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CHRISTOLOGY FOR THE ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN PREACHING

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Abstract

God has so richly blessed blacks with a unique experience of the African American church through the power and effectiveness of the art of African American preaching. It is a preaching experience like no other. African American preaching, or black preaching, is Christ-centered and theological (in its reflection of Christ), anthropological (in its reflection of the black experience), and social in nature. It is derived from a hurting people enslaved, taken from its motherland and relocated to a new land, and then propelled into experiences that have shaped and molded our rich heritage and legacy. This essay examines Christology at the heart of African American preaching.

Christ for the Oppressed

African American preachers have always believed in the divine providence of God and conventional wisdom of Christ-centered homiletical and theological thought. Diane L. Hayes, Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology at Georgetown University, writes, “Who is Jesus, and what does it mean to name him the Christ?” is a fundamental question in Christianity that has echoed down through the centuries.”¹ The Apostle Peter answered this question in Mark 8:29: “And he asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Christ.” Edward Blum, a politically conservative legal strategist known for his civil rights activism against laws that do not address injustice in matters of race and ethnicity, and Paul Harvey, author and professor of History and presidential teaching scholar at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs note: “In a brilliant shift, African Americans took the Jesus presented to them (a servant of servants), attached it to themselves as a servant who suffers and then focused on how Jesus triumphed over both suffering and servitude. The suffering Jesus became their analogue and invested them (not the whites around them) with sacred value...Jesus was their friend, mentor guide, kind master and liberator.”²

Theologian James Cone writes “It is the thesis of Black theologians that Christology is constructed from the interplay of social context, Scripture

¹ Diane L. Hayes, *The Oxford Handbook of African American Theology* (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2014), 153.

² Edward J. Blum and Paul Harvey, *The Color of Christ: The Son of God and the Saga of Race in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 95.

and traditions.”³ Cone, in his book *God of the Oppressed*, goes on to write, “The focus on social context means that we cannot separate our questions about Jesus from the concreteness of everyday life. We ask, “Who is Jesus Christ for us today?” because we believe that the story of his life and death is the answer to the human story of oppression and suffering.”⁴ This understanding sustained a people who were sold as chattel for over 250 years and expressed their ideas and beliefs through prayer, praise and preaching. African American preachers seek to explain the nature and character of their experiences that bring them into identification with a crucified Christ. African American preaching differs from other cultural experiences. That is because the faith once defined by the bible and interpreted by the white man was never fully embraced by blacks. Black Christianity took on its own ideas and beliefs and formed the framework of Christ-centered preaching.

James Cone, the Cross, and the Lynching Tree

James Cone also wrote the book *The Cross and The Lynching Tree*. He was the founder of black liberation theology and Judith Moyers Distinguished professor of Systematic Theology at Union Theological Seminary.⁵ He analyzes the paradoxical relationship between Jesus’ death on the cross and the appalling history of the lynchings of blacks by Southern whites, starting in the post-bellum South and leading up to the first decades of the twentieth century. Cone paints a vivid picture of the painful experience of being both a black man and a Christian in America. “Cone believes that the experience of being both black and Christian incites a paradox—as a Christian, his faith inspires him to be hopeful about God’s coming salvation and work in his life; as a black man, his life experiences under the evils of segregation and ever-present threat of death lead him to despair.”⁶ This resonated with enslaved blacks who heard the gospel message proclaimed and looked to the power of cross. “Christ crucified manifested God’s loving and liberating presence in the lives of black Christians that empowered them to believe that ultimately, in God’s eschatological future, they would not be defeated by the “troubles of this world,” no matter how great and painful their suffering.”⁷ Blacks suffered unimaginable cruelties during slavery. The emancipation ended slavery in America but did not end the violence and oppression that white supremacy subjugated black people to. New challenges arose in black religious life as black people shifted from slavery to Jim Crow segregation and discrimination. Cone states,

At no time was the struggle to keep such hope alive more difficult than during the lynching era (1880-1940). The

³ James Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), 108.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 108-109.

⁵ He died in 2018.

⁶ Benjamin Taylor, “Review of James H. Cone’s *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*,” *Journal of Lutheran Ethics*, 12:5 (2012). <https://www.elca.org/JLE/Articles/137>

⁷ *Ibid.*

lynching tree is the most potent symbol of the trouble nobody knows that blacks have seen but do not talk about because the pain of remembering – visions of black bodies dangling from southern trees, surrounded by jeering white mobs – is almost too excruciating to recall... In that era, the lynching tree joined the cross as the most emotionally charged symbols in the African American community – symbols that represented both death and the promise of redemption, judgment and the offer of mercy, suffering and the power of hope.⁸

Southern whites used lynchings as a terror tool to instill fear into blacks. The very idea of granting ex-slaves social, political, and economic freedom made most southern whites furious. Nevertheless, legislation collectively known as the 13th, 14th, and 15th, or the Reconstruction Amendments, indicated that blacks should be included in the everyday life of American society.

This led to the formation of white vigilante groups such as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). In 1866, the KKK originally organized itself as a social club in Pulaski, Tennessee, but morphed into a vigilante group with the aim of “restoring” the South and maintaining control. For the period of Reconstruction, the military had divided the Southern states into districts. The districts were designed to protect blacks from white violence. The Klan wore hoods at night as to hide the members identity while committing violence against blacks and white northern sympathizers. The dream of freedom that blacks once held in the South turned into a nightmare when the Reconstruction era ended (1877) with the removal of federal troops. All the rights and privileges that were given to black America were being taken by white Southerners through violent means. Black Americans were no longer permitted in politics and were held by debts and forced to work as sharecroppers. The formation of Jim Crow laws created a firm, segregated society that dimmed the light on the future of black America. Cone writes:

The claim that whites had the right to control the black population through lynching and other extralegal forms of mob violence was grounded in the religious belief that America is a white nation called by God to bear witness to the superiority of “white over black.” Such beliefs made lynching defensible and even necessary for many whites.⁹

Christology in Conflict with the Ideology of Whiteness

In his book *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race*, noted author and Associate Professor of Theology and Black Church Studies at Yale Divinity School Willie James Jennings argues that contemporary Western Christianity suffers from a “diseased social

⁸ James Cone, *The Cross and The Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

imagination.”¹⁰ “Christian theology now operates inside this diseased social imagination without the ability to discern how its intellectual and pedagogical performances reflect and fuel the problem, further crippling the communities it serves.”¹¹ We live in a racially divided society that affects the entire Christian community. We are culturally different, and relevant to this discussion, we have been crippled and taught to live in different communities resulting in the fact that most black American neighborhoods are substandard that consist of high crime rates, poor living conditions and are over-policed. Most white and some upper middle-class blacks are detached from the surroundings where there is suffering of black people in their living conditions. Jennings goes to the root of historical dysfunctionality that lays bare a distorted relational imagination. Jennings is saying that our society has an inaccurate social thought process that contradicts a Christian theological position reflective of the fundamental message of the incarnate life of the Son of God, the Christ who brings divine connection and relational intimacy. Jennings believes that the white Christianity of the modern colonists took an inverted hospitality everywhere they went. When white Christianity encountered other cultures and the indigenous people of the land, it claimed to be the primary landowner of the territory it entered and demanded that the native people conform to their culture and way of thinking.

European Christians used a supersessionist hermeneutic, a theological process which eroded the Church, and which began in Spain during the late medieval times. “That distortion was the replacement of Israel, or in its proper theological term, supersessionism.”¹² European Christians that supported supersessionism believed that in the mind and heart of God the European church replaced Israel. Jennings’ writes “This effect begins with positioning Christian identity fully within European (white) identity and fully outside the identities of Jews and Muslims.”¹³ These Christians believed they were at the center of God’s will by divine providence. The Christian settlers believed they had replaced Israel as God’s chosen people. In their minds the pendulum had now shifted from Jews to Gentiles. This shift slowly developed into the ideology of whiteness which understood white European Christianity as the primary face and fabric of God’s identity. This concept of whiteness, being the standard incorporated into this Christianity, subjugated blackness in order to gain absolute ownership of the Christian identity. The always-noticeable counterweight of a usually unseen white identity are black bodies. White European Christian leaders displaced indigenous people by comparing them to white society and birthed a racial Christianity. Racism has reigned and ruled the imagination and, most importantly, affected legislation in America concerning black America. This, according to Jennings, is a diseased social imagination that must be cured with the pure characteristics of a true Christ-centered imagination.

¹⁰ Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

¹² *Ibid.*, 32.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 33.

Christology and the Ghetto

The American ghetto is the result of the diseased imagination and how it contradicts Jesus' call to relationship and brotherhood. Dr. James. A. Forbes, Jr., Union Theological Seminary Henry Emerson Fosdick distinguished professor, author, and Senior Minister Emeritus of the Riverside Church, an interdenominational church on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, New York City writes "Racism is not just about name-calling, mean thoughts, cruel deeds, oppressive behavior, segregation, and discrimination; it has to do with attitudes and systems, rationalizations and stigmatization."¹⁴ These oppressive behaviors, along with attitudes and systems put in place by white (Christian) America, have stigmatized black America for many years and have resulted in the American ghetto. They have created a physical environment, as well as an ideological one, where the thought of questioning white supremacy or black inferiority is like questioning the will of God and the natural order of things.

