reflect the image of God when we are in a loving community with others. The church's identity is itself communal and relational. It derives this communal being from the Triune God whose being is the three divine persons in communion, and who created it for communion.³ This communion of the church plays out in the New Testament in many passages that command believers to relate to "one another" in a way that reflects the relational nature of the Godhead. While these commands occur frequently, they can be boiled down to at least twelve ways that we are to live in relationship or unity with one another, not primarily for ourselves.⁴

It is by these avenues of sharing with others the loving goodness of God which we have received, that we reveal to the world that we are the disciples of Christ. Yet, we in the West have been culturally conditioned to secede from the group,⁵ split from the congregation, move away from

³ Brad Harper and Paul L. Metzger, *Exploring Ecclesiology: An Evangelical and Ecumenical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2009), 19.

⁴ These twelve commands include the following: Pray for one another (Jam. 5:16); encourage one another (Heb. 3:13); comfort and build one another up (1 Thess. 5:9-11; also Rom. 14:19); confess our faults to one another (Jam. 5:16); love one another. (John 13:34-35); be devoted to one another, honor one another (Rom. 12:10); serve one another (Gal. 5:13); bear with one another (Col. 3:12-13); submit to one another (Eph. 5:19-21); spur one another on (Hebrews 10:24); be hospitable to one another (1 Pet. 4:8-9); and greet one another (Rom. 16:16). All these "one another" statements are evidence of the love of Christ and the unity of the Spirit in the church.

⁵ The dominant culture of North America was shaped by adventurers, explorers, rebels, and successive waves of immigrants. All we need to do is think through the narratives we learned as children.

family and neighbors, divorce our spouse, as well as “ghost” and “unfriend” those in our social media circles who do not agree with us enthusiastically enough. Matthew Kaemingk describes Cascadians (residents of the Pacific Northwest) as “being at the end of a long line of leavers.”⁶ It is believed to be easier to end a relationship than it is to walk through the longer, messier, process of understanding, forgiveness, and reconciliation. This practice has been used with terrible effects at all levels—marital, familial, neighborhood, community, states, and nations. We live in the midst of what is called the “cancel culture” that conditions us to relationally, professionally, and economically to ostracize and amputate those who are not in total agreement with us and our ever-changing litmus tests. It should not be so with the church. Sadly, it is no different with the church. I once spoke with a pastor’s daughter from a central Oregon town where all 15 churches had begun as church splits because no one wanted anyone else telling them what to do. While that may be an extreme example, the church should not be like this.

The importance of visible unity (not just an invisible/ spiritual unity) in diversity within the people of God is consistent throughout the Scriptures, not just in the New Testament. In the following sections, I will briefly present several representative Old Testament examples of unity (or lack thereof) from Numbers 32, Deuteronomy 12, Joshua 22, and 1 Kings 12. Is it any surprise that the people of God consisted of twelve distinct tribes yet were to come together to worship? From Israel’s beginning, we see shadows of passages like 1 Corinthians 12:26 “If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together” lived out in their history. In Numbers 13-14 Israel was discouraged by the lack of faith shown by ten of their spies and an entire generation perished in the wilderness. Let’s look at whether the next generation would make the same mistake to the detriment of all. Numbers 32 was just such a situation.

⁶ Matthew Kaemingk in *“Christ & Cascadia: Theology and Northwest Culture”* a symposium delivered to Foursquare pastors on October 3, 2016.

You First!

In Numbers 32, as the wandering tribes of Israel were getting close to finally entering into Canaan, two of them (the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and later half of Manasseh was added) decided they wanted the newly conquered Montana-like rangelands on the east bank of the Jordan as grazing lands for their abundant livestock. Commentators have generally seen this as a sinful desire on the part of Reuben and Gad, but it is not necessarily the case. Moses' initial reaction (v. 6-15) suggests that he also thought they were repeating the error of the previous generation who had refused God's command to enter the land from Kadesh Barnea (Num. 13-14). However, despite the harsh response from Moses (likely conditioned by 40 years of leading people who repeatedly rebelled) Reuben and Gad answered softly as they corrected the misunderstanding, generously offering not only to leave their families behind, cross the Jordan, but to lead Israel into battle (v. 16-18).⁷ I have to think that Moses was pleasantly surprised that this generation was responding differently. He permitted them to do so, but only after they kept their promise to lead the way in battle helping the other tribes gain their own inheritance. In the case of God's chosen people, the 2 ½ tribes could not rest and enjoy their land until the land for all the tribes had been obtained (v. 6). All the tribes would collectively inherit the land, or no one would. There was one nation, consisting of twelve very different tribes, yet sharing in a common mission that benefited everyone. Unity was necessary for if any turned back from following the Lord it would be an

⁷ Some commentators view this negotiation as Reuben and Gad compromising with Moses to gain approval for their plan. Again, while this is possible, it is not necessary to come to that conclusion. It makes more sense in the narrative as a second-generation contrast to the previous generation's failure (Number 13-14) if we see a calm courage and a more conversational resolution of conflict. Ronald B. Allen in the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* is an example of a delightfully evenhanded and optimistic approach to this important narrative.

abandonment that would “discourage” (v.7) or even “destroy this people” (v. 15).

Today, the church is faced with a similar challenge as that seen in Numbers 32. Are we willing to respond in patient kindness and courage to see that the needs and rights of others are obtained before we claim our own? Or are we as Moses accused Reuben and Gad, willing to just “sit here”? Will we stand in support of our brothers and sisters in Christ who have not entered their rest, or are we more focused on building our own kingdoms, grazing our own flocks, and seeking our own ease? Do we defensively “circle the wagons” at the first sign of misunderstanding and disagreement? Or do we welcome the other to eat with us at the table of hospitality? When will we realize that we are incomplete without all the parts of the body?

The Place of My Choosing

God instructed Israel in Deuteronomy 12 that they were to worship in only one place. Divided worship via the traditional Canaanite high places was forbidden. Israelite worship of the One True God was to be different than that of the idolatrous Canaanites. The tribes were only allowed to sacrifice and worship together in the place that the Lord would choose.⁸ In addition to outright idolatry, this tendency to splinter into autonomous worship units would become an issue of disobedience for Israel throughout its united and divided history up until the Babylonian exile. In support of this point, I will cite two specific examples.

Blessed Be the Tie That Binds

In Joshua 22 those same Transjordan tribes which we considered in Numbers 32 were finally released from assisting the other tribes to obtain their lands. They returned home and built an altar of remembrance to remind

⁸ Deuteronomy 12:3-7.

themselves and the Cisjordan tribes that they were part of Israel, but their actions were misunderstood. The rest of Israel saw that altar as an act of idolatry and grimly gathered an army to destroy those they had formerly regarded as family. Phinehas, “the spear of God”, leads the majority to confront the offending minority. His approach, though not gentle was generous, even to offering to make room in Canaan for the Transjordan tribes to come over and live among them instead of rebelling against God. Thankfully, someone thought to take time to listen to their explanation of their actions before coming to blows. The prominent twentieth century Christian philosopher, Francis Schaeffer argues that this narrative is more than mere history, but a paradigm for God’s people.

Those who were courageous in standing for truth were also courageous in acting in love. If there had only been a stand for truth, there would never have been a happy ending. There would have only been war... there would have been sadness in the midst of misunderstanding. But because of the love of God, the tribes talked to each other openly, and the love and holiness of God were able to come together...

Joshua 22 is not just history; it is a rule in the continuity of God’s commands to his people through the flow of history. It is an example for the people of God in dealing with each other for all time.⁹

Ironically, the Transjordan (East-bank) tribes had built the altar to remind the rest of Israel that they were one with them. They did not want their descendants to be marginalized and “canceled” by the other tribes who lived on the west bank and prevented from worshipping the LORD in “the place of his choosing.” While they would not have used contemporary terms

⁹ Francis A. Schaeffer, *Joshua and the Flow of Biblical History* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1975), 181.

like these, that is exactly the issue that was in play. They did not want to lose their place in the community of the people of God.

If only we valued unity as highly today! While pastors in western churches are now older than ever before¹⁰ many are prone to “upgrade” their positions¹¹, and congregations are often quick to trade in their pastor for a newer model.¹² In contrast, John Fawcett’s famous hymn, *Blest Be the Tie That Binds* (1782), was like a relational/incarnational beacon amid an increasingly transient clergy. When offered a “better” position he twice decided that there was a tie that bound him to the particular church at which he served and turned down the “step-up” and later wrote this hymn to commemorate that decision.

¹⁰ <https://lifewayresearch.com/2017/03/09/how-old-are-americas-pastors/>

¹¹ By “upgrade” I am using a consumer term to refer to seeking a position with higher pay, better benefits, larger platform, and greater influence. I remember the late Rev. Chuck Updike instructing staff pastors, “I would have greater confidence that [a pastor moving to a new congregation] was following the will of God and the leading of the Spirit if once in a while someone was ‘called’ to a smaller church with a cut in salary.”

¹² Such trends are described in The Baptist Press in 2005 <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/survey-pastors-say-pastors-should-stop-moving-church-to-church/>. Similarly, on his church leadership blog Kevin Blackwell admits that, “While the average pastoral tenure has increased from 3.6 to 6 years since 1996, we still have a majority of pastors who leave a church at the most crucial stage for revitalization.” He suggests that “the third year of a tenure is when many pastors will begin looking for greener pastures.” <https://drkevinblackwell.com/2018/09/27/church-health-and-pastoral-tenure-longevity/>

*Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.
Before our Father's throne
We pour our ardent prayers;
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one
Our comforts and our cares.
We share each other's woes,
Our mutual burdens bear;
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear.*

*When we asunder part,
It gives us inward pain;
But we shall still be joined in heart,
And hope to meet again.
This glorious hope revives
Our courage by the way;
While each in expectation lives,
And longs to see the day.
From sorrow, toil, and pain,
And sin, we shall be free,
And perfect love and friendship reign
Through all eternity.*

We would do well to remember this hymn when considering our view of the church. Fawcett saw the depth of relationship not as something restricting but uniting. I think that the advocates of both the visible and invisible unity of the church could find something in this hymn to bolster their argument. And perhaps that is my point . . . we should not argue for one of these positions against the other. Yes, there is an *invisible* unity in the church as all regenerated believers are now “in Christ”¹³ but we are also compelled to work for *visible* unity as a testimony of Jesus’ being sent by the Father¹⁴ and of our salvation by God.¹⁵

The Sin of Jeroboam

After the death of Solomon and the government passed to his diplomatically challenged son Rehoboam, the kingdom was divided. In 1 Kings 12:25-33, Jeroboam, despite having been raised to power by the LORD, chose not to trust the LORD to maintain that power. As the newly crowned ruler of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, in his lack of faith he committed a fatal error. In a strategic move to keep his people from having to maintain a divided loyalty and journey to Jerusalem (the capital of the Southern Kingdom of

¹³ Romans 12:4-5.

¹⁴ John 17:20-21.

¹⁵ Philippians 1:27-28.

Judah), three times a year to worship, he set up his own alternative worship sites complete with golden calf idols in both the south and the north of the kingdom (e.g., Bethel and Dan). His effort to co-opt true worship of the Lord to maintain national viability was a sin—hence called “the sin [or way] of Jeroboam”—for which all the subsequent kings of Israel would be judged. Jeroboam failed to understand the unity in diversity present within the people of God. This pattern has been reproduced by rulers throughout Christian history as well (Constantine, Charlemagne, Lutheran Princes, Henry VIII, Hitler, Mao, etc.) which should give us some comfort in our system of government-religious separation in America.

Jesus, in John 4, moved the debate about worship away from a centralized geographic location to a new place that he has chosen to “put his name” in the hearts of believers and gathered missional communities that would seek to worship “in spirit and in truth.” This statement should have mitigated against the manipulative power of Rome, Constantinople (and Geneva?) but those in political power too often have also controlled the message of the church. When that happens, one of the first victims is diversity and the beauty it adds to the Church. In what follows, this work will survey several biblical metaphors used to describe the Church which should inform our understanding of the interplay of unity, diversity, and the bond of peace we are to share.

Biblical Imagery for the Church

Another foundational aspect for us to consider is that the biblical metaphors used to describe the church imply unity in diversity. Jesus, the metaphorical theologian (as Kenneth E. Bailey calls him)¹⁶, is no less so when talking about the church than when speaking parables of the kingdom of God. And in a very real sense, they are the same and yet different. In their book,

¹⁶ Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 279.

Exploring Ecclesiology, Harper and Metzger maintain that “there is a dialectical relationship between the church and the eschatological kingdom.” and characterize the church’s function in relation to the kingdom in three ways—the Church is the doorway to the kingdom, the Church bears witness to the kingdom, and the church is the instrument of the kingdom, concluding, “By this we mean that the church not only points to the kingdom (witness) and opens the door to the kingdom (doorway) but also brings the blessings of the kingdom, not only to its own members, but to the world as well.”¹⁷

The Kingdom of God is his rule over his redeemed people through Christ. But this new people with their new life, new vision, and new power are meant to be the salt and light of the world. They can hinder social decay and spread the light of God’s love, peace, and righteousness, and so help to shape a society which is more pleasing to the God of compassion and justice than the society which it replaced.¹⁸

There are many vivid metaphorical ways to describe and teach about the nature of the church—many adapted from the Old Testament—including my favorites: the “People of God”¹⁹, the Lord’s “Vineyard”²⁰/vine

¹⁷ Harper and Metzger, 60-64.

¹⁸ John R.W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 167.

¹⁹ Ephesians 2:19; 2 Cor. 6:18.

²⁰ Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 2:21; Mark 12:1-11.

and branches²¹, a “Body” (of Christ)²², a “Holy Temple/building”²³, the “Flock of God,”²⁴ and finally “the Bride (of Christ)”²⁵ which shifts to the image of the “New Jerusalem”²⁶ and then back to Bride again²⁷. These images all strongly imply the idea of oneness, but it is always a unity in diversity. The ethnic division between Jew and Gentile was removed by the cross of Christ. The separation of power and privilege between master and slave was reconciled in the cross of Christ. The followers of Jesus are one in the Spirit. In fact, the early church was often called “a new race.”²⁸ Harper and Metzger also like a metaphor, which though not mentioned in the Bible captures much of the unity in diversity contained in these biblical images. It is also popular in the church today—the metaphor is that of a “Mosaic.” It is a beautiful picture of what is broken and scattered being pieced together into a collective that tells a larger story beautifully.

Why should we strive for such mosaic unity in diversity? It is because the church—not this or that uniform movement or niche faction—is one body with many parts, created by the one God and Father for his Son as his bride, the one Lord who gives his life for her redemption, a body gifted in a diversity of ways by the one Spirit who calls the church to

²¹ John 15:1-8.

²² Colossians 1:18; 1 Cor. 12:12-30; Romans 12:4-8.

²³ Ephesians 2:21-22; 1 Peter 2:5; 1 Cor. 3:16; 1 Cor. 6:19.

²⁴ 1 Peter 5:1-4; Ezekiel 34:1-31.

²⁵ Ephesians 5:22-32; Revelation 19:7-8.

²⁶ Revelation 21:2, 9-11.

²⁷ Revelation 22:17

²⁸ Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Present Day* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press/Hendrickson, 1999), 17.

unity (not uniformity), both to embody and to proclaim the one gospel of God's salvation. The mosaic will be complete on that day when the entire church sits down together at the marriage supper of the Lamb.²⁹

However beautiful this idea is, we all too often spend more time breaking communities into pieces, sharp shards of relational brokenness, instead of intentionally seeking the oneness, the wholeness, and beauty of unity in the mosaic of the church. It does not good to desire the "good old days" to return, for even the early church had issues, but we can press forward as humble pilgrims into the vision of an eschatological community that does not take the name of the Lord in vain by the way they live.

No Divisions

In the first chapter of 1 Corinthians Paul admonished the Corinthian church for their divisions, "I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment."³⁰ His haunting rhetorical question, "Is Christ divided?"³¹ echoes down through the centuries. Where is the answer to be found? Can we argue the issue out and come up with a wise plan to visibly unite the churches under one human leader and one hierarchical structure? The extended context of chapter one casts significant doubt that the answer will come from the wise and powerful. Has our discernment been thwarted by an elevated view of ourselves and a defective view of God? In verse 29, Paul makes it clear "that no human being" has grounds to boast in the presence of God. So, when we boast about our chosen group does that mean that God is not in it? Certainly,

²⁹ Harper and Metzger, 18.

³⁰ 1 Corinthians 1:10

³¹ 1 Corinthians 1:13. All Scripture citations are from the ESV unless otherwise noted.

if we are unwilling to fellowship with others who have faith in Christ, it is because our boast is in something other than the Lord. I agree with Christina Cleveland when she warns the church that focusing on differences does not bring unity in a divided culture, “Fixating on differences leads us to ignore glaring commonalities and focus on distinguishing ourselves from other groups, making it less likely for us to think that we should get to know other groups and collaborate with them.”³² Will we be willing to see such collaboration as theologically essential?