David Laskin, an American author of history, writes "The word ghetto first came into usage in Venice during the sixteenth century, when it was applied to the section where the Jewish colony lived."¹⁵ Its etymology is traced to the Latin *jactare*, meaning to throw, cast, or discard." "The Kerner Commission defined a ghetto as "any area within a city characterized by poverty and acute social disorganization and inhabited by members of a racial or ethnic group under conditions of involuntary segregation."¹⁶ In America the ghetto is entirely identical with the black community.

The Reverend Dr. William Augustus Jones, Jr. (1934-2006) was a Baptist preacher, activist, author, professor, and pastor of Brooklyn's Bethany Baptist Church for forty-three years. He wrote the book entitled *God in the Ghetto: A Prophetic Word Revisited* (2021), in which he states, "Ghetto connotes racial, social, and economic oppression."¹⁷ The white American society has systematically used collective forces that seek to dehumanize, deny, and demean the black American and nonaffluent population. Jones writes "The system" refers implicitly to the American trinity of capitalism, racism, and militarism."¹⁸ America's economic system is capitalism which was built by slave labor and rebuilt after the Civil War by cheap labor of former slaves. Jones also writes, "Capitalism is the economic system. Erected on the damnable foundation of slave labor, it pyramided on cheap labor after the emancipation and now thrives on social stratification, which is racism made

¹⁴ William Augustus Jones Jr., *God in the Ghetto: A Prophetic Word Revisited* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2021), 21.

¹⁵ David Laskin, "500 Years of Jewish Life in Venice," March 9, 2016, nytimes.com. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/13/travel/venice-italy-jewish-ghetto.html>.

¹⁶ Otto Kerner, Jr. "Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders," 1967, *US Dept. of Justice, Office of Justice Programs*, 12. <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/national-advisory-commission-civil-disorders-report>

¹⁷ Jones, *God in the Ghetto*, 36.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

manifest. Racism serves to preserve and perpetuate the system.”¹⁹ Jones quotes Fredrick Douglass in an address entitled “The American Fourth of July Celebration.” “For revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival.... America is false to the past, false to the present, and solemnly binds herself to be false to the future.”²⁰ The American ghetto is evidence of these realities. Kenneth B. Clark, psychologist and author writes “The dark ghetto’s invisible walls have been erected by white society, by those who have power, both to confine those who have no power and to perpetuate their powerlessness.”²¹ Therefore, the ghetto represents how powerholders resisted and continue to resist the call of Christ to brotherhood.

Contemporary Black Sermons and Christology

In today’s context, some black preachers have adopted new contemporary styles and reflected Christology in various ways, some avoiding racial issues. Henry Mitchell, who many scholars regard as the Father of African American Homiletics, writes that “culture is the key to understanding the different styles of preaching and that preaching is carried out in the idiom, imagery, style and world view of particular people.”²² Each group has its acceptable language, clothing styles, music, foods, slang, worldview, and storytelling. The great tradition within the African culture of storytelling or narrative interpretation was brought over with the slaves into America. This great oral tradition was passed down from generation to generation.

The black church is “traditional church” for the most part. Throughout its history the black church has been slow to change. Many mainline black denominations such as the Baptists, Methodists, and the Church of God in Christ (COGIC), whom many consider the big three of the African American denominations, have been reluctant to change and lean more to a traditional style of worship versus a contemporary worship and preaching experience. Today, contemporary black sermons are being preached by both traditional preachers like Rev Jasper Williams, Rev. Dr. Ralph Douglas West, and many others, as well as evangelicals of today, most notably Bishop Thomas Dexter Jakes, (affectionately known as T.D. Jakes), Creflo Dollar, and many other prominent pastors and preachers. Some make a concerted effort to steer clear of racial designations in their sermons and published works in order to broaden their appeal or “crossover.”

Since the inception of black preaching, its purpose has been lifting up Christ so that he would draw all men. When black mainline preaching stop preaching Christ, the black pulpits will become what Cleophus J. LaRue called “Pulpits without purpose.” LaRue writes “Pulpits without purpose happen when preachers neglect their primary mission – to preach the unsearchable

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Fredrick Douglass, in an address entitled “The American Fourth of July Celebration,” at (Rochester, NY: July 4, 1852).

²¹ Kenneth B. Clark, *Dark Ghetto* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1960), 11.

²² Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Preaching: The Recovery of a Powerful Art* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 12.

riches of Jesus Christ.”²³ The Apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 3:8-9 “To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things.”

Mainstream Preachers

Thomas Dexter (T. D.) Jakes
(1957-)

Time magazine called T. D. Jakes “a preaching prodigy.”²⁴ Few preachers have risen to the heights of Bishop Jakes, the NY times bestselling author, entrepreneur, playwright, and entertainment mogul born to parents Ernest and Odith Jakes in South Charleston, West Virginia June 9, 1957. Jakes is the pastor of the mega-church “The Potter’s House” in Dallas, Texas, a church with over 30,000 members. After the tragic events of September 11, 2001, Jakes preached a message on television entitled “The Gathering of America” on September 16, 2001. He preached it to comfort and calm the hearts of the American people after planes had crashed into the World Trade Centers, the Pentagon, and in Pennsylvania. Many Americans across this country and a few of the friends of Americans around the world were affected in some way by the magnitude of the travesty that has occurred. Here is an excerpt from his sermon:

They’re coming against our country, not our lifestyle, and we had better come together, “One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.” You don’t hear what I’m saying to you. I want to sound the alarm this morning. I want to blow the trumpet in your ears. It’s high time for you to wake out of your sleep. And yes, we’re hurt. And yes, we’re weeping. And yes, we’re angry. And don’t tell me that just because I’m a Christian I shouldn’t be angry. Jesus was angry and cleared the temple. The Bible said, “Be angry and sin not.” Sometimes you’re going to need anger. You’re going to need fire to drive you, but you don’t want to be reckless with the anger.²⁵

In this message Jakes preaches about the anger of Christ and how he used his anger to drive out the money changers from the temple. This message

²³ Cleophus J. LaRue, *I Believe I’ll Testify: The Art of African American Preaching* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 37.

²⁴ David Van Biema, “Spirit Raiser,” Sept. 17, 2001.
<http://content.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,20010917,00.html>.

²⁵ Frank A. Thomas and Martha Simmons, *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 2010), 730-731.

gave hope to a country who had been surprise-attacked by an enemy that wanted to destroy us. God used the voice of a black preacher to calm and encourage a nation that has, itself, historically promoted fear and discouragement in the lives of black people.

Charles Edward Booth
(1947 – 2019)

The next sermon excerpt highlights the preaching of the Rev. Dr. Charles Edward Booth. Rev. Booth was born in Baltimore, Maryland on February 4, 1947, to William W. Booth and Hazel Willis Booth. According to Wayne Croft, “Dr. Charles Edward Booth was a revered pastor, homiletician, prophetic preacher, scholar, author, and mentor to many. Known for his dignified manner, towering stature, impeccable dress, and sonorous baritone, Charles Booth was destined to be a preacher.”²⁶ Booth preached a message entitled “An Uneven Hand” (Matthew 25:19-28) that inspired and instilled hope in the believer. He asserted that although life has been unfair at times, and it appears that you have been dealt an-uneven hand God promised to always make a way in a time of need. Here is an excerpt from his sermon:

What you must do is acknowledge the hand that you have. Now, when Jesus tells this parable, Jesus does not pick or make any bones about the fact that there is an unequal distribution. I don’t care how you exegete the text. I don’t care how you interpret it. I don’t care what kind of hermeneutic you apply to it. Jesus never offers an apology for the text, nor does he ever answer the question of why he unequally distributes. But he does say that you have to accept or acknowledge what is in your grasp.²⁷

Cleophus J. LaRue writes “To examine Booth’s preaching is to see that he possessed the unique ability to wed biblical truth with social justice.”²⁸ “Charles Booth maintained a standard of preaching that refused to divorce scripture from the contemporary situation.”²⁹

While attending Shaw University Divinity School (SUDS) located in Raleigh, North Carolina, I had the distinct pleasure of hosting Dr. Booth at the 39th Annual Alexander / Pegues Minister’s Conference held March 19 – 22, 2012. He stood that night with great command of the pulpit and the English language. Dr. Booth preached from the text of Mathew 17:14-20. His topic was entitled “A Nameless Believer with a Pressing Problem.” Dr. Booth spoke

²⁶ Wayne Croft, “Charles E. Booth: A Preacher’s Preacher,” *Preaching*.
<https://preaching.org/charles-e-booth-a-preachers-preacher-by-wayne-croft/>.

²⁷ Thomas and Simmons, *Preaching with Sacred Fire*, 607.

²⁸ Cleophus J. LaRue, *Power in the Pulpit: How America’s Most Effective Black Preachers Prepare Their Sermons* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 29-33.

²⁹ Croft, “Charles E. Booth.”

with eloquence and articulate splendor about the dynamic divinity of Christ that empowered ordinary men to do extraordinary things.

Christology for Activism

James H. Evans Jr. is Robert K. Davies Professor of Systematic Theology at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School. Evans writes “The idea of Jesus is so deeply ingrained in the religious experience of African Americans that some scholars have claimed – within the context of a negative assessment of black religion – that the Christianity of African people in the United States is, in essence, *Jesusology*.”³⁰ This criticism requires a deeper look into the African American theological thought process. The cultural experiences of African Americans in the United States have defined who Jesus Christ is for the African American. Jesus Christ is the Messiah or “the anointed one” according to the Gospel of John. For African Americans “The Messiah embodies the nationalistic hopes and dreams of an oppressed people.”³¹ Many African American preachers have used their voice and influence to deal effectively with the issues of racism, sexism, discrimination, and injustice within the oppressed minority.

Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
(1929–1968)

The discussion now turns to an examination of Christology for activism in the preaching of The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. King was born in Atlanta, Georgia in 1929 to Reverend Michael King Sr. (who later changed his name to Martin Luther King, Sr.) and Alberta Williams King. Dr. King was nationally recognized as the iconic civil rights leader and the youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner, preacher, pastor, statesman, and author, and was elected as the first president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), an organization formed to provide new leadership for the Civil Rights Movement. King was married to his wife Coretta Scott King and from that union they birthed four children. King stepped into the public’s eye when he led the Montgomery Bus Boycott. King is the author of several books including *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (New York, 1958), his first book which told the story of the boycott and the beginning of the nonviolent Civil Rights Movement. According to the King Center, the civil rights leader went to jail 29 times. He was arrested for acts of civil disobedience on trumped-up charges. In its January 1964 issue, *Time* named Martin Luther King, Jr., “Man of the Year” for 1963, recognizing him as a fearless leader who fought to bring equality in America. On the evening of April 4, 1968, while standing on the balcony of his motel room in Memphis, Tennessee, where he was to lead a protest march in compassion for the striking sanitation workers of Memphis, King was assassinated.

³⁰ James H. Evans, *We Have Been Believers: An African American Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992) 77.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 79.

Dr. King wrote in his sermon "Loving Your Enemies," delivered at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church on November 17, 1957, from Matthew 5:43-45:

And this is what Jesus means, I think, in this very passage when he says, "Love your enemy." And it's significant that he does not say, "Like your enemy." Like is a sentimental something, an affectionate something. There are a lot of people that I find it difficult to like. I don't like what they do to me. I don't like what they say about me and other people. I don't like their attitudes. I don't like some of the things they're doing. I don't like them. But Jesus says love them. And love is greater than like. Love is understanding, redemptive goodwill for all men, so that you love everybody, because God loves them. You refuse to do anything that will defeat an individual, because you have agape in your soul. And here you come to the point that you love the individual who does the evil deed, while hating the deed that the person does. This is what Jesus means when he says, "Love your enemy." This is the way to do it. When the opportunity presents itself when you can defeat your enemy, you must not do it.³²

King goes on to say "With every ounce of our energy we must continue to rid this nation of the incubus of segregation. But we shall not in the process relinquish our privilege and our obligation to love. While abhorring segregation, we shall love the segregationist. This is the only way to create the beloved community."³³

Gardner Calvin Taylor
(1918 – 2015)

Finally, this project will examine Christology for activism in the preaching of the Reverend Dr. Gardner Calvin Taylor. Taylor was born in 1918 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to Rev. Washington M. and Selina Taylor. He was the grandson of emancipated slaves and grew up in the segregated South of the early 20th century. He pastored Concord Baptist Church of Christ for more than four decades, building the congregation into one of the largest churches in New York. "In 1980, *Time* magazine called him the "dean" of black preachers in America. In 1996, Baylor University said he was one of the most effective preachers in the English-speaking world."³⁴ Taylor, a friend and confidant of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., helped establish the

³² Martin L. King, Jr., "Loving Your Enemies," <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/loving-your-enemies-sermon-delivered-dexter-avenue-baptist-church>.

³³ Martin L. King, Jr., "Loving Your Enemies," *A Gift of Love: Sermons from Strength to Love and Other Preachings*. <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/loving-your-enemies-sermon-delivered-dexter-avenue-baptist-church>.

³⁴ Robert D. McFadden, "Rev. Gardner C. Taylor, Powerful Voice for Civil Rights, dies at 96," *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/07/us/rev-gardner-c-taylor-powerful-voice-for-civil-rights-dies-at-96.html>.

Progressive National Baptist Convention. Taylor also served as president. Taylor preached a very heartfelt sermon entitled “They Shall Ask the Way.”

We are beginning to recognize that the problem of race sorely vexes our Christian witness as it does our world’s peace. There was a day when men boldly proclaimed the superiority of race, even supported it by spurious interpretation of Scripture, a reflection on the integrity of God and the Justice of the Eternal. The day is far spent when men can believe that souls can be evangelized with a Bible in one hand and a whip in the other. Brave voices in Christ are standing up everywhere to declare such doctrines contrary to the spirit of him who made a mercy seat on the ledge of a well in Samaria, and who gave his pronouncement on the oneness of humanity in a parable about a dangerous curve on the road that led from Jerusalem to Jericho.³⁵

Taylor so eloquently explains that Christ died on the cross for all of humanity and for oneness. Taylor’s Christ resonates with what Hebrews explains about Christ’s work that finished on the cross as our sacrifice. Hebrews 9:26-28 reads:

For then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.²⁷ And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment,²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

As an overview of these four contemporary sermons of prominent African American preachers, I offer here some observations about their different perspectives and methods of applying Christology, contrasting the mainstream with the traditional. Most mainstream African American preachers like Bishop Jakes have the propensity to avoid the social issues of black people within the United States, perhaps due to their crossover appeal and white power base. Mainstream African American preachers tend to tread lightly and skate around the plight of oppressed people. Mainstream African American preachers may be socio-political in their over-sensitivity to political opinion. On the other hand, most traditional African American preachers advocate for social inclusion, fair treatment of all people, and instill hope within the black church. They affirmed that the “Suffering Savior” would one day liberate African Americans from the evils of racism and the social control of the white supremacist system of the United States. Therefore, mainstream African American preachers tend to practice avoidance while traditional African American preachers practice activism.

³⁵ Gerald Lamont Thomas, *African American Preaching: The Contribution of Dr. Gardner C. Taylor* (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 2009), 152.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that American black preaching has a distinct history, style, and use of Christology that is unique to the black experience in America. This project speaks as a testimony to the many African Americans that have been conduits of emancipation, change and freedom for black people, their religious faith, and their religious faith communities and institutions. It shows how the role of preaching to an oppressed and disadvantaged people in America has been vital to black people's survival. African American preachers and their preaching has liberated them and carried them through the sweltering heat of slavery, Jim Crow injustices, and American oppression.

Black preaching demonstrates a use of scripture and hermeneutic of suffering whereby black experience draws from the revealed word of God while also bridging the gap between the black experience of antiquity to the present daily realities of the black religious faith community. African American preaching creatively incorporates the word of God into the lives of the listeners. Therefore, the preacher has proclaimed the word of the Lord with conviction and power, making the bible and its contents socially relevant, in order to fully appropriate its treasures.

African American preaching is a very complex and diverse tradition. In fact, as an example of one particular school of thought, a community of clergy within the black church holds to a perspective that there are no specific, distinctive characteristics and qualities that identify black preaching. Many black preachers hold to this line of thinking and subscribe to the position that black preachers preach the gospel, but they do not preach black. The late Reverend Dr. Samuel Dewitt Proctor, former President of Virginia Union University, professor, and pastor of the 18,000 member Abyssinian Baptist church in New York, was a leading advocate of this position. Susan Bond assistant professor of Homiletics at The Divinity School of Vanderbilt University writes "Proctor observed that African American preaching demonstrated the same diversity as other forms of American Christianity and should not be characterized by style of delivery or theological assumptions."³⁶ Many other notable black preachers have argued along those same lines, such as the dean of black preachers Dr. Gardner C. Taylor, who seems to suggest that during the preaching moment the proclamation is not uniquely black. I humbly disagree with those homiletical heroes of mine and champion the thought of a preaching style and Christology that is unique to the black experience in America and, thusly, should be coined "African American preaching."

African American preaching has very rich history and those preachers who have been called by God to herald his word should examine the history of

³⁶ Susan Bond, *Contemporary African American Preaching: Diversity in Theory and Style* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2003), 44.

our preaching tradition. Black preaching should continue to provoke thought, create change, impact culture and, most importantly, lift the name of Jesus Christ by preaching the good news of the gospel. There is much work left to do. African Americans have won some freedoms, civil rights, and justice through the foolishness of preaching. However, the black preacher must continue to fight for justice when black people are facing injustice, staying true to the fact that African American preaching is a recontextualization of a history of how God sustained and delivered an oppressed people.