We need to adopt the belief that to be a follower of Christ means to care deeply about and pursue other followers of Christ, including the ones that we do not instinctively value or like. We need to adopt the belief that to be a follower of Christ means to allow our identity as members of the body of Christ to trump all other identities. We need to adopt the belief that to be a follower of Christ means to put our commitment to the body of Christ above our own identity and self-esteem needs. We have coped with our divisions long enough. It is time for us to discover our true identities as members of the family of God. It is time for us to rally around this identity, overcome our divisions and change the world.³³

Not Against You

A classic gospel text used against sectarianism is Luke 9:49-50, where “John answered, ‘Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us.’ But Jesus said to him, ‘Do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you.’” Viewed from the outside, it seems like churches do this all the time. Surprisingly, this pericope also makes space for diversity. If we take

³² Christina Cleveland, *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces that Keep Us Apart* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 69.

³³ Cleveland, 97-98.

this one directive to heart and learn to see other churches not as competitors, but as colleagues, our community impact will be multiplied. One doctoral candidate in the program I direct just completed his final ministry project studying a unique collaboration of seven congregations on one campus in Beaverton, Oregon. Instead of trying to make every expression of the church like our own, what if we sought out and partnered with diverse groups that are doing the work of the kingdom? That would be a testimony far more wonderful than some kind of ecclesial manifest destiny.

We live in times where cultural pressure seems to fracture society and the church, along any natural fault lines that exist—be they political, economic, racial, creedal, generational, etc. But as passages like 1 Corinthians 1, Galatians 2, and the narrative in Acts demonstrate, such pressures and tendencies have been with us since the first century and were consistently confronted by the Apostle Paul.

The apostle Paul “never wavered in his conviction that God was making a new creation by drawing into one church both Jews and Gentiles.”⁴⁰ He believed that it was not enough just to maintain a spiritual unity in the universal church. Unity needed to be seen and experienced in the local congregation as well. The break in sharing meals together would end “the social unity of the church.” The apostle Paul could not stand by and allow the Christian church to lose its power to reconcile and therefore make void the truth of the gospel.³⁴

The passages discussed so far, serve sufficiently to establish a biblical foundation for unity in diversity as a needed characteristic of the

³⁴ Curtis Paul DeYoung, Michael Emerson, George Yancy, and Karen Chai Kim. *United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 30.

kingdom-minded church. But before moving on to summarize several historical divisions and the resulting imbalances in applied ecclesiology by using Meldenius' classic statement about Church unity as a template, I will engage with one more New Testament passage.

One

In Ephesians 4 we encounter Paul's digital drumline beating out the message of unity in the church, "One . . . one . . . one" seven measures worth, before reverberating in a foursquare "all." I have arranged this text to make the pattern even more visible.

*There is one body
and one Spirit— just as you were called
to the one hope that belongs to your call—
one Lord,
one faith,
one baptism,
one God and Father of all,
who is over all
and through all
and in all.³⁵*

This condition of the church is stated as a fact. It is not merely an ideal or wishful thinking. At the same time, we have not been assimilated into the sameness of the fictional Borg.³⁶ As we seek to maintain "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"³⁷ we need to understand that unity or oneness does not mean sameness. Michael Reeves explains this in his book, *Delighting in the Trinity*.

³⁵ Ephesians 4:4-6, ESV.

³⁶ A hostile alien entity/group from the Star Trek franchise.

³⁷ Ephesians 4:3.

At the heart of Jesus' high priestly prayer to his Father for believers is the request "that they may be one as we are one" (Jn 17:22). That is not the sort of request one could put to a single-person God. Such a God would, of course, like oneness—after all, he is One—but it would be a very different sort of oneness from what Jesus has in mind.

Oneness for the single-person God would mean sameness. Alone for eternity without any beside him, why would he value others and their differences? Think how it works out for Allah: under his influence, the once-diverse cultures of Nigeria, Persia, and Indonesia are made, deliberately and increasingly, the same. Islam presents a complete way of life for individuals, nations, and cultures, binding them into one way of praying, one way of marrying, buying, fighting, relating—even, some would say, one way of eating and dressing.

Oneness for the triune God means unity. As the Father is absolutely one with his Son, and yet is not his Son, so Jesus prays that believers might be one, but not that they might all be the same. Created male and female, in the image of this God, and with many other good differences between us, we come together valuing the way the triune God has made us each unique.³⁸

We do well to consider Reeves' point that unity, in the service of a Triune (Three-person) God, is oneness, not sameness! However, do we fully embrace diversity, or do we stubbornly insist on sameness?

³⁸ Michael Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith*. [Downers Grove, IL, InterVarsity Press, 2012], 103-104.

The history of the churches in America doesn't lend itself to oneness. There was no sense of unity in the colonial period, just competing candidates for sameness. There was a diverse group of denominations, but they didn't like each other much. Historian Daniel Scalberg surveys that diversity and makes a startling observation.

Within the first three decades of European settlement, a variety of Christian denominations were planted in permanent colonies in North America: Anglican, Jamestown, Virginia (1607); Roman Catholic, Quebec (1608); Puritan Separatist, Plymouth, Massachusetts (1620); Dutch Reformed, New York (1628); Puritan Congregational, Salem-Boston, Massachusetts (1630); Roman Catholic, Maryland (1634); Baptist, Rhode Island (1636). For all of its variety of expression, early American Christianity did not embrace a culture of tolerance. Each Christian denomination came to America to worship distinctly, in their own way, without assuming the burden of the toleration of the existence of other denominational varieties.³⁹

When we look at the historical church and the contemporary church, we conclude that much needs to be done for us to live like we believe the “ones” of Ephesians 4:4-6 are true. Will we learn from history, or merely repeat its mistakes?

³⁹ Daniel A Scalberg. “The Formation and Fragmentation of the Idea of America as a Christian Nation.” *Cultural Encounters* 15, no. 1 (Winter 2019): 17–30.

Divisions in the Historical Church

The aforementioned quote from Meldenius ((*"In essentials unity; in non-essentials liberty; in all things charity."*)), a pseudonym for Peter Meiderlin (1582-1651),⁴⁰ is a remarkably powerful statement. It is also one that has been historically very hard to put into practice. This classic statement about the relationship between unity and diversity (liberty) in the church⁴¹ has been consistently read with the emphasis on the wrong clause resulting in visible disunity. For in the end, who defines what an "essential" or a "non-essential" is? From the Patristic period through the great schism between the Eastern and Western churches in 1054, councils and bishops were quick to throw what I call the accursed theological "A-bomb" (*anathema*) at their opposition in any given doctrinal dispute. It seems that almost everything was seen in terms of essentials, and perhaps rightfully so, as they processed the Church's Christology through the early ecumenical councils⁴². However, even here much of the conflict came from not understanding what the other group meant by a given term. The hard task of "listening long" before speaking and acting is one that churches too often avoid.⁴³ The position of the early church was that schismatics were nearly as bad as heretics and they reacted strongly against those who would seek to separate

⁴⁰ Steve Perisho, "A common quotation from "Augustine?" [georgetown.edu.http://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/augustine/quote.html].

⁴¹ This statement has generally appeared as the final point in the various Foursquare "This We Believe" lists.

⁴² Ecumenical councils included representatives of all five patriarchates of the Church (Alexandria, Jerusalem, Antioch, Constantinople, and Rome) and major creedal decisions were not to be decided by only part of the church.

⁴³ James 1:19.

themselves from the church. Irenaeus cautioned that those who brought division would be judged by God.

He will judge those who produce schisms, who have no trace in them of the love of God, and who have an eye to their own profit rather than. to the unity of the Church. Such men for any trivial cause cleave and divide the great and glorious Body of Christ and do their best to destroy it; they speak peace but bring about war; they 'strain out the gnat while they swallow the camel'. No amendment can come from them to cancel the harm of schism.⁴⁴

Several great divisions have occurred in the historic church that resulted from one group or all groups overemphasizing one of Meldenius' clauses against the others.

The Great East-West Schism (1054)

Throughout the first seven centuries of church history, doctrinal decisions and subsequent credal developments were the results of the universal church working together in unity. These ecumenical councils included representatives of all five patriarchates of the Church (Alexandria, Jerusalem, Antioch, Constantinople, and Rome) and major credal decisions were not to be decided by only part of the church. That is not to suggest that the councils were not contentious or even protracted at times because they could be both. However, eventually, from what had been a community of equals, one patriarch's personally elevating claims to power (the Patriarch of Rome/Pope) and unilateral credal editing (the *Filioque*) started a slow burn of resentment and misunderstanding that eventually resulted in a major *east-west* rift in the church with Pope Leo IX and the

⁴⁴ Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, rv. xxxiii. I, 7.

Patriarch of Constantinople mutually excommunicating each other. From that point on Christendom was separated into the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox empires. Despite this historic division, Orthodox theologian Timothy Ware suggests that “In the Church there is neither dictatorship nor individualism, but harmony and unanimity; its members remain free but not isolated, for they are united in love, in faith, and in sacramental communion.”⁴⁵

Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death! The North-South Division (ongoing from 1517-1521)

There have been times when the ecclesial and political authorities’ hands have been heavy upon the people of God. In the gospels, we see that Jesus chided the Pharisees for weighing the people down with the burdens of what was essential and not giving them any help to bear up under them.⁴⁶ Jesus also cleansed the Temple twice in a direct challenge to the oppressive barriers to worship that were enriching the Sadducees through temple concessions. In 1517, Martin Luther saw a similar hindrance to true worship and publicly pointed out the problem by nailing his famous *95 Theses* to the door of the Wittenberg Cathedral. This list was the medieval equivalent of Tweeting a list of potential debate topics. This began the process of his confronting the tragic abuse of the Church by the Roman Catholic vendors of indulgences who were manipulating the spiritual anxieties of the uninformed to raise money for papal building projects...and the Reformation was born. Like with Jesus, the religious authorities tried to kill the movement, but unlike the early Christians, Luther’s adherents fought back. The resulting century of conflict brought about a generally *north-south* division within the European church with Protestant churches in the north and Catholic churches in the south. This is still generally true today.

⁴⁵ Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* [New York: Penguin Books, 1993], 15.

⁴⁶ Matthew 23:4 and Luke 11:46.

However, it should be noted that Luther didn't want to split with the Catholic church, and even wrote to the pope in an effort to persuade him to correct the problem. Luther in his letter to Pope Leo X built a "golden bridge"⁴⁷ (diverting blame from the Pope to the Curia) that Leo might use to embrace reformation of the church without humiliation, but Leo wouldn't "mediate the estrangement."

The Inside-Outside Divide

The north-south European division also may have contributed to another north-south division outside of Europe, that of racialization. I could also call this *the inside-outside discrimination*, where people may believe the same doctrines on the inside but because of how they look on the outside they will not worship together.

However important liberty is in the efforts for Christian unity, if it is taken as the sole element necessary, or if given undo weight it can be disastrous. Charles Marsh comments on this within the historical context of the American Civil Rights movement, but it would seem equally appropriate in terms of the overall unity of the Church. He summarizes the trajectory of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and shows the danger of liberty without love.

SNCC's fragile unity of form and freedom, sustained for a while by spiritual convictions and passions, finally collapsed on the side of freedom; and *freedom unfettered from sacrificial love produced an unforgiving legalism*. Compassionate action can never drift too far from its sources

⁴⁷ William Ury, *Getting Past No: Negotiating in Difficult Situations* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), (Kindle Locations 229-232). Kindle Edition.

without forgetting [its] purpose and mission. (Emphasis added)⁴⁸

So, how do we seek to worship the Lord in both unity and also in the liberty of diversity?

All I Need Is Love: The Right – Left Polarization between Fundamentalists and Modernists.

There have been times when movements have arisen that don't want to contend for doctrinal orthodoxy or established hierarchy but only demand tolerance because "God loves everyone." This politicized theological division could be called *right-left*.

There is much to be said for this position of loving tolerance, specifically as tied to St. Paul's claim, that without love all our efforts for essentials and sacrifices for liberty are worthless.⁴⁹ When I think of this clause in Meldenius' call to unity I can't avoid the catchy tune of the classic Beatles' song. Some say all we need to do is love everyone, yet a generic unnamed love without freely held common convictions is not love. Freedom, without being guided by the love of Christ, to which it responds, merely replaces one oppressive structure with another tyranny—whether in politics or the church. Paul recognized the reality of our freedom in Christ but also cautioned against its dangers. "For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Charles Marsh, *The Beloved Community: How Faith Shapes Social Justice from the Civil Rights Movement to Today* [New York: Basic Books, 2006], 90.

⁴⁹ 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.

⁵⁰ Galatians 5:13-14.

Both sides of this divide tend to use the language of “freedom *from*” in order to rationalize *not* believing, *not* participating, or *not* serving the other. Instead, both sides should use the language of “freedom *to*” believe, participate, and serve as a grateful expression of the love of God they have received. Our freedom should not be used to disassociate from our brothers and sisters in Christ, no matter what they look like on the outside. This will take intentional efforts to not only build multi-ethnic personal relationships but to work for just systems and structures for everyone.

Ups and Downs—Divisions Between Socioeconomic Classes

One last division in the church that needs to be mentioned is *up-down*. In a socioeconomic sense, this is the division between classes. For years this has been mitigated in America by the large middle class. However, due to a changing economy and the exporting of jobs the middle class has come under pressure. Perhaps this will turn out to be a positive thing as we become more aware of the economic needs around our churches and move missionally to seek the good of our cities as the Lord once instructed the Jewish exiles. “But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.”⁵¹

For the last century, the Evangelical wing of the Western church focused primarily on individual conversions and often has relegated social reforms (which had once been a vibrant part of their gospel work) to the more liberal wing of the church, as noted by George M. Marsden among others.⁵² This has been called “The Great Reversal” by many and Marsden

⁵¹ Jeremiah 29:7.

⁵² “The “Great Reversal” took place from about 1900 to about 1930, when all progressive social concern, whether political or private, became suspect among revivalist evangelicals and was relegated to a very minor role.” George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*. (Oxford University Press. Kindle Edition, 2006), Location 1815.

devotes an entire chapter to it.⁵³ This schism already growing between fundamentalists and modernists was exacerbated by the onset of a dispensational eschatology that artificially disconnected the church from ministering systemically for the good of the world.

There was a tendency among the premillennialist holiness Bible teachers, expressed by Moody, to see the world as a “wrecked vessel,” implying that one should concentrate on saving souls and stay away from social issues except for what could be reached by preaching conversion and repentance. Most evangelical preachers, furthermore, along with their businessmen supporters and most of their contemporaries, viewed the cause and cure of poverty as related directly to the initiative of the individual.⁵⁴

Since the church is going “*up*” in the rapture, and the world is going “*down*” in flames it has seemed futile to try to reconcile the world except through individual conversions. This eschatological separation has also hindered the work of Christians in the area of creation care. The church should be more involved in the Adamic vocation than we have been in the past! Our role in the world is not to be that of domination but humble, healing service.

If we think carefully about Meldenius’ statement, “*In essentials unity; in non-essentials liberty; in all things charity*” There needs to be a more perichoretic relationship between the three clauses for it to work. It doesn’t matter if it is unity, liberty, or charity...and one clause emphasized over another will produce bad fruit. The genius of Meldenius is to be found

⁵³ Marsden, Locations 1798-1980.

⁵⁴ Marsden, Location 1788.

is in how all three clauses relate to one another, and in how their interdependent relationship describes needed Christian unity quite well.

The Community of the Holy Spirit

If our myriad of congregations, movements, and denominations are to be a healthy unified part of the Visible Church, we need to allow the overflow of the love of Christ by the Spirit to issue forth in living up to our calling as the people of God; negatively, by not slapping others back in knee-jerk defensive pride (even when they slap us), and positively, by demonstrating Trinitarian community in the unity of the Spirit. This is not affected by top-down human authority but by the supernatural participation in the Holy Spirit. This idea was expressed as far back as the time of Tertullian. “Tertullian is the first great teacher of unimpeachable doctrinal orthodoxy who dared to enunciate an unpalatable truth: the church is not a conclave of bishops, but the manifestation of the Holy Spirit”⁵⁵

The manifestation of the Holy Spirit in human lives and community cannot help but cause the visible unity of the Church. It certainly did on Pentecost and in the following chapters of Acts (e.g., 4:4, 13-16, 31-33; 5:12-16; 6:7; 13:48-50; 19:11-20). The visible unity of the early church was not accomplished by a formalized structure or primarily by the wisdom of men, but by the church being constituted in the shared Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is experienced here as the “Go-between-God” (Bishop John V. Taylor) who tears down the fences separating human beings from each other because the Holy Spirit takes away anxiety and arrogance. In this Spirit, the competitive drive, which ignites the struggle of all against all, turning human beings into wolves, comes to an end. In

⁵⁵ Timothy D. Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study*. Rev. ed. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985], 83. Quoted in http://www.tertullian.org/works/de_pudicitia.html.

the divine Spirit, human beings become of “one heart and soul” in the midst of a world of violence and injustice.⁵⁶

As time passed and the church endured periods of persecution, and more formal structures of authority began to develop, it still experienced manifestations of the Holy Spirit for the good of others. In reflecting on the visibility of the church in the Patristic era I am moved by its applicability to the visible church today as the grace-gifted community of the Holy Spirit. Even Irenaeus (130-202 A.D.) wrote offhandedly as if such occurrences were commonplace.

Those who are truly his disciples receive grace from him and put this grace into action for the benefit of other men, as each has received the gifts from him. Some drive out devils . . . some have foreknowledge of the future...others heal the sick through the laying on hands . . . and even the dead have been raised up before now and have remained with us for many years. Why, there is no numbering of the gifts which all over the world the Church has received, from the Lord; and put into action day by day, in the name of Christ Jesus..., for the benefit of the nations, without deceit and without payment. *For as the Church has received freely from the Lord, so it freely serves mankind.* (Emphasis added)⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Jürgen Moltmann. “God in the World—the World in God: Perichoresis in Trinty and Eschatology.” In *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology*. Edited by Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser, eds. Pages 369-381 Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008. 377.

⁵⁷ Henry Bettenson, ed., *The Early Christian Fathers*, [New York: Oxford University Press, 1956], 93.

This last clause is the key. The church saw itself as the servant of mankind with all that the Spirit had given them. I question how committed to this work we are today.

God's Missional People

Walking the Talk

Daniel Wallace, contra Barth, believes the participles of Ephesians 4:2-3 to be doubtful imperatives at best, and should likely be taken as adjectival describing how we can "walk worthy of the calling." With the attitudinal graces of humility, gentleness, and patience, a life lived worthy of the ambassadorial calling we have received is described by two further actions welling up from within.

The resultant idea in this passage, then, is as follows...the action is "walk worthily of the calling...." The means by which this command is to be carried is twofold: (1) negatively, by "forbearing one another in love"; and (2) positively, "by striving to maintain [not originate] the unity of the Spirit." Ephesians 4:1-3, then, gives us the author's sum of what this little epistle is about.⁵⁸

So, what difference does it make if maintaining "the unity of the Spirit" is a command or not? It may give us insight into how we maintain unity in our context today. I suggest that it comes not as the result of a culture-dictating command from some political/ecclesial power structure, nor is it an invisible just-below-the-surface-network like some giant varieties of forest

⁵⁸ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996], 652.

fungus. It is the natural outflow of the Spirit of God working through the people of God in all of their cultural contexts.

I have wondered if, after the argument of the fourth Ecumenical Council in 451—to correct Monophysite (one nature) influences regarding the person of Christ—which concluded that Christ was one person, but having two natures, it might be possible to argue that the Church, the body of Christ might still be one despite the diversity of cultural natures incarnate within it. So, why do we try to organize the church after human hierarchical structures? Jesus taught his disciples that, “it shall not be so among you.”⁵⁹ The late Colin E. Gunton went so far as to suggest,

Should we not consciously move towards an ecclesiology of perichoresis: in which there is no permanent structure of subordination, but in which there are overlapping patterns of relationships, so that the same person will be sometimes ‘subordinate’ and sometimes ‘superordinate’ according to the gifts and graces being exercised? ...The Concept may be thought to be hopelessly idealistic, but is that because we have been so long in thrall to the inherited stereotype? Whether that be so, the chief point of this section remains: that to base a theology of the church on the Trinity is of great practical moment, because ancient questions tend to receive different answers if the primary control on ecclesiology is the tri-personal community of God.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Matthew 20:25-28.

⁶⁰ Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* [New York: T & T Clark, 1997], 80.

As the disciples argued about who was the greatest,⁶¹ they typified the behavior of churches throughout history. The church is not supposed to be like that! It must be more essential than ever, freer than ever, and more loving than history has shown it to be. However, we are so shaped by an egocentric culture that it is only with difficulty that we become aware of the problem. Joseph H. Hellerman, in his excellent work, *Embracing Shared Ministry: Power and Status in the Early Church and Why It Matters Today*, suggests how Paul intentionally confronted this very issue in the church at Philippi.

Unity is difficult to maintain. Any group of persons banding together for a common cause will eventually encounter “people problems” among its members. This was true in first-century Philippi, and is true in twenty-first-century America today...

[While] It is easy to identify and, at least, attempt to address a generic interpersonal dispute, like the conflict between Euodia and Syntyche...

It is profoundly more difficult to “stand outside of ourselves,” so to speak, in order to identify and resist culturally systemic patterns of thought and behavior that are antithetical to the gospel, since we have been socialized from infancy to view these patterns as normal. Yet, where social status and honor-seeking were concerned, this is precisely what the Philippians had to do.⁶²

⁶¹ Mark 9:33-35; Luke 9:46-48; 22:24-27.

⁶² Joseph H. Hellerman, *Embracing Shared Ministry: Power and Status in the Early Church and Why It Matters Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2013), 122.

This question of identifying those “systemic patterns of thought and behavior” is very hard to do when they seem so normal. This is further complicated when our view of the Bible itself is colored by our culture instead of our view of our own culture being shaped by the scripture.

It is a truism that apart from intentional objectivity, we almost invariably read our Bibles through the perspectives of our cultural matrices and day-to-day experiences. As a result, we often overlook or miss the implications of those portions of Scripture that do not accord with life as we know it.⁶³

If the Roman Catholic Church was the spiritual rather than fleshly guardian of apostolic succession, then it would be laying itself down to serve all those who claim allegiance to Christ. Sadly, it seems that historically Rome would rather rule than serve. The same could also be said at times about the Orthodox, Lutheran, Anglican, Evangelical, and Reformed churches as well.

I am encouraged by the progress made at Vatican II, and by Pope John Paul’s request in 2000 for forgiveness for “sins against Christian unity”⁶⁴, and in various ecumenical efforts at establishing a wider Christian communion. Our own denomination, the *International Church of the Foursquare Gospel*, has as one of the points in its formal doctrinal statement that it is interdenominational, for no one church has exclusive claim to the truth of the gospel message. But while such statements by both Popes and Pentecostals are a positive sign, how intentional are we in our collective efforts at the cross-pollination of Christian unity in diversity?

⁶³ Hellerman, 242.

⁶⁴ Thomas P. Rausch, *Towards a Truly Catholic Church: An Ecclesiology for the Third Millennium* [Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier Book/ Liturgical Press, 2005], 138.

My Confession of a Case Study

I had a considerably ecumenical church background during the first two decades of my life. Baptized Episcopalian, I attended a Lutheran pre-school and churches, then later a local Assembly of God church, and then a period of no church attendance followed by a rededication of my life to Christ in a Conservative Baptist youth ministry before attending a Quaker University, working in a Presbyterian-influenced conference center, and participating in para-church ministries and foreign missions. Somewhere in there, I became a member of the Beaverton Foursquare Church not because I was born into it, but because of the humble focus on Jesus as the Lover and Lord of the Church by the Spirit and the Word.

I was licensed as a pastor in 1986 and have served in full-time ministry for 34 years with the last four years as an Assistant Professor and Director of the Doctor of Ministry program at the non-denominational Multnomah Biblical Seminary. However, from the ecclesial variety of my younger years, I eventually settled into the confident position of my doctrinal and ecclesial high ground. Yet there is much I could have learned from other “tribes” of Jesus followers who were just as much the “people of God” as the church where I served. My wife reminded me of my unwillingness to visit other churches when she would ask. At the time I felt like it was an act of family betrayal, but later realized that my definition of family and the church was not large enough, nor was my heart teachable enough.

Miroslav Volf boldly declares that the church that stands apart from other churches is not Trinitarian enough, “It is true that a local church, even a fellowship of mutual giving and receiving, could not correspond to the Trinity if it intentionally separated itself from other churches and did not seek communion with them.”⁶⁵ This openness, in an attitude of mutuality, is key to the development of both the maturity and the witness of the church.

⁶⁵ Paul L. Metzger, ed., *Trinitarian Soundings in Systematic Theology* [New York: T & T Clark, 2005], 163.

Living in community and close relationship with other people reveals our strengths—that which makes us helpful to others—as well as our weaknesses—those things that make us hurtful, our sinful patterns of behavior.

Relationships grow and mature us. We find authentic community as we learn to experience Christ *through* one another. Biblical community is experienced as we come to know others and are known by them, love and are loved, serve and are served, celebrate and are celebrated in return.⁶⁶

For churches to walk in unity, not only do they need to emphasize the relationality of their being, but they need to intentionally pursue open fellowship with Christians of other denominations. This personal contact needs to seek ways to bring greater communion between congregations around the Eucharist and expressed through a common mission. This will require the humility that comes from realizing that we are not the whole church when we are separated from others.⁶⁷ Rausch, a Catholic theologian writes rather confessionally that, “If a Church already shares a unity in the Spirit, it must strive to make that unity visible in its life . . . A church closed in on itself, completely self-sufficient, lacking communion with other churches would be deficient in catholicity.”⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Darrin Patrick, Matt Carter, and Joel A. Lindsey, *For the City: Proclaiming and Living Out the Gospel* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010], 91.

⁶⁷ 1 Cor. 12:21.

⁶⁸ Thomas P. Rausch, *Towards a Truly Catholic Church: An Ecclesiology for the Third Millennium* [Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier Book/ Liturgical Press, 2005], 151.

Young Men's Visions, Old Men's Dreams

In my doctoral classes and writing, much emphasis was placed on wrestling with the structural evils of the racial divisions in the American church, and the efforts to repent of and reconcile such divisions are readily transferable to the other schisms in the Church as well. I have seen the need not only to work towards an increasingly multi-ethnic church but to apply the same efforts towards addressing age differentiation and working towards greater intergenerational unity in the church. Just as our actions may unintentionally contribute to racialization⁶⁹ they may also unintentionally contribute to ageism, classism, or creed-ism. Too often we worship and work only with those who look like and live as we do. Christina Cleveland confronts such sameness, such homogeneity in her work, *Disunity in Christ*.

To respond to God's call fully, we need to express our interdependent diversity in individual churches, denominations, and organizations as well as in the worldwide body of Christ. We must be connected to those who are different within our respective churches *and* we must be connected to those who are different in the larger body of Christ.

This is the tall order of multilevel unity to which Paul calls us. This degree of unity requires a humble posture that values the perspectives and gifts that other parts offer, recognizes the dire need for interdependence between the parts and accordingly invests significant resources toward connecting with other parts. The homogenous, culturally isolated church, denomination or organization is not truly participating in the body of Christ. The broken and

⁶⁹ Michael Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001], Kindle Locations 240-241.

fragmented body needs to be healed. We've lost sight of our framework, and as a result, we are hurting.⁷⁰

So, how are we responding, “to those who are different”? We need to put into practice the four criteria of what Cleveland calls *Inter-group Contact theory* in our efforts at ecclesial unity across all the directional schisms we face: east-west, north-south, inside-outside, up-down, left-right, male-female, and young-old. It will require much care in bringing the groups together even within the same congregation. It will require (1) *Leadership*—the leaders of the groups involved are the driving force of the reconciliation efforts; (2) *Equal Status* where those within the context of the groups have equal status; (3) *Interpersonal Interaction*—we learn through spending time together that many of our generalizations were wrong; and (4) a *Superordinate Goal*—it is crucial to find something that you both can agree on and working on it together helps to build a friendship.⁷¹

Without contact, our errors continue to go unchallenged and often begin to take on lives of their own... Cross-cultural contact works its magic by (1) requiring people to see different group members as individuals, rather than nameless, faceless members of a cultural group, and (2) creating a context in which the two different groups are encouraged to form a common identity... Cross-cultural contact can also give us a much-needed attitude adjustment toward those who are culturally different... Cross-cultural contact can help us to do the seemingly impossible: treat

⁷⁰ Christina Cleveland, *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces that Keep Us Apart*. [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013], 39.

⁷¹ Taken from my personal notes from Christina Cleveland, given in an unpublished lecture at Multnomah University June 2014.

culturally different Christians in a loving, inclusive and gracious way!⁷²

Stay on Target

One of the problems with the church is that while it gives lip service to the Lordship of Christ it doesn't generally organize itself that way. If "Jesus is Lord" is the foundation of our church, then the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace, and the great *Missio Dei* communicating God's transforming love will be the glue of our gatherings. Cleveland also wrote that multi-ethnic churches will not hold together over the long haul unless there is a greater mission identity that is the focus of their gathering. Alan Hirsch raises the ideal of "communitas" to describe groups who have this greater missional identity.

Liminality therefore applies to that situation where people find themselves in an in-between, marginal state in relation to the surrounding society, a place that could involve significant danger and disorientation, but not necessarily so... "*Communitas*...describes that unique experience of togetherness that only really happens among a group of people inspired by the vision of a better world who actually attempt to do something about it."⁷³

Hirsch goes on to say that while many look at these as "temporary experiences" he says, "liminality and *communitas* are more *the normative situation and condition* of the pilgrim people of God."⁷⁴ Not only does shared

⁷² Cleveland, 153-155.

⁷³ Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* [Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006], 220-221.

⁷⁴ Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 222.

suffering and missional challenge build the relational depth of *communitas*, but because the foundation of the church is the shared Spirit of God our relationships can be revelatory. Miroslav Volf writes,

Through our relationships with others, we give expression to the relationships among the divine persons. That we genuinely are describing God, rather than just a piece of the world, derives from the fact that God's self-revelation breaks through in this world. The this-worldly character of God's self-revelation makes it possible to convert Trinitarian ideas into ecclesiological ideas.⁷⁵

This is to say that the way we live, work, and worship together as the church should reveal something about the character of the Trinity to the world. But when we do not actively move towards unity and embrace diversity, not only will we not demonstrate charity, but we will impair our ability to participate in the *missio Dei*.

Metaphors in 3-D

According to the repeated use of "one" of Ephesians 4, the church is one. This is presented as a fact not merely a possibility or a wish. However, this oneness or unity is not at the expense of diversity. We do well to remember Reeves' point that unity, in the service of a Triune God is oneness, not sameness! So, in oneness, the diversity of the church should be celebrated.

By the Spirit, we are part of the family of God, but that doesn't mean we give up our nuclear and extended families to participate in the church. Rather our family identity becomes a part of a larger family. Because we serve a three-person God, there is no need to abandon diversity in order to

⁷⁵ Paul L. Metzger, ed., *Trinitarian Soundings in Systematic Theology* [New York: T & T Clark, 2005], 159.

participate in unity. It is as we are shaped and placed by the mission of the Father that we draw near to him and each other as the sent ones of God.

When the triune God gives us his Word, he gives us his very self, for the Son is the Word of God, the perfect revelation of his Father... This God does not give us some *thing* that is other than himself, or merely tell us *about* himself; he actually gives us himself...

And so, in Jesus Christ the Word of God we see the most revealing revelation. In Jesus, we see that God is Father, Son, and Spirit, for he is beloved by the Father and anointed with the Spirit. In Jesus, we see a God so generous and kind that he gives himself to us and comes to be with us.⁷⁶

It is as we are drawn by the love of Jesus that we press on in eucharistic unity in the upward call in Christ to give our very selves to each other. It is as we are dependent on the power and giftedness of the Holy Spirit that we are marked by the bonds of visible community in true fellowship/participation of the Spirit.

If we are the *people of God*, then we are set aside for a relational purpose—God with us, as we give ourselves for the world.

If we are the *bride of Christ*, then we are captivated by his love and we are forever changed and can no longer be hidden. This is good news for the world.

If we are the *body of Christ*, then we are about doing his business in the world, living together as engaging witnesses, not as hermits.

If we are the *temple of the Holy Spirit*, then we are being built together as we are filled with the freedom of true worship supplied by every

⁷⁶ Reeves, 80.

tongue and tribe, on earth as it is in heaven.⁷⁷ This should serve as an example of unity in diversity for the world.

If we are *the Lord's vineyard*, then we will abide in him together to bear the good fruit of justice and righteousness (instead of oppression, bloodshed, and angry shouting)⁷⁸ and bring glory to God. This will bring peace for the world.

If we are the *flock of God*, we will naturally want to be together, humbly following the Good Shepherd and we will not be tempted to elevate ourselves and our churches above another.

The *visible church* building is a broken eggshell memorial to what once happened in the hearts of humanity by the Spirit of God if the community is not welcomed by Spirit-filled people. The *invisible church* of those who think faith is only a personal matter without any works in their community to show for it is dead as well.⁷⁹ Even Spirit-filled, missionally-focused churches need to not merely tolerate other churches but should work together for the good of the other. There can't be one without the other—visible and invisible together in the unity of the Spirit—a beautiful *mosaic*! “The church, then, is the community in which the kingly rule of God is made visible and becomes a conduit of the power of the kingdom in its preaching and ministry, both to itself and to the world. It is, then, a visible means of grace.”⁸⁰

May we allow the Father, Son, and Spirit to make us one in unity, diversity, and love, so that the world may see that our God is good!

⁷⁷ Revelation 7:9-10; Matthew 6:10.

⁷⁸ Isaiah 5:7; John 15:8-11.

⁷⁹ James 2:14-26.

⁸⁰ Harper and Metzger, 64.

The Healing Ministry of the New Testament Church¹

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ABSTRACT:

The article reviews all the relevant passages dealing with healing in the NT other than the healing ministry of Jesus. After a survey of healing occurrences in the book of Acts, an analysis of healing methodology is given. Healing through touch, spoken word, and extraordinary miracles, are examined in detail. The author concludes by observing that the NT church continued Jesus' ministry of healing because healing was part of the benefits of the kingdom being proclaimed; that is, the same kingdom power the early church exercised is available today through the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.