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**PAUL AND WOMEN IN THE CHURCH:
VIEWS ON 1 TIMOTHY 2:8-15 WITHIN PAULINE THEOLOGY**

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Abstract

Tradition and orthodoxy are hard walls to consider climbing over to investigate the views beyond them. This is especially true with any subject as foundational or deeply held as a Christian's long-standing biblical theology or interpretation of scripture. Few biblical texts have raised as much controversy among scholars and lay-people alike as the texts that appear (to some) to say that the Apostle Paul did not allow women to have leadership positions in the church, nor to speak in church, let alone teach in church, for all time in all circumstances, especially when men were present (1 Tim. 2:12, 1 Cor. 14:34-35). By presenting some of the reasoning behind various interpretations of 1 Timothy 2:8-15, there may be fresh and worthwhile considerations for those on either extreme edge of the spectrum of views. This essay does not address women in the specific role/office of Pastor or Lead Pastor in a church system yet makes the case for a more balanced view that biblically allows women to use their God-given spiritual gifts for the edification of the church, and to the glory of God.

Introduction: 1 Timothy and Authorship

Today, theology offers a spectrum of views regarding women in church leadership. On one extreme edge of the spectrum, women may be ordained as senior pastors. The other extreme edge may not allow women to even be deacons in churches where deacons are defined simply as servants for the physical or practical needs of others, though they have no teaching or ruling roles as those held by pastors and elders of those same churches. Still other churches hold positions in the middle ground. Some allow women to read scripture aloud in church, some allow it if the woman's husband or father are standing next to her, and some do not allow it all. Some allow women to assist in serving communion, and some do not. Some allow women to be associate pastors, but not senior pastors. Some do not allow a woman to teach a Sunday School class with men in attendance unless her husband is present as the official teacher, while others do not make that distinction. The variables are almost endless. This paper examines the first letter of Paul to Timothy for what can be gleaned on the subject.

Since the early 1800s, some scholars have questioned whether Paul himself wrote the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus)¹ or had an amanuensis, perhaps Luke, write them. Some think only 2 Timothy may have been written by Paul. Still others think someone wrote these letters after Paul's death and falsely ascribed them to Paul. I. Howard Marshall, a Scottish New Testament scholar and Professor Emeritus at the University of Aberdeen, wrote from the position that these letters "contain Pauline materials that have been adapted within a Pauline circle after his death in order to make his teaching available in a form adapted to the needs of the congregations at the time when there was the danger of succumbing to a heresy compounded of Jewish and ascetic elements and some misrepresentation of Paul's teaching."²

To support Pauline authorship, John Stott, the British preacher, theologian, and a leader of the worldwide evangelical movement, concluded that, "The internal evidence is plain, and so comprehensive that the theory of pseudonymity makes Paul's imitator a historical and literary genius."³ Stott mentions evidence such as Paul being identified in all three epistles as the author. Twice, in 1 Timothy, Paul states that he intends to visit Timothy, which would make the author intentionally deceptive if pseudepigraphically written after Paul's death. Personal words are given to Timothy, as though coming from his close friend, Paul. In 1 Timothy 5:23 Timothy is encouraged to stop drinking water only and to have a little wine to help his stomach. These internal statements seem to Stott too personal not to come from Paul directly. Whether written by the hand of the apostle Paul or not, this research will consider the passage in focus, 1 Timothy 2:8-15, worthy of study as canonized scripture.

1 Timothy: Context & Preface to 1 Timothy 2:8-15

Paul's primary theme in 1 Timothy warns against false teaching (1 Tim. 1:3-7). He emphasizes the fruitlessness of teaching the Law (1 Tim. 1:6-7) in contrast to teaching the gospel of mercy, grace, love, and patience he received from Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 1:13-17). Paul gives Timothy the command to "fight the good fight, keeping the faith" (1 Tim. 1:18b-19a). Paul then turns to instruction concerning prayer (1 Tim. 2:1-7). He begins with "First of all, then..." The word "then" harkens back to his stated purpose of the letter, his caution against false teaching in chapter one. It is interesting to note what is *not* mentioned as Paul proceeds in this chapter, that is, a worship service setting is not mentioned.

1 Timothy 2:8-10

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all scriptural references or quotes employ *The ESV Study Bible, English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

² I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, USA 2004), 398.

³ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus*, Rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, USA, 1996/2021), 1.

In 1 Timothy 2:8-10, Paul is concerned with anger and quarreling among men within the believing community of Ephesus, and with modesty among female believers regarding prayer and general good behavior. Cynthia Long Westfall, assistant professor of New Testament at McMaster Divinity College, does not believe these verses are restricted to worship services. Westfall makes the point that, "If this was addressing women's apparel during prayer in the worship service, why did Paul not repeat the universal custom among all the 'churches of God' of women wearing a veil while praying (1 Cor. 11:16), rather than forbidding elaborate braiding (1 Tim. 2:9)."⁴

Sixteenth century French theologian and reformer, John Calvin, commented on the word "everywhere" ("in every place" in some texts) in verse 8: "This phrase means the same as it does in 1 Corinthians 1:2, 'To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.'"⁵ Calvin makes no mention of a worship service when Paul says "in every place." While Calvin agrees with those who think the anger or disputing mentioned in verse 8 could mean not to pray complaining to God, nor toward other men, Calvin also says, "I feel sure that Paul is referring to the arguments that erupted because the Jews were so upset to have Gentiles as their equals... Paul says that no place is profane, and men and women have access to God everywhere, so long as they have no vices holding them back."⁶

Paul uses the word "likewise" as he directs his teaching on prayer toward women. Men are to come to the Lord in prayer without anger or dissensions. Likewise, women are to dress modestly, which was not always the case in wealthy, ostentatious Ephesus. Calvin said, "A godly and honorable woman will undoubtedly dress differently from a prostitute. These are the distinctions that Paul is making here. If Godliness is to be seen in good deeds, then it will be evident in the wearing of suitable clothes."⁷

1 Timothy 2:11-12

1 Timothy 2:11 is often cross referenced with 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. While Jewish practice in the first century prohibited women from studying the Torah, and many women were illiterate, scripture shows in both 1 Cor. 14 and in 1 Tim. 2 that both men and women were encouraged to learn in the Christian churches. The issue, however, seems to be *how* women were to learn in church: quietly and with submissiveness.

The Greek word for "quietly" used in 1 Tim. 2:11 is the word *hēsychia*. Linda L. Belleville, PhD, adjunct professor of New Testament at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary, and an egalitarian, says that when Paul has absence of speech in mind, he uses the word *sigāō* (Rom. 16:25, 1 Cor.

⁴ Cynthia Long Westfall, *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 287-288.

⁵ John Calvin, *1 & 2 Timothy & Titus, The Crossway Classic Commentaries* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1998), 45.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

14:28, 30, 34). However, when Paul is speaking about quiet behavior, he uses the word *hēsychia* (1 Thess. 4:11, 2 Thess. 3:12) and its cognitive forms.⁸ 1 Timothy 2:1-2 urges prayers and thanksgiving be made on behalf of "kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way." Here, the same word, *hēsychia*, is used for quiet life, referring to the same calm, peaceful living Paul asks of women in 1 Timothy 2:11, as opposed to Paul's response to the Corinthian church which was dealing with matters of disruption in church services. Perhaps Corinthian women, allowed to learn God's Word for the first time, blurted out questions in the service. Paul told the Corinthians their women were to be silent, actually silent, in that context.

Craig L. Blomberg, Distinguished Professor of New Testament at Denver Seminary and a complementarian, agrees that the word *hēsychios* in 1 Tim. 2 refers to "the kind of lives all believers are to live "peaceful and *quiet*," cooperative and caring, *not* never speaking!"⁹ Blomberg believes this is the appropriate behavior for any student, male or female, "even though what is considered submissive or cooperative may vary from one culture to the next."¹⁰

1 Timothy 2:12 may be one of the most debated scriptures in the Bible. While verse 11 encourages a woman to learn, verse 12 seems not to allow her to teach anyone, especially men, ever. In light of other scripture, can that be what Paul means?

Contexts, Authority, and False Teachers

John Calvin offered his own explanation of Deborah and other women who ruled, prophesied, or taught by saying, "God's extra-special acts do not annul the ordinary ways he has decided to rule by. On occasions there were women prophets and women teachers who held these offices under the direction of God's Spirit. God is above all laws...this does not clash with his normal methods of working."¹¹ John Stott sums up his own perspective by saying, "So women should submit to the headship (caring responsibility) of men, and not try to reverse gender roles, but not necessarily refrain from teaching them."¹²

Stott says the reformer, Martin Luther, held to 1 Tim. 2:12 as being in reference to wives, not to women in general. The intention was to regulate the private relation of a wife to her husband at home.¹³ Some scholars agree that the entire 1 Timothy 2:10-15 passage refers to the household environment, not

⁸ Linda L. Belleville, "Women in Ministry: An Egalitarian Perspective" in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, Stanley N. Gundry and James R. Beck, eds., Counterpoint Series, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 80.

⁹ Craig Blomberg, "Women in Ministry: A Complementarian Perspective" in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, Stanley N. Gundry and James R. Beck, eds., *Counterpoint Series*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 167.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Calvin, *1 & 2 Timothy & Titus*, 47.

¹² Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus*, 72.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 70.

the context of a worship service, while still others hold that Paul is addressing the worship service, specifically. Westfall also believes the context here is within the home. After Paul addresses the false teaching among men in 1 Tim. 2:1-8, he offers correction of false teaching among the women of Ephesus in vv.10-15. A woman was not to teach her more educated husband but should be learning from him and not the false teachers, who were then going house to house spreading false myths (1 Tim. 5:13).¹⁴ While women were permitted to learn in the first century, they were homeschooled, and boys were more formally or publicly educated. Therefore, women were not socialized for the classroom yet.¹⁵ If this is the case, 1 Tim. 2:12 does not mirror 1 Corinthians 14:34. The issues were different though both important; one pertaining to being disruptive in a Corinthian church service while the other concerning spreading false teaching in Ephesus. Even the words Paul used for "silent" in each passage were different, with very different meanings.

Looking at the teaching issue alone, separate from the authority issue, Paul would seem to be saying one of three things. One view could be that women should not teach men. Another view could be that women should not teach anyone at all, which is what the text actually says when no qualifying language is added. We know Paul cannot mean that a woman cannot teach anyone at all, since other women in scripture have led and taught all genders and ages as God desired (Deborah, Huldah, Priscilla, Phoebe, others), and the bible clearly permits women to teach other women (Titus 2:4) and children (Proverbs 1:8). A third view seems most likely; men who spread false teaching are told not to teach (chapter 1) and women who are uneducated and likely deceived should not teach or spread those men's false teaching (chapter 2).

In the next phrase of 1 Tim. 2:12, "or exercise authority over a man," is the Greek word *authentēō*, never used anywhere else in the New Testament. Before the first century it had a negative connotation of angry usurping of authority which could have included violence or even murder. After the first century the same word had a more positive connotation and could simply mean the exercise of authority.¹⁶ The King James Version uses the words "usurp authority," while later translations use "exercise authority." When following the prohibition for women not to teach in Ephesus with this word or phrase, Gilbert Bilezikian, former professor of biblical studies at Wheaton College,¹⁷ states, "The women were required by Paul to become quiet and submissive learners instead of struggling to assert themselves as teachers... Such persons who were still in the learning stages could obviously not be permitted to become teachers. They first had to earn their credentials."¹⁸ Bilezikian goes on to say, "Paul's strategy was the elimination of unqualified or deviant would-be teachers, both male and female... neither women nor all

¹⁴ Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 305.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 306-307.

¹⁶ Blomberg, "Women in Ministry," 168.

¹⁷ I am aware of recent revelation about Bilezikian's life and conduct. I trust that his knowledge of scripture and theology still holds, though his conduct is abhorrent to this writer.

¹⁸ Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: A Guide for the study of Female Roles in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), 179.

men could teach in Ephesus, but only a group of trained and carefully selected individuals."¹⁹

In 1 Corinthians 12:28, Paul lists the order in which God appointed roles and gifts in the church. "First apostles, second prophets, third teachers," with others mentioned after teachers. The ESV study Bible says in its footnotes that this "seems to be a ranking of importance."²⁰ If that is true, then teachers rank below prophets. Paul refers to women who prophesy as a normal occurrence in 1 Corinthians 11:5, and only admonishes them to wear head coverings while prophesying if they are married. He does not tell women they should not prophesy. Joel 2:28 foretold that sons and daughters would prophecy and Acts 21:9 reports that Philip had four unmarried daughters who prophesied. Bilezikian compares a modern equivalent "to prohibit women in the military to accede to the lesser rank of captain, while allowing them to be promoted to the superior rank of colonel."²¹

In 1 Timothy, Paul's main concern was the spread of false teaching. Uneducated women were susceptible to being deceived by the false teaching and then spreading it. Russell L. Huizing, Department Chair, Ministry & Leadership at Toccoa Falls College, and adjunct professor at Regent University wrote, "First Timothy 2:11-12 cannot be ripped out of this context and then applied to a modern preoccupation with structure and authority."²²

1 Timothy 2:13-15

In 1 Timothy 2:13-14, Paul refers to Genesis to support his prohibition of Ephesian women as teachers in the previous verses. What could the creation order have to do with women teaching? Calvin seems to contradict himself on this subject. On one hand, Calvin says, "Paul's argument that women should be subject to men because they were created second does not seem to be a very strong one. John the Baptist was born before Christ, but was greatly inferior to him." At the end of that same paragraph, Calvin says, "Moses taught that woman was created after man as a kind of appendage to men for the specific purpose of readily obeying them. As God did not appoint two "heads" of equal standing, but gave man a subordinate helper, he is right to remind us about the order in which they were created, which demonstrates the inviolable way God made this appointment."²³

Belleville reminds us of the culture of Ephesus in Paul and Timothy's day, which was influenced by the cult of Artemis where females were superior to males.²⁴ The importance of this cult is described in Acts 19 as Ephesus had a temple to the goddess Artemis. Angered because of Paul's teaching about false idols, they chanted "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" Some Artemis

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 182.

²⁰ *The ESV Study Bible, English Standard Version*, Frank S. Theilman, contributor, (Wheaton, IL:Crossway, 2008).

²¹ Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 178.

²² Russell L. Huizing, "What Was Paul Thinking? An Ideological Study of 1 Timothy 2," *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership*, 3:2 (2011) 19.

²³ Calvin, *1 & 2 Timothy & Titus*, 48.

²⁴ Belleville, "Women in Ministry," 89.

worshippers believed that she was born before her brother, Apollos, making females superior to men. Belleville says, "An Artemis influence would certainly explain Paul's correctives in verses 13-14... And Eve was deceived to boot (v.14) - hardly a basis on which to claim superiority."²⁵ Paul makes the point that Adam was created before Eve, so Christian women had no reason to think they should have superiority over men even in that Artemis-worshipping, domineering female culture.

The fact that Eve was created second and deceived first may have had two implications. First, women should not follow the cult of Artemis and think they are superior to men, as Belleville pointed out above. Second, if they are the learners in a situation, they should stay away from false teachers and defer to the qualified teachers for spiritual decisions, as Bilezikian pointed out. He says that Eve was the latecomer on the scene and "Of the two, she was the one bereft of the firsthand experience of God's giving the prohibition relative to the tree. She should have deferred the matter to Adam, who was better qualified to deal with it since he had received the command directly from God... Her mistake was to exercise an authoritative function for which she was not qualified."²⁶ Likewise, Paul says overseers must not be recent converts or think they know things they don't yet, or they may fall into the condemnation of the devil (1 Tim. 3:6). Along with 1 Timothy 2, this passage seems to say that new Christians should learn well and stay away from deceivers before teaching or leading in any way.

Considering verse 15 for what it does *not* mean, Paul clearly teaches that mankind is saved by grace through faith, not of works (Eph. 2:8,9). The act of childbearing cannot save a woman unto eternal life according to Pauline theology. What, then, is to be made of verse 15?

The question remains unanswered, while Stott says, "The serpent had deceived her; her posterity would defeat him... So then, even if certain roles are not open to women... No greater honour has ever been given to woman than in the calling of Mary to be the mother of the Saviour of the world."²⁷

Conclusion

1 Timothy 2:8-15 contains both a situational concern and a timeless principle. The prohibition of women as teachers seems to be specifically for the situation in Ephesus at the time 1 Timothy was written. The principle that any teacher, man or woman, should study and know the truth before becoming a teacher in order to avoid spreading false teaching seems plain. The priority of humility and quiet learning should be a timeless standard for both genders.

The scope of this examination did not include women in leadership as pastors. This study focused more on the seemingly apparent prohibition of women as teachers of God's Word. Paul's acceptance elsewhere in scripture, and the evidence of God's calling elsewhere in scripture, that is, of spiritually

²⁵ Ibid., 90.

²⁶ Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 180.

²⁷ Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus*, 73.

mature women who prophesied and led, must be included in a balanced understanding of 1 Timothy 8-15.

Even if a woman in spiritual leadership was to be the exception and not the rule in Old and New Testament times, who can question her call from God? Dare we argue against the female capacity to recognize the will of God Himself through her own conscience, after seeing clearly that God Himself used women as leaders during certain times in scripture? Respecting differing traditions, I do pray that even the most conservative, fundamental churches will expand their views of the gifting of some women to teach, especially when she and her husband agree about her calling.

I experienced a parenting class in a church years ago that was taught by a woman who had maturity, had studied the material well, had presented it in the past, and presented it well. However, because both fathers and mothers attended this class, the woman teacher had to have her husband sit next to her at the front of the class. He said nothing during the entire series of classes that wasn't incidental or outside of the scope of teaching the actual class. One day in the hall, I heard him tell another man that he felt silly sitting up there like that, as he had no calling of his own to teach. He did it to please the church leadership just to allow his wife to fulfill what they both thought was her calling to teach the subject to other parents.

Today, we see women in leadership roles in numerous parachurch ministries and missions. We also see women teaching a Bible class in more and more Christian schools or colleges, and seminaries. Some traditional churches have started to accept women teaching in seminars, on the radio, on television, and as authors of books and online blogs. I might ask those same churches and schools, what changed in their theology or understanding of scripture that allows qualified women to teach in non-church settings, while not allowing a woman to teach a Sunday School class with men in attendance? Additionally, a local church in my area does not allow women to hold any voting office, which is not that uncommon in some traditional denominations. However, that same church also does not allow women to hold the office of servant (deacon) with no church governance power yet does allow a woman to counsel both men and women as a state licensed Counselor. Does that church think Christian women should never refer to biblical teaching or God's promises or exhortations within the scope of counseling?