Introduction

Jesus appeared proclaiming the good news, demonstrating God's mercy for the suffering of humanity through releasing kingdom blessings of healing to those in need.³ During his ministry, Jesus both exemplified a healing ministry by allowing his disciples to watch, and then he sent them out in teams to practice for themselves (Matt 10:1–42; Mark 6:7–13; Luke 9:1–6, 10:1–23), explicitly instructing them to heal after empowering them for that task (Matt 10:1, 8; Luke 9:1–2, 10:9). Thus, it should not be surprising that after the resurrection and ascension, the disciples and early church continued the ministry of healing. Here I will review the healing approach

¹ The present article is revised material from a chapter in Clayton D. Robinson, "The Laying on of Hands, with Special Reference to the Reception of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament," (PhD Diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2008), 83–142.

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³ Cf. Joel Green, "Jesus and a Daughter of Abraham (Luke 13:10–17): Test Case for a Lucan Perspective on Jesus' Miracles," *CBQ* 51:3 (1989): 643–54.

practiced by the disciples in the New Testament, focusing on the methodology that they utilized to release healings.⁴

Healing in the Acts of the Apostles

On the Day of Pentecost, the band of believers received the Holy Spirit. When a crowd of onlookers gathered, Peter, after noting that Jesus had been attested by God through miracles, wonders, and signs (Acts 2:22), proclaims, “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). Here the reader is enlightened—Jesus the miracle worker has become “both Lord and Christ.”⁵ From Pentecost on, the Spirit-empowered church picked up the work of preaching the gospel and displaying the mighty works of God (Acts 5:12; 6:8; 8:6, 13; 14:3; 15:12)—a point driven home by Luke,⁶ “Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by

⁴ While often healings in the New Testament are intertwined with demon possession, the practice of exorcism will not be covered in the present paper.

⁵ For a review of the research on the role that miracles play in Acts, see Matti Myllykoski, “Being There: The Function of the Supernatural in Acts 1–12,” in *Wonders Never Cease*, 146–79.

⁶ Luke-Acts is accepted by the vast majority of scholars as being penned by the same author, with similar theological interests, and likely were intended as two volumes. So Ward Gasque, *A History of the Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* (BGBE 17; Tübingen: Mohr, 1975; idem, “The Book of Acts and History,” Pages 54–72 in *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology: Essays in Honor of George E. Ladd* (ed. Robert Guelich; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978); Robert O’Toole, *The Unity of Luke’s Theology: An Analysis of Luke-Acts* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1984); Charles Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes, and the Genre of Luke-Acts* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974); Robert Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts* (2 vols.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); J. Verheyden, “The Unity of Luke-Acts: What Are We Up To?” in *The Unity of Luke-Acts* (ed. J. Verheyden; BETL 142; Leuven, Bel.: Leuven University Press, 1999), 3–56.

the apostles” (Acts 2:43).⁷ It is not by chance that the very next portion of Acts is dedicated to the healing of a crippled person lying at the temple gates, complete with bold proclamation of the gospel and dramatic increase in the church. Concerning the mission of the church, Luke has provided the *what* (the bold proclamation of the gospel through the Holy Spirit in power, accompanied by signs and wonders), as well as the *how* (empowerment through the infilling of the Holy Spirit), and the *who* (those upon whom the Spirit fell at Pentecost).

Healings are recounted in eight passages (Acts 3:1–10; 5:15–16; 9:17–18; 9:32–41; 14:8–10; 19:11; 20:7–12; 28:8–10), judiciously placed in the narrative to coincide with the proclamation of the gospel and advance of the church. The healing miracles serve as a demonstration of God’s power to substantiate the truthfulness of the gospel, and thereby are referred to as “signs” (Acts 2:43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 8:6, 13; 14:3; 15:12).⁸

Following the Example of Jesus

The Gospels note that while ministering healing, Jesus took along his disciples—especially Peter, James and John—that they might observe and learn from him (Luke 8:51; Mark 5:37). Moreover, Jesus on several

⁷ Adolf von Harnack contends for the homogeneity of the record found in Acts, “the supernatural element is so abundant, indeed is wanting in no single chapter, is accordingly a proof that we have here a body of tradition, homogeneous in its treatment of the supernatural, which had been transmitted to the author in a form and with a coloring that were congenial to his temperament” (*The Acts of the Apostles* (NTS 3; trans. J.R. Wilkinson; New York: Putnam’s Sons, 1909), 144). John Hardon further notes, “at every point where the Gospel was first established among a certain people, the foundation was made in a miraculous context” (“The Miracle Narratives in the Acts of the Apostles,” *CBQ* 16 (1954): 303–18).

⁸ Nielsen, *Heilung*, 153–87. Myllykoski, “Supernatural,” 159–79, demonstrates that miracles “have a generative function; they cause a chain reaction in the story by leading to events that must follow from the powerful act of God,” such as the healing of the lame man in Acts 3:1–10 leading to the growth of the church, the arrest of the apostles, and the prayer of the community, which itself leads yet again to another miracle with attending results.

occasions empowered and sent the disciples out so that they too would heal and be ready for ministry (Luke 9:1–6; 10:1–17). Hence, it seems the disciples merely continued the healing practice and methods of Jesus, utilizing the laying on of hands and healing words to characterize their ministry.⁹ The key difference distinguishing the healing practice of Jesus from that of the disciples is that Jesus is shown healing by his own authority without the need to appeal to God in prayer, whereas the disciples performed miracles in the name of Jesus, often accompanied by prayer.¹⁰

Healing Methodology in Acts

Luke has carefully illustrated that the healing ministry of the apostles mirrors that of Jesus. For example, as Jesus healed through the laying on of hands, so did Paul (Acts 28:8); as Jesus healed through a commanding word, so did Peter (Acts 9:32–5; 14:10); as Jesus healed with both touch and healing word, so did Peter (Acts 3:1–10) and Ananias (Acts 9:17–19); as Jesus raised the dead, so too did both Peter with only a spoken word (Acts 9:36–42) and Paul by picking up a boy physically (Acts 20:7–12).¹¹ Also,

⁹ So Behm, *Urchristentum*, 16–7; González, “Ritual,” 133; Tipei, “Function,” 104; Wilkinson, *Bible and Healing*, 172. As Blomberg, DJG, 305, notes, “The wording of the account of Peter’s healing of Aeneas (9:32–35) and of the resurrection of Dorcas (9:36–41) so closely parallels the wording of similar stories in the Gospels (Lk 5:17–26; 8:49–56) that Luke almost certainly was trying to make clear that the apostles had received exactly the same healing power which Jesus himself had.”

¹⁰ Borgen, “Healing,” 103; Coppens, “L’imposition des mains dans les Actes des Apôtres,” in *Les actes des apôtres: Traditions, rédaction, théologie* (ed. J. Kremer; BETL 48; Gembloux, Bel.: Leuven University Press, 1979), 405–38; Augustin George, *Étude sur l’Oeuvre de Luc* (SB; Paris: Gabalda, 1978), 75–6, 138.

¹¹ While some assert that Eutychus was only unconscious, the entire tenor of the passage indicates that Luke believed he was actually dead (Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* (Hermeneia; ed. Eldon Epp with Christopher Matthews; trans. Limburg, Kraabel and Juel; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 169; Bert Peerbolte, “Paul the Miracle Worker: Development and Background of Pauline Miracle Stories,” in *Wonders Never Cease*, 186–7).

as Jesus healed through the touch of his tassels, so Peter healed through his shadow (Acts 5:15); and as Jesus healed at a distance, so Paul had sweat-cloths taken from his body and laid on others who were not present (Acts 19:11–12). Finally, as Jesus healed all who had need of healing, so did Peter (Acts 5:15–16), Paul (Acts 14:3; 15:12; 28:9; 19:11–12), Stephen (Acts 6:8), Philip (Acts 8:6–7, 13) and the apostles (Acts 2:43; 5:12).

Laying on of hands is used for healing only twice in Acts—in the healing of the father of Publius on Malta (Acts 28:8), and in the healing of Paul’s blindness by Ananias (Acts 9:17). Additionally, on four occasions healings occurred accompanied by “touch”—as Peter lifted the crippled beggar (Acts 3:7) and Paul laid on Eutychus (Acts 20:10), as well as with “extraordinary” miracles, namely Peter’s shadow (Acts 5:15) and Paul’s aprons (Acts 19:11). On two occasions, healing was accomplished through a word alone—when Peter raised Dorcas from the dead (Acts 9:40), and when Paul commanded the lame man of Lystra to stand (Acts 14:10). Similar to the Gospels, however, the book of Acts gives a number of healing summaries that intimate that healing was a usual part of the ministry of the early church (Acts 2: 43; 4:30; 5:16; 6:8; 8:6–7, 13; 15:12; 28:9), often mentioning that miracles came through “the hands of the apostles” (Acts 5:12; 14:3; 19:11).

It appears that in Acts the healing ministry of the apostles mirrored the healing ministry of Jesus, with touch often accompanied by words of healing being the main method of healing, though on occasion a spoken word by itself was sufficient.¹² Since the focus of my research has been

Behm, *Urchristentum*, 18, avers the laying on of hands is assumed, though not clearly stated. Charles Talbert notes the similarities between Peter and Paul in ministry accomplishments (*Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Crossroads, 1997), 93–94), though Barrett doubts they have been deliberately contrived by Luke (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 2:907).

¹² Cf. Wilkinson, *Bible and Healing*, 173–8; Behm, *Urchristentum*, 18.

focused on the laying on of hands, only passages that deal with healing through touch will be discussed in-depth here.

The first miracle recorded in Acts is the healing of the lame man sitting by the temple gate (Acts 3:7–9). In this passage it is not clear if the healing came through touch since Peter gave the man his hand, or if the touch was incidental and merely a gesture of lifting the man to his feet. As the text specifically mentions that the man’s legs were strengthened after Peter took hold of him, likely Luke understood Peter’s touch as the effective agent, so that the man’s healing was accomplished as power transferred through Peter’s hand as he was lifted.¹³

In two passages the laying on of hands is mentioned as being used to accomplish healing. In 9:12, 17–19, Ananias is sent by the Lord to lay his hands upon Paul. Ananias is told that Paul has seen a vision of him coming to “restore his sight.” However, when laying his hands on Paul, Ananias states, “Brother Saul, the Lord...has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Ananias has interpreted his own vision to include the laying on of hands for both healing as well as for conveying the Holy Spirit. After the laying on of hands, something like scales fell from Paul’s eyes so that he could see, making it plain that the gesture was more than symbolic, but was in fact, the very means of transmitting the healing power.¹⁴

¹³ Barrett, *Acts*, 1:183; Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (trans. Bernard Noble and Gerald Shinn; trans. rev. R. Wilson; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 200. Conversely, Dennis Hamm understands the lifting of the lame man as incidental to the healing itself (“Acts 3:1–10: The Healing of the Temple Beggar as Lucan Theology,” *Bib* 67 (1986): 305–19); cf. idem, “This Sign of Healing, Acts 3:1–10: A Study in Lucan Theology” (PhD diss., St. Louis University, 1975); John Stott, *The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church & the World* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downer’s Grove: IVP, 1990), 103.

¹⁴ González, “Ritual,” 135. Conversely, Stott, *Acts*, 175, suggests that the laying on of hands was “a gesture of love to a blind man, who could not see the smile on Ananias’ face, but could feel the pressure of his hands” and F.F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The*

After the shipwreck of Paul and his companions on Malta, it was revealed that the father of Publius, the chief official of the island, “was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him, and after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him” (Acts 28:8).¹⁵ The end result of the immediate and effective cure was that the rest of the community came to Paul for healing (Acts 28:9).¹⁶ While Jesus never prayed to effect a healing, here Paul prays as part of the healing procedure, a precursor to the laying on of hands. By mentioning that Paul prayed first, Luke points to God as the source of Paul’s power.¹⁷ Since healing was accomplished through the laying on of hands, the prayer must have been a petition that God move in power through Paul, thus making the laying on of hands effective (cf. Acts 4:24–30). Paul took the time to seek personal empowerment before attempting a healing through the laying on of hands. That the only instances of the laying on of hands for healing in Acts are placed in the ministry of men who did not personally sit under the ministry

Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary (3^d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 239, “This gesture may have signified Saul’s recognition and welcome as a fellow believer as much as anything else, although it is also closely associated with his recovery of sight.” Cf. Simon Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles* (NTC 17; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 343.

¹⁵ Commentators have suggested the malady is Malta fever, which plagues its victims from four months to two years, cf. Stott, *Acts*, 395.

¹⁶ Some have suggested that Paul and Luke responded with medical treatment, cf. F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (rev. ed. NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 499–500; Charles Carter, and Ralph Earle, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Zondervan Commentary Series; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959), 416. It is more likely that Luke intends us to understand this as a healing summary, cf. Conzelmann, *Acts*, 223; Barrett, *Acts*, 2:1226; Haenchen, *Acts*, 715.

¹⁷ Barrett, *Acts*, 2:1226.

of Jesus is remarkable. As such, it implies that the laying on of hands had become a usual gesture for healing.¹⁸

The Significance of the Hand to Healing

Marvin Miller suggests that the laying on of hands is not so much a transfer of miraculous power which involves touching the affected part of the body, but rather more likely the “laying of both hands upon the head in a quasi-liturgical style.”¹⁹ His suggestion makes the laying on of hands into a symbolic designation of whom God is going to heal, rather than the transfer of power from the healer into the person. Miller’s position seems to miss the primitive nature of NT healing ministry. No “quasi-liturgical” process seems to be implied anywhere, as seen by the various methods utilized by both Jesus and the early church. Instead, an “effective gesture” seems to be a more relevant way to describe the laying on of hands in the NT.

Yet Miller does make a valid point. “To receive such healing is not so much to be the object of a certain technique as the beneficiary of divine grace...many of the kinds of action involved in the technique of contact are thus not really a description of the action between two persons, but of that between God and the recipient.”²⁰ Miller is correct, since nowhere is it implied that the apostles and disciples operate in their own power or somehow have a reservoir of power from the Holy Spirit they themselves can control. Instead, healing comes through prayer and is performed in the name of Jesus; nevertheless, God’s power still flows through the agency of human hands.

Along these lines the ministry of Jesus and the apostolic church come together. After Pentecost (Acts 2) and the healing of the beggar (Acts

¹⁸ Tannehill, *Luke-Acts*, 341–2, notes the laying on of hands demonstrates that “Jesus’ healing ministry still continues through his witnesses.”

¹⁹ Miller, “Miracles,” 94.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 94–5.

3), Luke records that the disciples were arrested and forbidden to preach in the name of Jesus (Acts 4). Subsequently the church gathered and prayed, “And now, Lord, look at their threats, and grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness, *while you stretch out your hand to heal*, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus” (Acts 4:29–30).²¹ While the phrase “stretch out your hand” is a common idiom for the use of power,²² here it appears as if the laying on of hands is being deliberately tied to the action of God, as if God himself were performing the laying on of hands. Further, healing was to be performed “in the name of Jesus” to make clear the connection between the laying on of hands, miracles, and the power of God.²³

Luke notes that God heard and answered their prayer. First came the immediate confirmation, “When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31). Luke follows by observing, “Through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people” (Acts 5:12 NKJV; cf. 14:3; 19:11).²⁴ In direct

²¹ James Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Narrative Commentaries; Valley Forge, Penn.: Trinity Press, 1996), 57–58, notes the careful balance being made between “word and action” in this passage as “the actions in view are healings, signs and wonders.”

²² So Haenchen, *Acts*, 227; Luke Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (SP 5; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1992), 85. Barrett, *Acts*, 1:247–8; 2:906–7.

²³ In the same way, Jesus himself is viewed in Acts as operating as an extension of God (2:22).

²⁴ Many translations drop the literal rendering of miracles being performed “through the hands of the apostles,” instead opting for a more interpretive, “the apostles were performing” (cf. \Barrett, *Acts*, 1:273). Kistemaker, *Acts*, 191, explains, “The literal translation has a typical Hebraic idiom that need not be translated. However, not the apostles but God heals the sick; the apostles serve as instruments in God’s hands.” While Kistemaker is technically correct, the overall flow of Acts seems to reveal Luke expects the reader to connect the prayer for God to “stretch out his hand” with God’s positive

response to the apostolic prayer, God performed “many signs and wonders among the people,” accomplished *through* the hands of the apostles. In other words, the apostolic ministry of healing was understood as being the direct extension of God himself working through the apostles—even through their very hands.²⁵ As G. Stählin observes,

The hands are present (so Acts 14:3; 19:11) literally and completely (different than in Acts 11:30; 15:23; cf. 7:35): the apostles heal by touch (Acts 3:7; cf. 9:41) or the imposition of their hands (cf. Acts 9:12, 17; 28:8) just like Jesus himself often did (cf. Lk. 4:40; 13:13 among other times) and thereby understood themselves as tools of the hand of God (Acts 4:30) (translation mine).²⁶

fulfillment by means of miracles performed through the hands of the apostles. Thus, to gloss over the literal rendering is to lose in translation important clues left by Luke as to the origination and source of apostolic power.