I find Bilezikian's comment on the canonization of scripture to be interesting in regard to the authority of a teacher, before and after the establishment of the canon. My understanding is that prior to the writing and the canonization of the books of the New Testament, teachers were the dispensers of Christian truth. Their authority was absolute and normative, provided that they were duly trained and authorized. With the formation of the New Testament canon, the locus of authority was displaced from the teacher to the teaching enscripturated in the New Testament. As a result, the apparent implication is that a current-day teacher has no personal authority other than his or her competency. The authority resides in the text of the Bible and not in the person teaching the Bible. A teacher today is only a person *sharing* knowledge and insights from scripture. In our day, restrictions to the teaching

ministry of the church on the basis of sex are necessarily made with the tacit implication that the authority resides in the teacher rather than in scripture. Such a priestly/pontifical concept of Christian ministry cannot be reconciled with the evangelical adherence to scripture as the only authority of the church.²⁸

May further study on this controversial subject not bring dissension, but may it give honor to God in all ways, even fostering grace and love between those who disagree.

²⁸ Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 184.

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THE STRANGERS AMONG US: HOSPITALITY AS A BIBLICAL RESPONSE TO THE ISSUE OF UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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Abstract

When a *stranger* resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The *stranger* who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God (Lev. 19:33-34 NASB).

The stranger that the Bible speaks about has been contested by many scholars. On the one hand, scholars like James K. Hoffmeier in the discussion argue that Bible passages about the stranger cannot be used to defend illegal (undocumented) immigrants or even be employed as a justification to reform current immigration policies and law.¹ On the other hand, scholars such as M. Daniel Carroll propose that “the topic of immigration needs to be considered from a human rights perspective rather than be defined solely in terms of national security, cultural identity, or economic impact.”² In other words, Carroll is arguing that the discussion about the stranger should be based on the person’s humanity, and not his or her immigration status. However, where should the conversation on immigration start and what are the implications for the Church? Can the Church be in “subjection to the governing authorities” (Rom. 13:1 NASB) and still knowingly provide a haven to undocumented immigrants? How should the Church deal with the treatment of undocumented immigrants biblically and in practice? This essay offers hospitality as a biblical response to the issue of undocumented immigration. It will not argue for immigration reform but approaches the topic with the hope to defend the dignity and aspirations of immigrants who decided to migrate to the United States in response to regional contexts of economic, political, and social instability.

¹ James K. Hoffmeier, “The Use and Abuse of the Bible in the Immigration Debate,” Center for Immigration Studies, December 1, 2011. <https://cis.org/Report/Use-and-Abuse-Bible-Immigration-Debate>

² M. Daniel Carroll, *Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible* (Ada, MI: Brazos Press, 2013), 48.

Immigration in the United States

It is important that time is taken to consider immigration in the US, including the development of immigration law, because immigration is indeed a fact of life, so hospitality should be a cultural value.

Brief History

In *Immigration in the United States: New Economic, Social, Political Landscapes with Legislative Reform on the Horizon* (2013), Faye Hipsman and Doris Meissner point out that large-scale immigration in the US has taken place in four major peak periods that are connected to important transformations of the American economy. The first peak immigration period saw an influx of European settlers in the Americas. The second period made it possible for the United States to transition from a colonial economy to one that was agricultural. During the third peak period, the industrial revolution brought about a manufacturing economy that propelled America's growth to become the leading power in the world. "Today's large-scale immigration has coincided with globalization and the last stages of transformation from a manufacturing to a 21st century knowledge-based economy."³ This has caused the US to adjust to new economic and immigration realities.

In a publication entitled *Why Does the U.S. Need Immigration Reform?* (2019), the Open Society Foundations shows that the US immigration system was more reactive in its approach rather than demonstrative of a well thought out plan of receiving the people. According to the publication, "Historically, the United States has had an unfortunate history of enacting restrictive exclusionary laws, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the National Origins Act of 1924, and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996. The system as we know it today is the result of several major legislative reforms."⁴

The major legislative reforms that the US enacted included the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 which ended the national origins quota system that disproportionately favored European immigrants; the Refugee Act of 1980; a major immigration reform bill that was approved by a Democratic Congress and signed into law by President Reagan in 1986, which created a path to citizenship for people who entered the United States without permission before 1982; The Temporary Protected Status program of 1990 which allowed people fleeing violence and natural disasters to legally work and live in the United States until their home country had sufficiently recovered; The DREAM Act, which was first introduced in Congress in 2001 but has yet to become law, and was designed to offer undocumented youth a

³ Faye Hipsman and Doris Meissner, "Immigration in the United States: New Economic, Social, Political Landscapes with Legislative Reform on the Horizon," Migration Policy Institute, April 16, 2013, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/immigration-united-states-new-economic-social-political-landscapes-legislative-reform>.

⁴ Open Society Foundations, "Why Does U.S. Need Immigration Reform?" Last update May 2019. <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/explainers/why-does-us-need-immigration-reform>.

path to legal status; The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program was introduced by President Obama in 2012 and allowed a specific group of young immigrants without status, who were brought to the United States as children, to apply for work authorization permits and protection from immediate deportation. Although the Trump administration ended the DACA program in 2017, the federal courts allowed the program to remain in place. Since that time, immigration reform has eluded the administration of both parties.⁵ Hipsman and Meissner add that for “a nation of immigrants and immigration, the United States adjusts its immigration policies only rarely, largely because the politics surrounding immigration can be deeply divisive.”⁶

Abby Budiman in the article, *Key findings about U.S. Immigrants*, published in August 2020 by the Pew Research Center states that:

- The United States has more immigrants than any other country in the world. Today, more than 40 million people living in the U.S. were born in another country, accounting for about one-fifth of the world’s migrants. The population of immigrants is also very diverse, with just about every country in the world represented among U.S. immigrants. Immigrants today account for 13.7% of the U.S. population.
- Most immigrants (77%) are in the country legally, while unauthorized immigrants are almost a quarter of U.S. foreign-born population according to new Pew Research Center estimates based on census data adjusted for undercount.
- Some 27% of immigrants were permanent residents and 5% were temporary residents in 2017. Another 23% of all immigrants were unauthorized immigrants. From 1990 to 2007, the unauthorized immigrant population more than tripled in size – from 3.5 million to a record high of 12.2 million in 2007. By 2017, that number had declined by 1.7 million, or 14%. There were 10.5 million unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. in 2017, accounting for 3.2% of the nation’s population.
- In 2018, most immigrants lived in just 20 major metropolitan areas, with the largest populations in the New York, Los Angeles and Miami metro areas. These top 20 metro areas were home to 28.7 million immigrants, or 64% of the nation’s total foreign-born population. Most of the nation’s unauthorized immigrant population lived in these top metro areas as well.
- In 2017, about 29 million immigrants were working or looking for work in the U.S., making up some 17% of the total civilian labor force. Lawful immigrants made up the majority of the immigrant

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Hipsman and Meissner, “Immigration in the United States: New Economic, Social, Political Landscapes with Legislative Reform on the Horizon.”

workforce, at 21.2 million. An additional 7.6 million immigrant workers are unauthorized immigrants.⁷

Hipsman and Meissner further state that the “DHS estimates that 59 percent of unauthorized residents are Mexican born; with El Salvador accounting for 6 percent, Guatemala 5 percent, Honduras 3 percent, and China 2 percent. The ten leading countries of origin also include the Philippines, India, Korea, Ecuador, and Vietnam, which represented 85 percent of the unauthorized immigrant population in 2011.”⁸

Additionally, the Open Society Foundation reports that “two-thirds of undocumented immigrants have been living in the United States for more than 10 years and many of them live with their children who are U.S. citizens.”⁹ According to Hipsman and Meissner, “Roughly 46 percent of unauthorized adult immigrants are parents of young children. As of 2010, there were 5.5 million minors with at least one unauthorized parent. While 1 million of these minors are also unauthorized, the vast majority—4.5 million—are U.S.-born, and are, therefore, American citizens.”¹⁰

Current Immigration Dilemma

William F. McDonald¹¹ claims that immigrants are vulnerable to exploitation due to many reasons which include their need for employment, their necessary reliance upon the representations of numerous officials, salesman, employers, landlords, employment agents, lawyers, notaries, their distrust of the police and government officials, and their lack of knowledge of the language, laws, and the culture of the host society. Furthermore, immigrants who are poor and uneducated are easy targets of fraud because they are even less able to protect themselves from predators who exploit their vulnerabilities.¹²

McDonald further states that undocumented immigrants are easy targets for endless scams because they are desperate to obtain citizenship or work papers. This typically occurs when some employment agencies go abroad to recruit workers promising them a job and good working conditions which later never come to fruition. The hopeful foreign workers subsequently fall out of status and are subjected to poor living conditions and lower wages

⁷ Abby Budiman, “Key Findings About U.S. Immigrants,” Pew Research Center. August 20, 2020. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/20/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/>

⁸ Hipsman and Meissner, “Immigration in the United States: New Economic, Social, Political Landscapes with Legislative Reform on the Horizon.”

⁹ Open Society Foundations, “Why Does U.S. Need Immigration Reform?”