²⁵ Cf. Kistemaker, *Acts*, 170. Johnson, *Acts*, 85, notes the connection in Acts 4:30 with signs and wonders and the prophetic imagery of Moses.

²⁶ “Die Hände sind dabei (wie 14:3; 19:11) ganz wörtlich zu verstehen (also anders als 11:30; 15:23; vgl. 7:35): die Apostel heilen durch Berührung (3:7; vgl. 9:41) oder Auflegung (vgl. 9:12, 17; 28:8) ihrer Hände wie auch Jesus selbst des öfteren (vgl. Lk 4:40; 13:13 u.a.) und wissen sich dabei als Werkzeuge der ausgeredten Hand Gottes (4:30).” Gustav Stählin, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Das neue Testament Deutsch 5; Göttingen: Vandenhoe & Ruprecht, 1962), 86. González, “Ritual,” 4 n.6, believes that Luke manipulated his sources to demonstrate that God’s hand is working through the hands of the apostles: “The book of Acts has four accounts that deal indirectly with the practice of laying on of hands. The order in which they appear is significant as well. The first reference (4:23–31) is embedded in the disciples’ prayer shortly after Peter and John’s first release from prison. They pray that God will grant them boldness while he stretches forth his hand to heal and to perform signs and wonders through Jesus’ name. This first reference to God is undoubtedly programmatic for the development of the book itself and its subsequent fulfillment in the apostles’ ministry. Three accounts (5:12–16; 14:1–7; 19:11–12) relate to the previous prayer of the apostles. The texts demonstrate the

Thus, the interconnection between God, the healing ministry of Jesus, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the healing ministry of the apostles (Acts 5:12; 14:3; 19:11) is such that it is possible that Luke understood the laying on of hands as the means of transmitting the power of God in the same manner as Jesus (Acts 2:22), as if apostolic hands symbolized the very hands of Jesus in healing ministry, reminiscent of Jesus himself praying for the sick.²⁷

Extraordinary Miracles

There are two passages that relate “extraordinary miracles.”²⁸ After prayer for God to perform miraculous signs and wonders (Acts 4:30), Luke relates that the “apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders” (Acts 5:12). Luke continues, “As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter’s shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by” (Acts 5:15). Two key issues arise from the passage. First, did Luke believe that healing by touch extended to the very

positive response to the prayer. In these accounts, first Peter and later Paul are shown to be effective workers of signs and wonders as well as healers, specifically, by their hands. The inference is clear: healing acts of hand imposition are concrete expressions of God’s hand healing through the apostles’ ministry” (cf. González, “Ritual,” 196–7).

²⁷ Cf. Paul Senf, *Urchristentum: Heilkraft für Gläubige in Krankheitstagen* (2^d ed.; Marburg: Francke-Buchhandlung, 1954), 43, 65. Elderenbosch, *Handen*, 51, suggests that one is assured of physical solidarity with Christ through the laying on of hands, “In de oplegging der handen beleefde men de gemeenschap met Christus die zijn leven aan het onze verbonder heft en ons daardoor heft binnengeleid in een nieuwe aeon waarin genezing.”

²⁸ In Acts 19:11 Luke comments, “Δυνάμεις τε οὐ τὰς τυχοῦσας ὁ θεὸς ἐποίει διὰ τῶν χειρῶν Παύλου,” which translates literally, “Miracles that just do not happen, God did...” The phrase οὐ τὰς τυχοῦσας is a Hellenistic expression basically meaning uncommon, thus extraordinary. For discussion on the phrase *ou tas tuchousas*, see Bruce, *Greek Text*, 410; Conzelmann, *Acts*, 163; BDAG, 1019.

shadow of Peter, as if the shadow itself was a part of Peter?²⁹ If so, did Luke hold to magical concepts or did he portray Peter as a superior pagan, *Theios Anēr*, who could heal even with his shadow? In defining the difficulty, Luke Timothy Johnson observes, “The image of healing by sheer presence here is striking and perhaps even shocking . . . The divine *dynamis* is so powerfully present in Peter that it radiates automatically.”³⁰

Many ancient cultures use the same word for “shadow,” “soul,” and the “reflection of a person,” understanding little difference between them. As such, the shadow of a person can be damaged, hurting the person, or it can bless or harm those it touches.³¹ As P. W. Van der Horst summarizes: “The common element...is that the shadow is regarded as a person’s (or animal’s) soul, soul-substance, spiritual essence, spiritual double or whatever other term one may use to designate the vital power or life force. To be touched by a man’s shadow means to be in contact with his soul or his essence and to be influenced by that, whether it be for the better or for the worse.”³²

Other than the general observation that in Hellenistic literature the shadow can be either helpful or harmful, no clear parallels have been found in magical or pagan texts demonstrating a person’s shadow healing others. Johnson suggested that possibly the closest parallel that can be put forth from Hellenistic literature are inscriptions found at healing shrines such as

²⁹ Haenchen, *Acts*, 243, suggests that Luke actually believed that Peter’s shadow possessed healing power. For in-depth treatment see Barrett, *Acts*, 1:276–7; W. Bieder, “Der Petruschatten: Taufe 5:15,” *TZ* 16 (1960): 407–9; Johnson, *Acts*, 328–9; Kistemaker, *Acts*, 192–4. For a religio-historical analysis, see P.W. Van der Horst, “Peter’s Shadow: The Religio-Historical Background of Acts 5:15,” *NTS* 23 (1977): 204–12.

³⁰ Johnson, *Acts*, 95–96.

³¹ Van der Horst, “Shadow,” 204–12.

³² *Ibid.*, 207.

Epidaurus, where healings were claimed by those who were simply present in the shrine at the time of their healing.³³ Since Luke has carefully portrayed the gospel as superior to magic and pagan ideals in Acts 19:17–20, and without clear Hellenistic background to account for the healing power of Peter’s shadow, it seems prudent to look elsewhere to explain the origin of the passage.

Jewish sources are revealing. While healing by a shadow is not present in Jewish literature, the much later Babylonian Talmud does hold touch and “overshadowing” as equivalent. “Rather here is what you must derive from this. What does touching mean [in this circumstance]? [It means] overshadowing” (*b. Hul.* 125b).³⁴ While it cannot be known for sure, if first century Judaism held a similar understanding, a Jewish reader might not think it strange that the shadow of Peter was able to carry the same power and produce the same effect as his personal touch, both being deemed essentially the same. Thus Acts 5:15 may reveal similarity to Jewish understanding, and one does not need to look to pagan texts or make assumptions about magical beliefs in order to understand it.

³³ Johnson, *Acts*, 95–96. Van der Horst, “Shadow,” 209, points out that Pliny the Elder discussed in detail the medicinal or harmful properties possessed by the shadows of different trees (*Nat.Hist.* 17.18). However, while demonstrating that shadows (of trees) can be helpful, it is hard to believe that Luke borrowed or adapted the understanding here. In a different approach, Lake and Cadbury suggest that Luke took Mark’s account of Jesus healing through the tassels of his clothing (Mark 6:56), and placed it here, reworking the story into the healing power of Peter’s shadow, though their suggestion has gleaned little support. (*The Acts of the Apostles: Vol. 4: English Translation and Commentary in The Beginnings of Christianity: Part 1: The Acts of the Apostles* (5 vols.; eds. F. Jackson and Kirsopp Lake; London: Macmillan, 1922–1933), 54–55).

³⁴ The entire section of *b. Hul.* 125a–126b is devoted to discussing how touch and overshadowing are essentially the same thing. In similar fashion, a corpse can convey uncleanness through only its shadow (*b. ’Abod. Zar.* 48b; *b. Naz.* 52A; *b. Soṭah* 44A).

In reference to healing, as far as can be determined, the passage is unique, and explanation for it must be found within Luke's own Christian context. Luke previously had related that Peter himself vigorously argued that healing did not come through his own power or piety, but through the name of Jesus (Acts 3:12, 16).³⁵ Peter did not possess healing power, nor was it within Peter's shadow, but the ability to heal came directly from the presence and power of God whom Peter represented.³⁶ As God honored the faith of the crowds when they touched the tassels of Jesus' garment, so here God honors the faith of those whose hope is only to be touched by the shadow of Peter. Clear in both passages is that the faith behind the touch is as important as the touch itself, yet the touch, whether of a tassel or shadow, still was efficient in accomplishing healing.³⁷

Additionally, Luke may be attempting to make a subtle allusion to the overshadowing of God, since *episkiazō* is the same word he used to describe God's "overshadowing" of Mary in the conception of Jesus (Luke 1:35),³⁸ as well as for God's "overshadowing" presence at the transfiguration (Luke 9:34).³⁹ Apparently God's power and presence were perceived as radiating to the very fringes of his existence, even to his

³⁵ Paul Walaskay, *Acts* (Westminster Bible Companion; Louisville, Ken.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 63.

³⁶ Barrett, *Acts*, 1:276–7; Carter and Earle, *Acts*, 75; Kistemaker, *Acts*, 192–4; Tipei, "Hands," 147.

³⁷ While the Gentiles who were receiving healing seem to be acting in superstitious ways, the text does not represent Peter as holding to superstitious ways. With a different perspective, Walaskay, *Acts*, 63, postulates that Luke is attempting to connect with readers "who are outside the mainstream of early Judaism and Christianity—Gentiles who needed a display of miracles as an inducement to become believers." Cf. David Williams, *Acts* (NIBCNT 5; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1990), 103.

³⁸ Van der Horst, "Shadow," 211, muses, "If a shadow can damage or heal a person, why should the shadow of God not be able to impregnate a woman?"

³⁹ Cf. Stott, *Acts*, 306. Lampe, "Miracles," 175.

shadow, a presence Peter now represents.⁴⁰ In contrast, persons in the world have to endure danger and fear, often referred to in the Old Testament as the “shadow of death” (Ps 44:19; 102:11; Job 3:5; 16:16; Jer 13:16). Yet it was promised that God would bring his people out of the shadow of death and into his light (Ps 23:4; 107:10–15; Job 12:22; Isa 42:7; 49:9; Jer 2:6).

Matt 4:13–16 refers to Isa 9:1–2, noting that Christ had come to bring light to the Gentiles who were living in the “shadow of death.”⁴¹ It is possible that the early church utilized Isa 9 to justify its Gentile mission.⁴² If so, Luke has made the power of the gospel as released through the apostles here, into the overshadowing presence that brings life and restoration. Regardless, Luke reveals that God answered the prayer for divine power to accomplish signs and wonders, while in the process overshadowing the Gentiles through his apostles, thereby shining light upon their darkness and despair (cf. Acts 26:17–18).

Another difficulty is the implication of indiscriminate healings taking place apart from the proclamation of the gospel or the intentionality of Peter. Though, reminiscent of the ministry of Jesus (Mark 6:53–56; Matt 14:34–36), the crowds demonstrated faith through the effort made to arrange the sick so as to connect with Peter’s shadow.

In the second passage, Luke relates, “God did extraordinary miracles through [the hands of] Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them” (Acts 19:11–12).⁴³ Here Luke portrays healing

⁴⁰ Típei, “Hands,” 147; Barrett, *Acts*, 1:277. In the OT, it was desired to live under the shadow of the Almighty (Ps 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 91:1; Isa 51:16; Hos 14:7).

⁴¹ Hagner, *Matthew*, 1:72.

⁴² It appears that Luke was aware of the verse used in a Christological manner, as it was included in Zechariah’s prophecy (Luke 1:79), though there the passage defines the coming ministry of John the Baptist.

⁴³ Bert Peerbolte, “Pauline Miracle Stories,” 180–99, contends that the usage of a number of hapax legomena suggests Luke utilized traditional material that demonstrated Paul as a

power as being able to be disseminated to the sick through a mediating instrument, namely sweat-cloths,⁴⁴ which accomplished healing and exorcisms.⁴⁵ This is reminiscent of the usage of relics in the medieval church, causing some to question if Acts has crossed over into pagan understanding here.⁴⁶ Thus, I. Howard Marshall muses:

It is undeniably difficult to distinguish what is described here in verse 12 from primitive and crude beliefs in mana, i.e., in a quasi-physical power emanating from the healer and infecting his clothes so that these can be the vehicles of supernatural power. It is surprising that Luke, who is so

miracle worker. For in-depth treatment of the passage, see Haenchen, *Acts*, 561–3; Kistemaker, *Acts*, 685–7; David Gill and Conrad Gempf, *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting* (The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting 2; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 312–5.

⁴⁴ For discussion on the definition of the sweat-cloths, see T. Leary, “The ‘Aprons’ of St. Paul—Acts 19:12,” *JTSNS* 41 (1990): 527–9. Leary concludes that belt, rather than apron, is the correct understanding here.

⁴⁵ Exorcisms in the NT otherwise were performed through an authoritative command alone. Whether an exorcism ritual was performed along with the rags is not clear, though it seems Luke understands the rags alone were effective for exorcisms as well as healings. For in-depth treatment on exorcism see Todd Klutz, *The Exorcism Stories in Luke-Acts: A Sociostylistic Reading* (SNTSMS 129; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Sorensen, *Possession*; Twelftree, *Exorcist*; Charles Yeboah, “Demon Possession and Exorcism in the Context of Divine Providence in Luke-Acts (New Testament)” (PhD diss., Loyola University of Chicago, 1999).

⁴⁶ Hans-Josef Klauck, *Magic and Paganism in Early Christianity: The World of the Acts of the Apostles* (trans. Brian McNeil; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 98, contends, “It appears that the miraculous power is thought of in material terms, so that it can be ‘tapped’ from the person of the wonder-worker and stored for subsequent use. The cloths take on the function of the amulets and talismans which were so common in the magic of antiquity.” For a clear review of Klauck’s work, see Graham Twelftree, “Review of Hans-Josef Klauck, *Magic and Paganism in Early Christianity*,” *JTS* 53 (2002): 225–29.

critical of pagan magic, can allow that similar magical beliefs in a Christianized form were effective in the apostolic ministry. Perhaps we may suggest that God is capable of condescending to the level of men who still think in such crude ways.⁴⁷

On the other hand, Luke has made it clear these healings are “exceptional,” neither typical nor magical.⁴⁸ In fact, Luke gives no hint whatsoever that the practice was to be understood as quasi-superstitious, but instead clearly defines the source and effectiveness of the power as being from God himself.⁴⁹ Luke simply states, “*God did* extraordinary miracles *through the hands* of Paul.”⁵⁰ Luke understood this most “extraordinary” healing method to be through the hands of Paul (rather than through the

⁴⁷ Marshall, *Acts*, 310. Johnson, *Acts*, 340, also expresses surprise that Luke “betrays no embarrassment about combining the ‘word of God’ with such ‘popular religiosity.’” Though Williams, *Acts*, 332–3, suggests, “It may have been a case of God meeting the needs of these people at their own level of understanding... There is no suggestion that Paul ever encouraged or condoned what they were doing.” Cf. John Polhill, *Acts* (NAC 26; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 402.

⁴⁸ Stott, *Acts*, 306; Marshall, *Acts*, 310. Kee, *Miracle*, 215–6, strikes a balanced approach, “Operative here is an assumption, constitutive for magicians, that contact with a person of power, with a part of his body, or with something that has touched him, is an effective means of tapping that power. The healings as a whole, however, are set forth in Acts as essential features of the spread of the gospel in Jerusalem and the wider Mediterranean world, so that what might appear to be a magical feature—the healing effect of a passing shadow—is treated as part of the more traditional redemptive enterprise in Acts.” James Dunn further asserts, “The belief that spiritual power can be conveyed through physical means is at the root of Christian teaching on the sacraments and on healing ministry as well as the long tradition of relics within Christianity” (*Acts*, 259).

⁴⁹ Kistemaker, *Acts*, 686.

⁵⁰ Tannehill, *Luke-Acts*, 236–40, notes the similarities of Paul’s ministry with those of Jesus and Peter, suggesting that Luke is simply making Paul equivalent in power and ministry to Peter. Cf. Barrett, *Acts*, 1:276–7; Coppens, “Acts,” 405–38.

cloths themselves), and as such, the passage may imply nothing more than healing at a distance similar to the practice of Jesus.⁵¹ Similar to the healing with Peter's shadow, most likely the numinous power resided not in the sweat-cloths, but in the faith of those who took them to pray for the sick.⁵² Thus, Luke's purpose in the passage may be to demonstrate that the power of the apostles was greater than that of the magicians. As the immediately following story of the seven self-proclaimed Jewish exorcists demonstrates, it is no mere magical formula or power that can be used by anyone, but the power of the living God being released through those who possess the Spirit.⁵³

In these two passages Luke extends healing through touch to encompass even indirect contact with the source of power (e.g., Peter's shadow or Paul's sweat-cloths).⁵⁴ Regardless of whether or not one believes numinous power could be transferred through these means, clearly Luke

⁵¹ That the text emphasizes Paul as the agent of God's power minimizes the seemingly magical elements, cf. Edward Woods, *The "Finger of God" and Pneumatology in Luke-Acts* (JSNTSupp 205; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 164. Haenchen suggests that "by the hands of Paul" should be taken literally, as power being transmitted by direct physical contact through the laying on of hands (Haenchen, *Acts*, 561 n. 2; cf. Lake and Cadbury, *Acts*, 4:239). Here Haenchen divides the Lucan records of Paul's ministry into two parts, miracles through the laying on of hands and miracles through sweat-cloths, though to Haenchen they still are one and the same: "If anyone is considered to be actively filled with miraculous power, it does not make much difference whether he transmits it by a laying-on of hands himself or with the cloth which has touched his body." However, all this is moot as Haenchen, following Käsemann, believes that this is the Paul of legend, not the Paul of history who "has no such objectively controllable characteristics" and who has been "transfigured by legend" (Haenchen, *Acts*, 562–3).