¹⁰ Hipsman and Meissner, “Immigration in the United States: New Economic, Social, Political Landscapes with Legislative Reform on the Horizon.”

¹¹ William F. McDonald is Professor in the Department of Sociology at Georgetown University in Washington, DC; and Co-Director at the Institute of Criminal Law and Procedure at the Law Center in the US (<https://www.palgrave.com/gp/book/9783319690612#aboutAuthors>).

¹² William F. McDonald, *The Criminal Victimization of Immigrants* (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 47.

than what was promised. In other cases, employers refuse to pay workers or pay them unfair amounts when they know that the workers are undocumented immigrants who will not go to the authorities if they are not paid for the work they have been hired to perform.¹³ Kevin R. Johnson, Professor of Public Interest Law and Chicana/o Studies at the University of California, Davis, points out that:

With the fear of deportation shaping all social and economic interactions, many undocumented immigrants, not surprisingly, accept what employers offer, no questions asked, and work long hours for low wages and few benefits. Understanding that undocumented immigrants enjoy little in the way of actual legal protections and deeply feared deportation, many employers cannot resist the temptation to exploit them. The making of demands by undocumented immigrants on employers means loss of a job. Laws other than the immigration laws also contribute to the exploitation of undocumented immigrants.¹⁴

Another aspect of victimization involves illegal housing where undocumented immigrants are subjected to live in overcrowded facilities that cater to more people than the law allows.¹⁵ This put people at risk in an unsafe and unhealthy environment. According to McDonald:

In Brookhaven, NY, where in 2005 town officials were shutting overcrowded houses, one home had between 14 and 42 people living there, each paying \$50/week. The house had various code violations, including exposed electrical wires, blocked doors, litter, and no smoke detectors. ...In the course of a little more than one month, seven houses that were targeted by officials had as many as 240 tenants. Regarding one house, a town official said, "No human being, no animal should ever live in that house. It's a death trap waiting to happen."¹⁶

McDonald adds that illegal immigration has revived involuntary servitude or slavery. For example:

In February 1998, the FBI broke up an alien smuggling/prostitution ring that brought 20 girls, some as young as 13, from Mexico to Florida, enslaved them for two years and forced them into prostitution to work off the

¹³ McDonald, *The Criminal Victimization of Immigrants*, 48.

¹⁴ Kevin R. Johnson, *Opening the Floodgates: Why America Needs to Rethink Its Borders and Immigration Laws* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2007), 120.

¹⁵ McDonald, *The Criminal Victimization of Immigrants*, 49.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 50.

smuggling fee. A family of six illegal immigrants from Mexico operated the sex/slavery ring in Florida, Texas, and South Carolina. They are accused of beating the women, raping some, and forcing two to have abortions.¹⁷

Illegal immigration has influenced many initiatives to be undertaken to remedy the crisis. For example, according to Budiman from the Pew Research Center, approximately 337,000 immigrants were deported from the U.S. in fiscal 2018, the Obama administration deported about 3 million immigrants between 2009 and 2016, 2 million immigrants were deported by the Bush administration between 2001 and 2008, and the Trump administration deported 295,000 immigrants in 2017.¹⁸

The historical overview shows the restrictive exclusions and inherent racialization of the law that may have contributed to the current immigration situation. In their book, *Living Illegal*, Marquardt et. al.¹⁹ point out that many politicians today use unauthorized immigration as a hot topic that is linked with “racial stereotypes and violent criminality.” They add that the word *illegal* is now an emotionally charged term that dehumanizes the unauthorized immigrants by objectifying them as faceless criminals. Thus, the pervasive use of the term *illegal* does not give any possibility to think about “the moral and policy contradictions” that necessitated people to depart their residences and “risk their lives crossing the border without authorization or to overstay visas and live in a precarious status.” Simply put, the term *illegal* contributes to a climate of “mistrust, hostility, and incivility” that hinders constructive immigration debate thus impeding the “search for rational, pragmatic, and long-term repairs to the broken immigration system.”²⁰

Marquardt et. al. argue that immigrants are a major part of American history. The process of building the nation of the United States heavily relied on successive waves of migrants who came both voluntary and forced, as was the case with the slaves from Africa. Immigrants and their offspring have been instrumental in “building the infrastructure, economy, and culture of American society.” It is noteworthy then that the groups of people who are now viewed as threats to the American society during the twentieth century constitute a part of what is now believed to be mainstream US culture. The stories of immigrants are subsequently the story of the American dream.²¹

Therefore, for a country that is largely built by immigrants and prides itself on Christian values, it is an outcry that hospitality is not being

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Abby Budiman, “Key Findings About U.S. Immigrants.”

¹⁹ Marie F. Marquardt is a Scholar-in-Residence at Emory University’s Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, Georgia. Timothy J. Steigenga is a professor of political science and chair of social sciences and humanities at the Wilkes Honor College at Florida Atlantic University. Philip J. Williams is the director of the Center of Latin American Studies at the University of Florida. Manuel A. Vasquez is a professor of religion at the University of Florida at Gainesville.

²⁰ Marie F. Marquardt, Timothy J. Steigenga, Philip J. Williams, and Manuel A. Vásquez, *Living “Illegal”*: *The Human Face of Unauthorized Immigration* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2011), 9-10.

²¹ Ibid., 54.

emphasized in the US immigration debate. The above statistics are daunting, and some may argue that the undocumented immigrants deserve whatever treatment is meted out to them because of their illegal status. However, should they be rendered faceless and dehumanized simply because of their immigration status? What should the biblical approach to this ongoing and prevalent injustice be? What could be causing such laxity among Christians to this grave issue that requires an urgent and God-centered response? Christians must endeavor to live with a deep yearning for greater social justice. In the next section, this paper will investigate the works of four interlocutors to analyze their biblical viewpoints on the immigration debate.

Review of Scholarly Arguments

This discussion now turns to the scholarly arguments of James Hoffmeier, M. Daniel Carroll, Matthew Sorens and Jenny Hwang. James Hoffmeier is a professor of Old Testament and Near Eastern Archaeology at the Divinity School at Trinity International University in Deerfield, Illinois, and the author of *The Immigration Crisis: Immigration, Aliens and the Bible* (2009). M. Daniel Carroll is a professor of Old Testament at Denver Seminary in Littleton, Colorado, and the author of *Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible* (2008). Matthew Sorens is an accredited immigration and citizenship counselor on the Board of Immigration Appeals at World Relief DuPage in Wheaton, Illinois. Jenny Hwang is director of advocacy and policy of the Refugee and Immigration Program of World Relief, located in Baltimore, Maryland. Matthew Sorens and Jenny Hwang are the authors of *Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion & Truth in the Immigration Debate* (2009).

James K. Hoffmeier

James K. Hoffmeier finds it surprising that the Old Testament is frequently referenced to defend the status of illegal immigrants in the current immigration debate. He states that though scripture advocates for showing compassion for the alien in ancient Israel, those who defend illegal aliens cannot use it as a rationale for rewriting current laws. By doing so they “make a simplistic correlation between the ancient Israelite social law and the modern situation as if the Bible was addressing the same problem.”²²

Hoffmeier points out that that *ger* is the Hebrew word that is mostly translated as “stranger” (KJV, NASB, JB), “sojourner” (RSV, ESV), “alien” (NEB, NIV, NJB, NRSV), and “foreigner” (TNIV, NLT). The word *ger* occurs more than 80 times as a noun and about the same number of times as a verb and typically means “to sojourn” or “live as an alien.” However, some translations such as the TNIV and NLT are misleading in rendering *ger* as “foreigner” because *nekhar* and *zar* are the more appropriate Hebrew words. Although all three Hebrew terms refer to foreigners who might enter another

²² Hoffmeier, “The Use and Abuse of the Bible in the Immigration Debate.”

country, the *ger* had obtained legal status.²³ In other words, the *ger* was “a person who entered Israel and followed legal procedures to obtain recognized standing as a resident alien.”²⁴ Simply put, *ger* refer to those who are legal residents in a country who would have access to most of the rights of citizenship. Other persons who did not hold recognized status were referred to using other Hebrew terms that denoted that they were “foreigners” who did not have the same advantages and rights that sojourners did.²⁵

Furthermore, countries in the ancient biblical world had borders that were protected and respected which meant that foreigners desiring to reside in another country needed to obtain permission to be considered an alien with certain rights and privileges. Thus, aliens or strangers (*ger*) received all the benefits and protection of a citizen, while the foreigner (*nekhar*) did not. Hoffmeier states that “nowhere in the Old Testament is there any sense that a nation had to accept immigrants, nor was being received as an alien a right.”²⁶ Hoffmeier further asserts that, “It is wrong, therefore, to confuse these two categories of foreigners and then to use passages regarding the *ger* as if they were relevant to illegal immigrants of today.”²⁷

Consequently, Hoffmeier is emphasizing that countries in ancient times were recognized as sovereign nations and so their territorial borders were taken seriously. As a result, legal aliens were privileged to the rights and benefits that is afforded to a country’s citizenship. On the other hand, however, he posits that:

Illegal immigrants should not expect the same privileges from the state whose laws they disregard by virtue of their undocumented status. The Bible clearly distinguishes between the status of illegal alien (*ger*) and a foreigner (*nekhar* and *zar*), and one consequence is that there really is a difference between the legal standing of a present-day documented alien and an illegal immigrant. Therefore it is legally and morally acceptable for government to deal with those in the country illegally according to the nation's legal provisions. The Christian insists however that they be dealt with in a humane manner.²⁸

Wayne Grudem, Professor of Theology and Biblical Studies at Phoenix Seminary in Arizona points out that the general responsibility of the government from a biblical standpoint is to seek the good of the nation that it governs (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-14). This signifies that the immigration policies that the nation puts in place should be beneficial to that nation.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Hoffmeier, *The Immigration Crisis: Immigrants, Aliens, and the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 52.