⁵² Bruce, *Greek Text*, 410.

⁵³ Walaskay, *Acts*, 178–81.

⁵⁴ Tannehill, *Luke-Acts*, 237.

did. Here Luke demonstrates that touch, in all its various forms, can transmit divine power.

Healing in the Rest of the NT

Healing in the Pauline Epistles

It is clear that belief in the practice of healing was widespread in the early church, and the Pauline Epistles are no exception. For example, Paul himself maintains that he made the “demonstration of God’s power” the cornerstone of his ministry in Corinth, so that faith “should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God” (1 Cor 2:1–5). Paul further laid claim to apostleship: “The things that mark an apostle—signs, wonders and miracles—were done among you with great perseverance” (2 Cor 12:12). These “signs and miracles” were done “through the power of the Spirit” and resulted in the conversion of the Gentiles (Rom 15:17–19).

Not only did God work miracles through Paul, but he also bestowed the Spirit and worked miracles among the believers through faith (Gal 3:5). These miracles could take the form of “spiritual gifts” given by the Holy Spirit to certain individuals within the church for the ongoing release of divine healing (1 Cor 12). Yet apparently healing power was not absolutely effective in every circumstance. For even though the Gospels portray Jesus as always being effective in healing, apparently on occasion there were some people in the NT church who were not healed (1 Cor 11:29–30; 2 Cor 12:7–10; 2 Tim 4:20; Rev 2:22). Unfortunately, since Paul does not otherwise describe the methodology utilized to release these healing gifts, the Pauline corpus does not further our understanding of healing methodology.

Healing in the General Epistles

There are a number of references to healing in the General Epistles (Heb 2:4; 12:13; James 5:14–16; 1 Peter 2:24). The references in Hebrews and 1

Peter are not helpful for our understanding since no healing methodology is mentioned. On the other hand, James 5:14–16 instructs the infirm to call for the elders of the church.⁵⁵ That the ill must call the elders probably speaks of the severity of their condition, since it appears that they cannot make the journey to the church service personally.⁵⁶ When the elders arrive, it appears that the sick are to confess their sins (5:16), possibly in case they have committed a sin that is responsible for their illness.⁵⁷ The elders are then to pray over the person while anointing with oil. It is the prayer and anointing that is relevant to our present study.

The use of oil in healing was common in the ancient world (Isa 1:6; *ApMos* 9–13, *Gos. Nic.* 19; *Jos Ant.* 17.172; *Philo Somn.* 2.58; *Plato Menex.* 238; *Pliny Nat. Hist.* 23.39–40; *Seneca Ep.* 53.5; *Gos. Nic.* 19).⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Though we are not sure about the responsibility of the elders, Ralph Martin, *James* (WBC 48; Dallas: Word, 2002), 206, observes that pastors and elders were never mentioned together in the NT, and thus the elders may have carried out pastoral duties. Joseph Mayor, *The Epistle of St. James* (3^d ed. rev.; London: Macmillan, 1913), 232–4, suggests that the elders were able to discern the will of God and thereby know better how to pray for the sick.

⁵⁶ Not being able to attend services where the gift of healing operated might explain why it is not mentioned here. Then again, the churches James addressed may not have operated in the gifts of the Spirit in the same manner that the Pauline churches did.

⁵⁷ That sin was believed to cause sickness and even death in the NT is illustrated by 1 Cor 11:29–30. With a different interpretation, P. H. Alexander suggests the “weary” here are those “faltering in the face of persecution and affliction. If they have sinned against the community by yielding to the pressures of the rich, they will be forgiven if they confess their sins and ‘turn from the error of [their] way.’ ” (“James, Book of,” in *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (ed. Stanley Burgess, Gary McGee, and Patrick Alexander; Regency Reference Library; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 476–8.

⁵⁸ For additional examples see Peter Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 193; Luke Johnson, *The Letter of James* (AB 37A; Garden City: Doubleday, 1986), 331; Tipei, “Hands,” 147–8; Schlier, *TDNT* 1:230–232. Especially noteworthy is the first century Jewish work, *Life of Adam and Eve*, which mentions an oil of life flowing from the tree of mercy that provides

Nevertheless, as far as we know Jesus never utilized oil as a healing agent, though he was clearly aware of its medicinal usage (Luke 10:34). Instead Jesus directly healed the sick, usually through the laying on of hands. The closest we find to the use of oil by Jesus is his use of saliva on three occasions (Mark 7:32–37; Mark 8:22–26; John 9:1–6).

On the other hand, Mark 6:13 relates that the Twelve “anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.” The reference occurs in the commissioning and sending of the Twelve by pairs. First, Jesus gave the Twelve authority over unclean spirits (Mark 6:7), and when they returned Mark notes that they had healed many by anointing with oil (Mark 6:13). Why neither Matthew nor Luke included the anointing is puzzling. Matthew and Luke both mention that Jesus gave the disciples authority (power is added by Luke) to drive out demons and to cure diseases (Matt 10:1; Luke 9:1), though neither provides further detail relating to methodology. It is possible that they both assumed anointing was understood by their audience, and thereby did not think it necessary to detail it. It is also possible that they were not aware of any such practice at the time of their writing⁵⁹ and felt it would confuse their readers, though the reference in James makes the latter unlikely.⁶⁰ Exactly why Mark is the only evangelist to include anointing with oil is a mystery that cannot be answered with certainty.

That both Mark and James mention anointing, coupled with Paul’s mention of “gifts of healings” (1 Cor 12:9), likely demonstrates that there were different streams of healing technique utilized throughout the different

God’s healing and mercy, but will not be available until the end of time (*ApMos.* 9–13). The story was later retold in the fifth or sixth century *Gospel of Nicodemus*, but now the oil that raises the sick is available through the incarnation of the Son of God (*Gos. Nic.* 19).

⁵⁹ Likewise, Luke makes no mention of the practice of anointing with oil in Acts.

⁶⁰ That they both chose to follow Q instead is unlikely, as otherwise their accounts have little in common and thereby a Q origin is unlikely.

communities of faith in the first century. This would not be strange at all, seeing the wide variety that Jesus utilized in his ministry, although the accounts are unified because they all rest upon the foundational healing ministry of Jesus and include the understanding that healing was available from the Spirit through the church.

In a different line of reasoning, John Tipei suggests that the elders working together “*as a college*” shift the emphasis from a charismatic gift possessed by a few to healing through “their official position in the church... In other words, they are called not as healers but as intercessors.”⁶¹ If Tipei’s observation is accepted, then James provides an alternative method for healing, separate from empowered healers, whereby every sick believer attached to a believing community has access to healing power without the need of special charismatic gifts.

Some suggest that the oil should be understood as a medicinal agent,⁶² though that is doubtful since James places emphasis on the prayer of faith to raise the sick.⁶³ Instead the oil probably should be understood as a religious symbol of the presence of the Lord in healing.⁶⁴ The symbolic

⁶¹ Tipei, “Hands,” 149–50, notes that healing ministry is not restricted only to those with special gifts, or even those holding special office. “It is rather a privilege of each member of the church... The elders act as representative of the local congregation as a whole and their intercession for the restoration of the sick member expresses the concern and the plea of the entire local Christian community.”

⁶² Johnson, *James*, 331, 343; John Wilkinson, “Healing in the Epistle of James,” *SJT* 24 (1971): 338–40; idem *Bible and Healing*, 248–55. James Ropes suggests that James might be counteracting “the habit of seeking aid from superstitious, often heathenish, incantations and charms” (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1916), 305–6).

⁶³ Davids, *James*, 193; James Heugel, “‘Graunted of the Bysshop Honde:’ The Meaning and Uses of the Sacrament of Confirmation from Its Inception through the Middle Ages” (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2003), 19.

⁶⁴ Gary Shogren, “Will God Heal Us—A Re-Examination of James 5:14–16a,” *EvQ* 61/2 (1989): 99–108; France, *Mark*, 250; Douglas Moo, *The Letter of James* (Pillar NTC;

meaning has been variously described as consecration and election (common in the OT for the anointing of kings and priests), good favor and joy, the presence of God to heal, or the symbolic presence of the Holy Spirit to heal. The last seems most plausible, as the usage is found elsewhere in the NT (Acts 10:38; 1 John 2:20, 27; cf. Isa 61:1).⁶⁵

Most importantly, the anointing with oil is to be accompanied with prayer. The elders are instructed to pray *over* (*epi*) the sick (rather than pray *for* them) as a means whereby the elders of the church can confidently beseech the Lord for healing. Since the laying on of hands is conspicuously absent, it has been suggested the church no longer deemed it necessary and therefore the rite should not be read back into the text.⁶⁶ On the other hand, anointing likely implies touch, and the idea of praying *over* an individual leaves open the possibility that hands were laid on the sick when the prayer was offered.⁶⁷

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 238–42; Guelich, *Mark*, 323.

⁶⁵ For an in-depth discussion on this passage see Ralph Martin, *James* (WBC 48; Dallas: Word, 2002), 208–15; Tipei, “Hands,” 151–2. For the view that anointing is a sacramental vehicle of divine power see Martin Dibelius, *James* (Hermeneia; rev. Heinrich Greeven; ed. Helmut Koester; trans. Michael Williams; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 252; Davids, *James*, 193.

⁶⁶ Sophie Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James* (HNTC; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 230; Wilkinson, “James,” 326–45. Dibelius, *James*, 252, suggests the prayer is for deliverance of a demon.

⁶⁷ Davids, *James*, 193; Gunther, “Healing,” 171; Hogan, *Healing*, 293–4; Kahl, *Miracle Stories*, 119; Martin, *James*, 207; Mayor, *James*, 170; Moo, *James*, 238; Senf, *Urchristentum*, 34, 60; Tipei, “Hands,” 152–3; Ysebaert, *Terminology*, 259. Davids, *James*, 193, observes that while the participle indicates prayer rather than oil is the primary act, the construction reads naturally with the anointing being part of the prayer-act. For different arrangement of the prayer/anointing see Ropes, *James*, 305; Johnson, *James*, 331.

Healing in the Long Ending of Mark

Mark 16:9–20 probably was added between the early to mid-second century to provide a more satisfactory ending to Mark’s account.⁶⁸ Important for the present study is Mark 16:18c, “They will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.” Nowhere else in the NT is the formal laying on of hands specified or seen as *the primary means* of healing procedure; the unambiguous reference here to the laying on of hands for healing demonstrates a development of thought towards the full acceptance of a formal gesture for that purpose. Consequently, the passage likely demonstrates the reality that the laying on of hands was considered the primary healing procedure in at least one sector of the early church. Regardless, as the passage makes clear, healing as an ongoing ministry of the church was practiced well beyond the first century.

Concluding Thoughts

The apostles and New Testament church continued the ministry of healing in much the same manner as Jesus had done. That they did implies they did not understand healing as unique to the ministry of Jesus, but that healing was part of the overall benefits of the kingdom of God they were proclaiming.

While it is true that some, such as Peter and Paul, are shown to have extraordinary effectiveness in releasing healing, passages such as James 5 (discussed above) and 1 Cor. 12, (not discussed but which mentions “gifts of healings” as part of the gifts of the Spirit available to all Spirit-filled

⁶⁸ For dating and discussion of textual issues see Steven Cox, *A History and Critique of Scholarship Concerning the Markan Endings* (Lewiston: Mellen Biblical Press; 1993); Paul Mirecki, “Mark 16:9–20: Composition, Tradition and Redaction” (ThD diss., Harvard University, 1986).

believers), demonstrate that a healing was believed to be available within every local community of believers.

Since healings and miracles are not touted as “proof” of the gospel, but are deemed the result of the demonstrated power of God available as part of kingdom blessings, it seems to me that the ministry of healing should not be considered as having ceased for good. Instead, the same kingdom power the early church exercised is available to us today through the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.

Jacques Maritain and the Intelligibility of Universal Human Rights

Jeremy Wallace, D.Min.¹

ABSTRACT:

This article examines the thought and influence of Jacques Maritain, specifically his application of traditional natural law theory to the matter of universal human rights. The author shows how Maritain's formulation of Thomistic Natural Law can account not only for human rights in general, but universal human rights in particular. Whereas traditional natural law can account for universal human rights, rival theories such as legal positivism, New Natural Law, and Empirical Natural Law each fall short.

Introduction

Perhaps no event in human history has had as great an impact on a global scale as the Great Wars of the twentieth century. In the wake of devastation incurred by the Great Wars, people recast their vision toward the value of human life. Not long after World War II, pains were undertaken by nations to collaborate and explore the feasibility of a unified international body to draft a Declaration of Universal Human Rights (DUHR). What began as an inquiry as to its plausibility became a reality in 1948. Whereas discussion of "rights" is not a new discussion, rooted in centuries of philosophical and legal thought, contemporary American society swims in the sea of "rights talk." Max Hocutt claims America has become an "entitlement culture" and argues that "talk of rights has gotten completely out of hand."² This burgeoning "rights consciousness" has, in his view, become unbalanced, for

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² Max Hocutt, "Rights: Rhetoric versus Reality." *The Independent Review*. 2012 (17, 1) 51.

now “rights lists have become wishlists.”³ So, what are the limits of “rights talk”? What role can and should human rights play in society today? How can one make sense of “rights” and what further is needed such that the notion of universal human rights is not only coherent and compelling, but truly intelligible? These questions and more will garner the primary focus of this present essay.

In search of a coherent explanation and justification of universal human rights, scholars in the fields of jurisprudence and moral philosophy have posited divergent theories. *This essay seeks to determine which theory best explains the justification of universal human rights*; in other words, which view, if any, can provide a consistent, coherent, and intelligible rationale for how “universal human rights” can justifiably be considered “rights,” and how these rights can truly be “universal” in scope? The essay will, therefore, first examine the life, thought, and influence of Jacques Maritain in the realization of the DUHR, followed by analysis of his Natural Law (NL) theory and how NL has historically answered the question of Natural Rights (NR). After alternatives to NL are examined, the author will demonstrate how these alternatives have, to some degree, explanatory power in addressing the functional dimensions of law making, yet fail to provide the sufficient grounds for what is necessary to justify the *universality* of human rights, which alone can be vindicated in Traditional NL (TNL) theory.

The Life and Thought of Jacques Maritain

Jacques Maritain was born in Paris in 1882. He grew up viewing life as basically hopeless. As a young adult he, and his new fiancé Raïssa Oumansav, made a suicide pact together, promising to one another that if they did not find meaning in life within the next year, they would end their lives on the anniversary of their pact. Within that year, however, they both

³ Ibid., 51.

were persuaded by León Bloy that life indeed has meaning, and preeminently in Jesus Christ. Filled with faith that Christianity was true they subsequently were received into the Roman Catholic Church in 1906.⁴

Maritain enjoyed a long, prolific career as a philosopher teaching in numerous Institutes, Colleges and Universities from 1912 till 1960, whereupon Jacques and his wife Raïssa returned to France. Not long after the death of his wife, he joined a religious order in Toulouse, the Little Brothers of Jesus, where he lived and died in 1973⁵. In addition to his prolific teaching career, Maritain composed a voluminous body of published works that notably include *The Degrees of Knowledge* (1932), *True Humanism* (1936), *The Rights of Men and Natural Law* (1942), *The Person and the Common Good* (1947), and *Man and the State* (1951). Focused mostly on social action, he “began to develop the principles of a liberal Christian humanism and defense of natural rights.”⁶ Just prior to World War II, he and Raïssa fled to North America, where he taught first in Toronto, then Princeton and Columbia. Following WWII, he dedicated much of his attention to assisting in the efforts made by the United Nations to draft a Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Concerning this, William Sweet adds, “in December 1944, Maritain was named French Ambassador to the Vatican (serving until 1948), and was actively involved in a number of diplomatic activities, including discussions that led to the drafting of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).”⁷ Maritain’s legacy is inextricably linked to the role he played both in terms of the content of the UDHR and assistance in its final incarnation. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

⁴ Maritain, Jacques. *Natural Law: Reflections on Theory and Practice*. St. Augustine’s Press, 1952.

⁵ Ibid., 7.

⁶ Ibid., 5.

⁷ William Sweet, as cited in Maritain, 6.

(UNESCO) assembled a committee to examine the feasibility of drafting the UDHR and, as Andrew Woodcock points out, the

committee was made up of some of the leading scholars and jurists of the day, and it has been suggested that it is largely due to the foundations laid by this group that the declaration ultimately came into existence. . . . [I]f the drafting process had stalled at this point, and it had been established that there could be no agreement between the stakeholders on the question of content, then the process could not have gone on. Jacques Maritain played a significant role at this early stage. He was a key figure in the UNESCO committee, and prepared the introduction to the UNESCO report on the proceedings of the committee. [He] made a significant submission to the committee in his individual capacity . . . [and] the ultimate “tone” of the Declaration *reflects the substantial contribution made by Maritain at this genesis of its creation.*”⁸

The significant linkage between the content of the UDHR and Maritain’s thought can hardly be understated. As Woodcock points out, as “an unashamed Thomist . . . he was a strong exponent of the work of Thomas Aquinas. The dominant theme in his work tends to be on the issue of the rights of man, and the [sic.] human dignity, as it arises from natural law, rather than on the duties of man as a social animal.”⁹ The UDHR is not therefore the product of legal positivism or alternative natural law theories, but the fruit Thomistic Natural Law. Why does this matter? It is relevant

⁸ Woodcock, Andrew. “Jacques Maritain, Natural Law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” *Journal of the History of International Law*, vol. 8, 2006, 247.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 256.

because “the declaration was perhaps the clearest example in the twentieth century of a document which has the appearance of a legislative instrument bearing the hallmarks of a natural law document . . .”¹⁰ On the specifics of NL theory, and Maritain’s version of it, this essay turn shall now turn.

Natural Law and Natural Rights

Since discussion of “natural rights” is a legitimate discussion to have, and *universal* rights in particular, one must ask a pertinent question: On *what* is the notion of “natural rights” based? Historically, the response has been that “natural rights” proceed from “natural law.” But what is Natural Law? What is its theoretical origination? Which major figures have promoted and advanced NL theory?

Andrew Woodcock argues that “The high watermark of classical natural law theory is to be found in Cicero, the first century lawyer, statesman and philosopher. Cicero approached the identification of true law on the basis of the assumption that the world was the work of a divine entity.”¹¹ Centuries before Cicero, however, philosophers like Plato and Aristotle advanced theories of NL, laying significant groundwork for discussion in the field. The role Cicero played in the development of NL should not be overlooked. “Borrowing from both Plato and Aristotle, Cicero focused on the essentially social nature of man, to determine the content of law. That is, he considered the social institutions created by Man, and proposed that the content of law must be to promote the interaction of man, and to protect the institutions he has created.”¹² The matter of humanity’s *preservation* is important to the theory. Woodcock underscores how “the principle of preservation of the order of man is the single most important

¹⁰ Ibid., 248.

¹¹ Ibid., 249.

¹² Ibid., 249.

principle governing the determination of law, which can be identified from the works of all natural lawyers following upon Cicero.”¹³ Another key figure in the development of NL theory is Thomas Aquinas, the Dominican scholastic of the thirteenth century A.D. In his *Summa Theologiae*, he writes:

Now among others, the rational creature is subject to Divine Providence in a more excellent way, by being provident both for itself and for others. Therefore, it has a share of the eternal reason, whereby it has a natural inclination to its own proper act and end; and this participation of the eternal law in the creature is called the natural law . . . The light of natural reason, whereby we discern what is good and what is evil, which is the function of the natural law, is nothing other than the participation of the eternal law in the rational creature.¹⁴

In Aquinas’ view, God as creator has ordered the cosmos and everything he has created to function in a rational, particular, ordered way. Thus, everything in creation is ordered to the end (*telos*) to which God has brought it into being. As he states elsewhere, “everything that is contrary to the law of nature is a sin because it is contrary to the law of nature.”¹⁵

Expounding upon NL, Ralph Masiello emphasizes that “The reality of the natural law is manifested in the natural tendency of man to eschew violence and pursue peace. This spontaneous quest for justice, friendship,

¹³ Ibid., 249.

¹⁴ *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 92, 2, as cited in Ralph J. “Some Brave Ideas on an Old Rule of Law: The Natural Law According to Jacques Maritain - Jacques Maritain on the Natural Law and Human Rights.” *Catholic Lawyer*, vol. 25, no. 1, Winter 1979, 4.

¹⁵ Ibid., 6.

enlightenment, everything that is necessary for the perfection of the person, it is rooted in man's will.”¹⁶ This “natural tendency” for humanity to “eschew violence” and to “pursue peace” is viewed to be *in itself* a kind of empirical evidence of the “law” which makes these propensities consistent, evident, and consistently evident. This is precisely what Aquinas addresses by his reference to the “natural inclination” of man as predisposed toward his nature. Why? Because “a natural inclination is a tendency of man to function according to the normal capacity of a power.”¹⁷ Humans consistently behave *in a certain way*, and as they do, they demonstrate there is distinction evident between the “laws of men” and the “moral laws” which supersede them. It is precisely these “moral laws” which compel many to abide by the “laws of men” and to conform to them. As Woodcock points out, “natural law in its classical formulation is perhaps best stated in the Ciceronian maxim *lex iniustia non est lex* (‘an unjust law is not law’). This is perhaps the most simplistic statement of the theory, and it is arguably overly simplistic.”¹⁸ This has led some to highlight what is called the “due care standard” with respect to commonly held convictions regarding basic human ethical behavior. In the words of Charles P. Nameth,

An imprecise doctrine, the due care standard governs human conduct, demanding that every person act reasonably in his journey through the temporal world and entitling him similar treatment in return. It is generally agreed that individuals do not have a duty to anticipate others’ negligence, and thus, absent special circumstances, persons may assume, and act accordingly, that other members of society will use ordinary care. The shadow of the natural law may be seen within these

¹⁶ Masiello 1.

¹⁷ Ibid., 6.

¹⁸ Woodcock, 249.

lines, for man is thought of as good and is expected to be directed to it.¹⁹

Nameth's commentary accentuates the basic assumption made by humans to be free to live as "they are entitled" to in their self-determinative pursuits. This "sense of entitlement" directly addresses the notion of "rights," and universal ones at that. This is pointedly significant, because "All legal standards recognize that there is a higher order, a design in which men govern and are governed by just measure. This concept is embodied in the natural law. The rights to life, personal freedom and property are not legislative inventions; they are merely reflections on the Supreme rule."²⁰ As Ralph McKinnon so eloquently puts it, it is "evidenced that laws are made, not discovered except in the natural principles in which they are ultimately grounded."²¹

Not all scholars believe the notion of "human rights" to be all that clear. As Max Hocutt retorted, "the phrase human rights is ambiguous between (1) rights that are presumed to belong to human beings naturally as against rights belonging to them as members of various societies and (2) rights that human beings are presumed to have as against rights supposedly belonging to animals, plants, or inanimate objects."²² Masiello echoes the challenge of "human rights" rhetoric, particularly their grounding: "The crucial problem relating to human rights today, over and above an overriding sense of uncertainty as to the true foundation of human rights, is the confusion of surrogate rights entrusted to the state with the natural

¹⁹ Nemeth, 9.

²⁰ Ibid., 8.

²¹ McKinnon, in Nemeth 8.

²² Hocutt 51, footnote 3.

rights, or the relegation of natural rights to acquired rights.”²³ Since political legal theory and moral philosophy are replete in virtually every culture, one must consider the alternatives to the TNL view.

Rival Theories to Traditional Natural Law

If a person is not inclined to embrace TNL, what alternative theories may be embraced? Some scholars embrace a theory called *legal positivism*, others advocate a form of *new natural law* theory, and yet others contend for a mere “empirical natural law.” The author of this essay shall address each of these in turn.

Logical positivism is “the view that legal standards are merely social conventions and do not reflect a universal moral law.”²⁴ In other words, every culture establishes particular behavioral norms and as such these norms become implicit regulations for how people in these cultures “should” behave. The apparent “moral laws” serve as a functional “law” as they determine the ideal behavioral standard in that particular culture. Not all laws, however, pertain to moral categories. In the words of Leslie Green,

. . . legal positivism, denies [the claim of natural law that laws are grounded in an essentially moral enterprise] insisting that there is no necessary connection between law and morality, at least none that guarantees that every full-blooded legal system will have some positive moral worth. Law is just an institutionalized mode of rule application, rules being identified by considerations of social fact and without recourse to moral arguments.²⁵

²³ Masiello, 7.

²⁴ Cowen and Spiegel, 457.

²⁵ Green, 206.

Distinction needs to be made here between the laws a government may pass, and a judge's interpretation of the law in its application, for "to a positivist, a theory of law and a theory of proper adjudication are different enterprises. Law often gives judges the power to decide whether a certain delay is 'unreasonable,' whether a wage rate is 'fair,' whether procedures accord with 'fundamental justice,' and so on."²⁶ If legal positivism can arrive at a cogent explanation for NL as referring to laws produced by natural, albeit rational animals, the case, it seems, can be made that these local (as opposed to universal) conventional rules are in fact a kind of NL. Such normative behavioral rules are simply naturally produced by natural entities. Still, the question of how one may distinguish between "morals" and "laws" remains. "Certain exponents of positivism have sought a complete separation of law and morals. . . [For instance,] Justice Black believed that the natural law had no place in legal reasoning and felt that the Supreme Court should abandon it as an 'incongruous excrescence on our constitution.'"²⁷ Hence, it appears that legal positivism can account for some measure of standardization concerning localized communally compulsory behavioral expectations, yet it cannot, and does not, make a case for universal NL.

What does New Natural Law (NNL) theory bring to the table? The roots of NNL are rooted in TNL theory. As Maritain once claimed (representing the Thomistic tradition), "man's right to existence, to personal freedom, and to the pursuit of the perfection of moral life, belongs, strictly speaking, to natural law."²⁸ Aquinas maintained that there were two levels involved in the Natural Law: (1) the ontological ground for natural law, and (2) the epistemological (or "gnoseological") dimension related to *knowledge of* the natural law. It is precisely the aim of NNL theorists to

²⁶ Ibid., 208.

²⁷ Nameth, 11.

²⁸ Maritain, 65.

contemporize Thomistic Natural Law such that the first level is deemed irrelevant, hence atheists can find common ground with NNL, since human reasoning about normative human behavior is possible.

Shalina Stilley unpacks some NNL distinctives: “New natural law theorists claim that just as principles of speculative reason are not derived from other principles but are *per se nota*, so too is the first principle of practical reason. In addition, they claim that since there are self-evident goods, it is possible to grasp the basic precepts or Oughts of natural law without deducing them from facts about human nature.”²⁹ If indeed certain goods are “self-evident,” one is still left to wonder *why* they are self-evident. Nonetheless, NNL advocates contend the starting place must be self-evident goods, from which one deliberates to more complex levels of moral reasoning. On this, George Khushf highlights that, “Generally, new natural law theorists claim that we reason from self-evident basic goods to that sense of the whole meaning of life.”³⁰ This points to what is called “practical reasoning.” How does this type of reasoning work? “Practical reasoning starts with the self-evident basic goods, specifies these, moves to second-order regulation of their pursuit (and this feeds back on the specification), and then at the tail end of the process comes to a sense of ‘integral fulfillment,’ which is itself specified and iteratively refined over the whole of life.”³¹ The process of NL reasoning for NNL is, then, one which builds from *practical reasoning* to *integral fulfillment*. Khushf demonstrates that at least four distinct levels are entailed in NNL:

If we take for granted what new natural law theorists say about practical reasoning, then: at the first level, practical reasoning orients an agent toward basic goods and regulates

²⁹ Stilley, 141.

³⁰ Khushf, 251.

³¹ Khushf 251.

how such goods are to be pursued; at the second level, a general theory might be worked out about what is going on at this first level; at the third level, an account might be given of the nature of the accessibility of claims associated with either of these first two levels to an agent or agents who may ask about the grounds for holding any of the claims to be true. Finally, even if we conclude that some set of claims is rationally accessible (whatever we may mean by this), we have a tricky relation between those beliefs about rational accessibility and any belief about what will, in fact, be the case . . .³²

Khushf does well to highlight the tension NNL faces in the identification of “what is knowable” and what in fact “will be the case” in certain circumstances. When it comes to NNL, therefore, it appears clear that its starting point is the very fact of human acknowledgement of self-evident goods, continuing via practical reasoning to integral fulfillment.³³

Finally, what can be said about a so-called “empirical natural law” view? Max Hocutt makes the case for an “empirical natural law,” one that

³² Khushf, 246.

³³ Much more could be elaborated here. Note what David Elliot contends when he states that NNL theorists “insist that prior to any moral consideration whatsoever, practical reason must be aware of the good the pursuit of which will result in moral considerations, but whose sheer awareness itself is distinct from such considerations. This is the level at which practical reason self-evidently knows Aquinas’ first principle of practical reason: ‘Good is to be done and pursued, and evil avoided.’ The idea is that prior to choice human beings find themselves directed towards various goods the realization of which does not merely lead to happiness or flourishing, but constitutes it. These goods are considered to be intrinsic to all human persons, and as such are spoken of by Finnis as ‘underived’ and ‘basic’. They are ‘underived’ in the sense that the goodness of the goods does not need to be proven by speculative reason because anyone who reflects upon their own practice understands them to be self-evidently good without the need of argument” (Elliot 36).

is evolutionarily tenable to think that moral norms are the byproduct of biological programming in human DNA. Every tribal people, according to Hocutt, would have embraced communal duties which, in turn, are passed on not simply in one's oral history, but one that "suggests that an instinct for closely knit tribal communalism is probably built into the human genome and embedded in the human brain; as the saying goes, it's in our DNA."³⁴ To be certain, this view should be taken seriously. To this he adds, "Furthermore, this hypothesis is confirmed by the fact that human beings everywhere yearned for the security of the tribally based communal existence that their ancestors enjoyed for many millenia. This yearning helps to explain socialist distain of personal Liberty and private property, concepts once pregnant in England and its colonies, if now very much in decline there."³⁵ His concluding argument is both clear and forceful:

Rights—moral as well as legal—are constituted by social conventions. Moral rights are constituted by moral conventions, legal rights by legal conventions. Under both kinds of conventions, some people have rights because other people have duties, and others have duties because the members of their society make a practice of enforcing them. Therefore, that a right exists means that it has protection in the form of regular enforcement of the duties associated with it. This explanation holds whether the topic is official rights of law or unofficial rights of morality and etiquette. Legal rights exist under rules of law, so they enjoy the protections of government. Moral rights (and rights of etiquette) exist under informal customs and enjoy the protection of ordinary members of society. Without official protections, no legal

³⁴ Hocutt, 60.

³⁵ Ibid., 60-61.

rights exist; and without unofficial protections, no moral rights exist. It follows that all rights, legal or moral, are man-made.³⁶

John Hasnas, another advocate of empirical natural rights, admits from the outset that morals and rights are products of humanity and need not be grounded in a transcendent source. “The rights I have described . . . are not inherent in human beings and do not spring from human nature or fundamental moral principles.” He goes on to explain, “They are certainly not ‘natural’ in the sense of not having been created by ‘human action.’ Although not consciously created by any human mind, they depend on human interaction for their existence. Thus, although they are ‘the result of human action, but not the execution of any human design,’ they are indeed the creation of human beings.”³⁷

If all rights and laws are man-made, as Hocutt and Hasnas assert, one is left to ask, “Should this theory be called ‘empirical natural laws rather than ‘empirical natural *law*’? The use of the singular *law*, although helpful linguistically, may give the strong impression that NL would apply to *all* humans *everywhere*. This, however, does not logically follow from the case made by Hocutt or Hasnas. More on this to come. Attention now will turn to Maritain and his adumbrations of Thomistic NL theory.

Maritain’s Application of Traditional Natural Law

Maritain stayed well within the bounds of TNL but helped to flesh out much of Aquinas’ thought so as to be understood and applied within a twentieth-century post-WWII context. To understand a Maritainian NL theory, one must appreciate his emphasis on the nature of “true humanity.” This view

³⁶ Hocutt, 63.

³⁷ Hasnas, 134.

emphasizes a human as both an “individual” as well as a “person.” Andrew Woodcock provides a useful summary:

In order to understand [Maritain’s] formulation of natural law, it is essential to appreciate Maritain’s distinction between personality and individuality. The concept of individuality is derived primarily from the work of Aquinas, and is based upon the proposition that all things of matter have a purpose. The consequence of this is that everything of matter has a function, and must fit in as a portion of the total physical whole. Therefore, individuality tends to describe the position of man as a fraction of the totality of mankind. Conversely, the concept of ‘personhood’ is much more complex, and represents a whole in itself. The idea of personhood is something separate from the material; ‘it refers to the highest and deepest dimensions of being.’ The person is the vehicle for the exposition of human intelligence, which is the high point of human development, and which makes humanity separate and superior to the rest of creation. The person is therefore a whole in itself. As a whole, it is able to communicate with others, and this, then is the basis for community.³⁸

Here, Woodcock explains how Maritain’s starting point centers on the *nature of man*, that is, humanity’s *ontology*. He adds, with “respect to the ontological element, the first assumption which may be made is twofold; firstly, man has certain ends, or a role in the world, and secondly, that as a creature with the gift of intelligence, man is capable of ascertaining those

³⁸ Woodcock, 257.

ends.”³⁹ The relevance of this cannot be stressed enough, for everything mankind does comes out of his nature. Further, the whole notion of NL, according to Maritain, rests on the premise of man’s nature. In his own words he states, “the natural law of all beings existing in nature is the proper way in which, by reason of their specific nature and specific ends, they achieve fullness of being in their behavior.”⁴⁰

A significant function of human nature revolves around a human’s capacity to cogitate, both in what Maritain calls “inclination” (by way of Aquinas) and “conceptual reasoning.” In *Natural Law*, Maritain indicates that “the formal medium by which we advance in our knowledge of the regulations of Natural Law is not the conceptual work of reason, but rather those inclinations to which the practical intellect conforms in judging what is good and what is bad . . . The notion of natural knowledge through inclination is basic to the understanding of Natural Law, for it brushes aside any intervention of human reason as a creative factor in natural law.”⁴¹ By “inclination” Maritain means something along the lines of a “predisposition,” a “moral propensity,” or a “practical intuition.” This, he claims, is part of man’s nature as according with Eternal Law, rooted in Divine Reason. He explains how morality and human reason presuppose God as their foundation:

. . . uncreated Reason, the reason of the Principle of Nature, is the only reason at play not only in *establishing* Natural Law (by the very fact that it creates human nature), but in *making Natural Law known*, through the inclinations of this very nature to which human reason listens when it knows natural law. And it is precisely because Natural Law depends

³⁹ Ibid., 257.

⁴⁰ Maritain, 29.

⁴¹ Ibid., 43.

only on Divine Reason that it is possessed of a character naturally sacred, and binds man in conscience, and is the prime foundation of human law, which is a free and contingent determination of what Natural Law leaves undetermined, and which obliges by virtue of Natural Law.⁴²

In recapitulation, therefore, Maritain's NL holds that mankind has a nature which simultaneously contains a predisposition toward moral inclinations (by virtue of his nature) as well as the ability to reason about those very inclinations *cum eo* (after the fact). The moral inclinations constitute a kind of "practical reason," such that a person has immediate access to knowledge of what is good. Maritain states, "my contention is that the judgments in which Natural Law is made manifest to practical Reason do not proceed from any conceptual, discursive, rational exercise of reason; they proceed from that *connaturality* or *congeniality* through which what is consonant with the essential inclinations of human nature is grasped by the intellect as good; what is dissonant, as bad."⁴³

Reason itself, says Maritain, is grounded in Divine Reason, and *ordered* reason, at that. This very "ordered-ness" of Eternal Law makes Natural Law intelligible, for law *as such* presupposes order. Order is discernable in all law. "That which defines law is reason, intelligence, because there is an order. It is reason that can make order, and which is itself order. Law presupposes an ordination of reason for the common good. The community, then, is the subject of the law, while the good of this community is the end or purpose of the law."⁴⁴

How exactly do NL and NR relate one to one another? Somewhat surprisingly, Maritain seldom defined what he meant by "rights" within his

⁴² Ibid., 22.

⁴³ Ibid., 20.

⁴⁴ Maritain, 44.

writing. In an unpublished paper entitled “The Philosophical Foundations of Natural Law,” he defined what he meant by a human “right” in stating the following:

A right is a requirement that emanates from a self with regard to something which is understood as *his* due, and of which the other moral agents are obliged in conscience not to deprive him. The normality of functioning of the creature endowed with intellect and free will implies the fact that this creature has duties and obligations; it also implies the fact that this creature possesses rights, by virtue of his very nature—because he is a self with whom the other selves are confronted, and whom they are not free to deprive of what is due him. And the normality of functioning of the rational creature is an expression of the order of divine wisdom.⁴⁵

Elsewhere Maritain connects NL with rights. “How could we understand human rights if we had not a sufficiently adequate notion of natural law?”, Maritain inquires. “The same Natural Law which lays down our most fundamental duties, and by virtue of which every law is binding, is the very law which assigns to us our fundamental rights.”⁴⁶ On this view, rights as “universal human rights” are not only warranted, but *to be expected*. The Eternal Law which grounds NL also grounds universal human rights (UHR). For rights to be universal, they must find their source in a Grand Orderer of the nature of humankind.

In other words, there is no right unless a certain order—which can be violated in fact—is inviolably required by what

⁴⁵ Maritain, 60; footnote 27.

⁴⁶ Maritain, 58.

things are in their intelligible type or their essence, or by what the nature of man is, and is cut out for: in order by virtue of which certain things like life, freedom, work are due to the human person, an existent who is endowed with a spiritual soul and free will. Such an order, which is not a factual datum in things, but demands to be realized by them, and which imposes itself upon our minds to the point of binding us in conscience, existing things in a certain way, I mean as a requirement of their essence.”⁴⁷

In sum, Maritain employed Thomistic NL theory consistently in his own thinking about NL and NR. His insistence that the grounds for NL, as well as “conceptual reasoning” about it, are equally important to the whole endeavor of making the case for UHR. In the final section of this essay, the failures of NL’s rival theories in providing sufficient grounds for UHR will be articulated.

The Intelligibility of the Universal Human Rights

Thus far, the author of this paper touched on (1) the life and thought of Jacques Maritain, (2) Natural Law and Natural Rights, (3) Alternatives to TNL, and (4) Maritain’s application of TNL. Focus will now be given to the shortcomings in alternative theories to TNL in satisfying the preconditions for the intelligibility of UHR. First, NNL will be addressed, then legal positivism, and finally, empirical NL.

Contra NNL. One of the salient questions this essay centers on is this: Which theory can best make the case for the universality of human rights? Deriving from TNL theory, NNL adherents make a strong case for how humans can navigate toward moral and ethical behavior by starting from self-evident goods and extrapolating from these toward a place

⁴⁷ Maritain, 61.

deemed “integral fulfillment.” In strong criticism against NNL, Khushf claims the following:

On the premises of new natural law theory, the capacity for practical reasoning and the use of that capacity is logically, ontologically, and temporally prior to any awareness of the truth of the theory. Satisfying these conditions for practical reasoning is not sufficient for development of the theory. In fact, many people reason practically yet are not able to explicitly articulate the first principle, let alone the full theory. Appreciation of this distinction between rational accessibility of the theory and rational accessibility of the principles posited by the theory is important for clarifying the nature of the claim new natural law theorists make about the direct rational accessibility of the principles to all rational agents. They are claiming that *all agents are aware of the principles and they deploy them when they reason practically*. However, at the second-order level, agents may not be aware that they are aware of the principles and how they are deploying them.⁴⁸

An important take-away from Khushf’s critique is simply that NNL makes a fatal assumption that agents “are aware of the principles and they deploy them when they reason practically.” Khushf astutely points out that *people often fail to do so*. Additionally, NNL, as well as a version of it named NNL Action Theory, fall short of satisfying the “universality factor.” In the words of Steven J. Jensen, “One of the great weaknesses of [NNL] action theory

⁴⁸ Khushf, 253, emphasis added.

is a lack of consistency in applying a universal standard.”⁴⁹ Elsewhere he writes,

The fundamental criticism against new natural law action theory questions its account of intention. New natural law excludes from intention (so the criticism goes) that which should be included . . . on the one hand, it might claim that intention includes more than the goal and the means to achieve that goal. On the other hand, it might grant this account of intention but question the new natural law analysis of what counts as a means. I think the merits of the former criticism can often be expressed in terms of the latter.⁵⁰

The failure of NNL to account for why certain goods are self-evident is the Achilles heel of the theory, falling short as a satisfactory model in making the case for UHR. Although it makes a case for a kind of epistemological tenability that explains human behavior—most notably “moral awareness of goods”—it does not make a satisfactory case for both the ontological grounds for why self-evident goods exist, or why such moral duties are compulsory for an individual. It simply falls short of the goal.

Contra Positivism. Legal positivism fares even worse in accounting for UHR. Their own proponents have acknowledged that positivism makes no claim to do so. Positivists argue laws cannot derive their grounding from a supernatural source and “that only its purpose, goal or function makes law what it is; and since it is trivially true that a thing ought to fulfill its proper function, positivists must be wrong to think that there is a difference

⁴⁹ Jensen, 525.

⁵⁰ Jensen, 529.

between law as it is and law as it ought to be.”⁵¹ Despite the laws of men taking the form of an “ought,” there is no universally binding factor which compels all men everywhere to submit to them. They are merely social conventions and, as such, can be revised and dismissed at the behest of the cultures who produce them.

The rejection of a universal NL leads to a fundamental undermining of UHR. Like NNL, positive law lacks a sufficient ontological ground. “To Maritain, positive law could not exist without the natural law. There is no true ‘being’ of positive law,” says Nemeth.⁵² Why is this the case? Because “even the most expert craftsman of legal verbiage must rely on more than mere words. Just as a carpenter needs to have a conceptual picture of a table in order to build one, a legal draftsman needs to have a specific foundation of justice appropriate to his or her legislative proposal.”⁵³ To quote Mortimer J. Adler, “positive law without a foundation in natural law is purely arbitrary. It needs the natural law to make it rational.”⁵⁴

Ralph Masiello, professor of philosophy at Niagara University, finds positivism lacking because it reduces to arbitrary subjectivism, lacking universal authority. He warns that “without the natural law as the basis for civil law, a purely pragmatic interpretation of the law could become capriciously susceptible to the whims of public opinion, and inalienable rights can become a figment of positive law, undermining the foundations of our democratic freedoms.”⁵⁵ What becomes apparent is that positive law, a codified instantiation of the general public’s opinion, could never be kept in check by a supervening law, hence the public would be left with no other

⁵¹ Green, 207.

⁵² Nemeth, 11.

⁵³ Ibid., 11.

⁵⁴ Adler, *The Doctrine of Natural Law in Philosophy*, in 1 Natural Law Institute Proceedings 83 (A. Scanlin ed. 1949), as cited in Nemeth, 11.

⁵⁵ Masiello, 4.

recourse than to attempt to sway public opinion in order to establish a new positive law.

Contra Empirical Natural Law. Max Hocutt, John Hasnas, and others make the case for NL based “solely” on empirical data. Arguing for his version of empirical natural right, Hocutt makes the following case.

Rights—moral as well as legal—are constituted by social conventions. Moral rights are constituted by moral conventions, legal rights by legal conventions. Under both kinds of conventions, some people have rights because other people have duties, and others have duties because the members of their society make a practice of enforcing them. Therefore, that a right exists means that it has protection in the form of regular enforcement of the duties associated with it. This explanation holds whether the topic is official rights of law or unofficial rights of morality and etiquette. Illegal rights exist under rules of law, so they enjoy the protections of government. Moral rights (and rights of etiquette) exist under informal customs and enjoy the protection of ordinary members of society. Without official protections, no legal rights exist; and without unofficial protections, no moral rights exist. It follows that all rights, legal or moral, are man-made. If calling a right “natural” means only that it was made and is protected by God, no empirical meaning can be assigned to the claim.⁵⁶

Much like legal positivism and NNL, Hocutt’s case is persuasive but only to a point. It can answer how local laws arise, their role and complexion in society, and the interrelation between legal laws and moral laws, but it too

⁵⁶ Hocutt, 63.

fails to provide a universally binding dimension to law. Jasnas' theory fares no better, as Hocutt himself even admits: "The main problem with Hasnas' [empirical natural rights] theory is that [his] Lockean conventions appear to be highly provincial, but natural rights are supposed to be universal" (Hocutt 51). Attempts, therefore, to ground all law-making merely in the mechanics of human functioning will fall short of demonstrating what these very laws should be and why they should be compulsory.

Conclusion

The question of UHR is one of profound relevance today. The establishment of the DUHR in 1948 marked a strident move forward in the recognition for the need to substantiate UHR, and the role that Jacques Maritain played in bringing the DUHR into being was both crucial and laudable. The key theory in helping to bring about this Declaration was founded primarily on the principles grounded in TNL, rooted in the likes of Aristotle, Cicero and Aquinas. Maritain's thought helped to elucidate that "the law in effect is essentially an ordinance of reason (*ordinatio rationis*), so that without an ordering reason there is no law. The notion of law is essentially bound up with that of an ordering reason. Indeed, in the case of natural law, human reason has no share in the initiative and authority establishing the law, either in making it exist or in making it known."⁵⁷ He made the compelling case that "in reality, if God does not exist, the natural law lacks obligatory power. If the natural law does not involve the divine reason, it is not a law, and if it is not a law, it does not oblige."⁵⁸ The contention is strong—UHR requires a NL. In the words of Roscoe Pound, "Natural law has proved itself

⁵⁷ Maritain, 43.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 47.

in the history of civilization . . . It gives us the distinction between law and laws.”⁵⁹

Alternative theories to TNL fail to meet the preconditions (both ontological and epistemological) necessary for a thoroughgoing justification for (1) how UHR are intelligible, and (2) how in fact UHR can meet the “universality factor.” Apart from a transcendent, rational, ordered NL, the legal pronouncements of men would be reducible to fruitless legal pronouncements and in-fighting, one nation claiming their man-made laws to be superior to another nation’s man-made laws. It would “appear that any state action that abridges human rights automatically violates the natural law.”⁶⁰ If no NL exists to serve as a “check” for the laws of all humanity, what will compel nations to change their laws? How could any nation be guilty of violating a person’s “universal human right?” Without an ontologically grounded Natural Law, none could rightly do so.

⁵⁹ Roscoe Pound, *The Revival of Natural Law*, 17 Notre Dame Law. 287, 328 [1942], cited in Nemeth 12.

⁶⁰ Nemeth, 11.

BOOK REVIEW

Dorothy A. Lee. *The Ministry of Women in the New Testament: Reclaiming the Biblical Vision for Church Leadership*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021.

It seems the past few years have seen an explosion of books on the topic of sexuality, gender, and theology. These books have a variety of goals and are of varied success. Dr. Dorothy Lee's *The Ministry of Women in the New Testament* has a clearly stated goal in the subtitle *Reclaiming the Biblical Vision for Church Leadership*, and it squarely hits its mark.

While this book is by no means exhaustive, it is very nearly a one-stop shop for all one's egalitarian needs. "This study argues from a New Testament perspective that women should have full access to the church's ministry, whether in lay or ordained ministries and that this access needs to depend not on gender but rather on a sense of vocation and on the church's discernment of calling."¹ Dr. Lee focuses her study on the two points of focus that she has identified in the opposition of female ordination. The first lies in Scripture, and the second in Tradition. The resulting book is laid out in two parts, one addressing each of these points.

Would you like to know more about how to approach individual New Testament texts as they relate to female ordination? Part 1 of this book, canonically organized, has you covered in spades. Have you heard that the church has never ordained women in its history until the advent of feminism? Sit back and enjoy the demolishing of this myth in Part 2 of this book. If that weren't enough, the rich footnotes through the book will leave you with plenty of additional reading to follow up on any curiosities.

The only likely complaint to be found with this book will be on pages 8-9 of the introduction wherein Dr. Lee lays out her convictions about

¹ Dorothy A. Lee, *The Ministry of Women in the New Testament: Reclaiming the Biblical Vision for Church Leadership*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021), 11.

interpretation. After an incisive summary of the debates around authorial intent and reader response, Dr. Lee affirms the “surplus of meaning” from Ricoeur that lies within the text which new readers may be able to draw out based on their backgrounds.

In this sense, the text—though capable of more than one meaning—retains its objectivity and cannot mean whatever the reader wants . . . The horizon of the text and the horizon of the reader need to meet for biblical meaning to emerge. For our purposes, this balanced view enables women, in particular, to read and reread the biblical texts from their own perspectives (‘horizon’) to discern meanings for today.²

As this is a departure from the prevailing convictions of interpretation found in most evangelical exegetical handbooks, it may ruffle some feathers. Nevertheless, even if for those who disagree with Lee on these points, her arguments (and perhaps more importantly the careful research on which they are built) are still worth reading in their entirety. The sheer amount of work that was poured into such a project deserves careful attention from any reader.

However, if that is not convincing, simply skip to Part 2 of the book. It is worth the price of admission all on its own. To begin, unless you are remarkably well-read in your early church history, Part 2 will introduce you to the likes of Thekla, Irene of Macedonia, Perpetua, Felicity, and others who engaged in significant ministry in the early church. As Dr. Lee puts it, “There is no single, unanimous voice on women’s ministry throughout the history and experience of the church. From the early days, women engaged in leadership and ministry in various communities and in different ways.”³

² Ibid, 9.

³ Ibid, 169.

After this remarkable history lesson, the reader will be treated to a much-needed theological discussion of gender, the image of God, and the Trinity. This is even more important considering the past decade's worth of poor argumentation around the eternal submission of the Son and how that might relate to gender relations and ministry roles.⁴

Dr. Lee is to be commended for this excellent and timely work, even by those who are ultimately unconvinced by her conclusions. However, as one who agrees with her at nearly every point, I am deeply grateful to her for this careful and engaging work. I strongly encourage that you take the time to engage with it and let it challenge you in the process.

⁴ For more, see: "The Trinity Debate (2016-2017): A Selected Bibliography," available at https://www.academia.edu/36499151/The_Trinity_Debate_2016_2017_A_Selected_Bibliography