²⁵ Ibid., 89.

²⁶ Ibid., 156.

²⁷ Hoffmeier, “The Use and Abuse of the Bible in the Immigration Debate.”

²⁸ Ibid., 156-157.

Consequently, the US should design immigration policies that bring benefit to the well-being of the entire nation. Furthermore, the US “should control all immigration processes so that the country gives priority to accepting those people who will most like make a positive contribution to the US society.”²⁹

Regarding illegal immigrants, Grudem suggests that:

Churches must kindly but honestly counsel such illegal immigrants that the Bible teaches that we are all to be “subject to the governing authorities” (Rom. 13:1). Therefore God requires us to be obedient to the laws of the nation in which we live. The current immigration laws of the United States require that people come here through an established legal process, and obeying that process does not require anyone to sin against God, so it does not fall under the category of the laws that we may in good conscience disobey. Illegal immigrants are obligated before God to obey the immigration laws of the United States.³⁰

Hoffmeier’s distinction between the status of the stranger (*ger*) from that of the foreigner, (*nekhar* and *zar*) as well as arguing for the protection of a country’s territorial border are commendable. Additionally, Grudem has highlighted the benefit that proper immigration should afford a country and how the church should respond to the laws of the land. However, one cannot deny that the bible commands the people of God to treat those who sojourn in another country fairly and justly regardless of status (cf. Exodus 23:9; Lev 19:33; Deut 10:19).

M. Daniel Carroll

M. Daniel Carroll, in his book *Christians at the Border*, challenges Christians to reevaluate their starting point in the immigration debate. He proposes that Christians hold a divine viewpoint on immigration instead of being caught up in the “passionate ideological arguments, economic wrangling, or racial sentiments that pervade the national discourse.”³¹ While racial sentiment is an inherent part of the conversation due to racialization that has been a part of the US history, Carroll is saying that God created people in His image and therefore values them. This means that the attitudes and actions of Christians towards immigrants must be governed by this insight. The fact that immigrants are human beings bearing the *imago Dei* must be the foundation for any discussion. “Ultimately, immigration is about people. This is where the discussion should begin, not with legal status.”³² Carroll is implying that the issue is about human dignity.

²⁹ Wayne Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible: A Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Modern Political Issues in Light of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 471-472.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 481.

³¹ Carroll, *Christians at the Border*, xxv.

³² *Ibid.*, 49.

Carroll adds that referring to immigrants as illegal aliens “can carry a pejorative connotation, suggesting by definition that the person is guilty of some act, has few scruples, and is prone to civil disobedience.”³³ He asserts that this is not the case with most immigrants who would gladly seize the opportunity to regularize their status within the U.S. if the existing system provided the appropriate avenues to do so. Furthermore, these immigrants are not criminals but simply lack the proper documentation required by the government and the workplace. Additionally, using the common label *alien*³⁴ can suggest “the sense of someone unchangeably foreign and other, without hope of reconciliation or mediation. *Illegal aliens*, therefore, is unhelpfully prejudicial. *Undocumented immigrant* is a more just label and better represents the present reality.”³⁵

Marquardt et. al. suggest that the term *unauthorized immigrant* may be more factually correct in some cases since many immigrants are out of status after entering the country at a place other than the designated port on entry or after overstaying their tourist or work-based visas. They further state that debates about unauthorized immigration are simply about semantics but are “shaped by a widespread lack of knowledge of the root causes of this immigration and, most important, of the situation unauthorized immigrants face in their daily lives.”³⁶

Carroll asserts that the United States is seemingly finding it more difficult to be hospitable, to make time for others and to welcome them into one’s home.³⁷ Additionally, the current Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has complicated the issue of hospitality due to the precautionary measures, such as social distancing and avoiding large gatherings, that are in place to avoid widespread infections. However, should Christians in America be so unthinking or overcautious that they fail to be hospitable to their neighbor, and ultimately the stranger? Carroll seeks to answer this question by stating that the biblical mandate to be hospitable to the stranger is set before the individual Christian and Christian communities. Furthermore, the key is to have an attitude of hospitality and a gracious spirit toward these strangers.³⁸ It therefore shows that America, and Christians more specifically, should welcome and be hospitable to all immigrants.

Carroll also suggests that in addition to functioning as sanctuaries of worship, churches can serve as networking centers for finding jobs and helping those in need; some work to connect immigrants to appropriate resources for

³³ *Ibid.*, xxviii.

³⁴ In a Fact Sheet from the White House dated January 20, 2021, the Biden Administration proposed the U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021 bill which “recognizes America as a nation of immigrants” and recommends that the word “alien” be changed to “noncitizen” in the immigration laws. The main points that the bill addresses are available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/01/20/fact-sheet-president-biden-sends-immigration-bill-to-congress-as-part-of-his-commitment-to-modernize-our-immigration-system/>

³⁵ Carroll, *Christians at the Border*, xxix.

³⁶ Marquardt, Steigenga, Williams, and Vásquez, “*Living “Illegal,”*” 8-9.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 78.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

getting their legal matters straightened out. Congregations may also take on the role of the extended family in the respective cultures.³⁹

Matthew Sorens and Jenny Hwang

In keeping with Carroll's viewpoint, Sorens and Hwang advocate for compassionate and concrete ways for local churches to cater to immigrants in their book, *Welcoming the Stranger*. They present two perspectives on the immigration issue that currently exist in the United States. On the one hand, they state that:

Our nation is facing an unprecedented invasion of illegal aliens, who violate our laws upon entry and then become a drain on social services and public education systems, depress wages and displace native-born American workers, and then contribute to increases in poverty and crime rates.⁴⁰

This statement reflects the rhetoric that characterizes many of the speeches that are given by government officials and policymakers who lobby for stricter protection of the nation's borders and tend to be keen on removing the "illegal aliens" especially during the election period.

The other perspective that Sorens and Hwang offer is that:

Millions of people who have, usually for economic reasons, accepted displacement from their home countries to pursue a better life for themselves and their families in the United States, just as generations of immigrants have done before them. Tragically, from this perspective, these people are not welcomed into our society, but are scapegoated and forced into shadowy existence by broken immigration laws, even though they contribute to our nation's economy by performing a host of jobs, most of which few native-born Americans would be willing to do.⁴¹

This second perspective is more often held by sympathizers who advocate for favorable immigration reform so that those that have been displaced can still aspire to a lifestyle that is better than the one that they absconded.

Sorens and Hwang point out that those who seek to follow Christ are faced with the challenge of sorting through the rhetoric to understand how to reflect God's justice as well as his love and compassion in creating a national immigration policy, and with the challenge of relating individually to the immigrants and refugees in their communities. Further assessment of the immigration dilemma shows that immigrants are people who are made in the image of God who should be treated with respect, and similarly God has

³⁹ Carroll, *Christians at the Border*, 36.

⁴⁰ Sorens and Hwang, *Welcoming the Stranger*, 11.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

instituted the government and the laws it legislates for a reason and Christians are generally required to submit to the law of the land. This quandary leaves many conflicted and unsure of what they are obligated to do as Christians.⁴² Sorens and Hwang continue by stating that the current immigration dilemma presents a special challenge because there is no mention or consideration for legal status when scripture refers to immigrants. They point out that many Christians would readily agree that they should care for the immigrants and refugees in a general sense but are concerned about the issue of legal status. As a result, they are not sure that they want to or should assist individuals whose presence in the United States is unlawful.⁴³

Sorens and Hwang show that the African American population in the US, for example, is a people group that is descended from African slaves who were forced to come to the United States and has been struggling for a long time to attain their rights. It took Americans a long while to realize the injustice of having a “second tier” of human beings and it was not until the 1960s that they passed legislation that recognized the worth and dignity of every human today. Nevertheless, discrimination and inequality persist to this day. Subsequently, churches should be a place where Christians can interact with immigrants who are open to hear the good news. According to Sorens and Hwang, Christians should be open to the possibility of their own transformation as they have fellowship with immigrant communities while testifying of the gospel.⁴⁴

Sorens and Hwang further argue that the church must be a place of reconciliation in a broken world that can offer a just and biblical response to the growing diversity of people in the US. Immigrant populations present grand opportunities for the church for evangelism and doing ministry in its own locale. In other words, churches within the US can do evangelism among foreigners who are residing locally instead of just traveling to foreign lands to do missions. What is evident is that God is allowing Christians the ability to adapt and respond to the immigrant situation to accomplish his greater purposes. The proper way of being obedient to God is to submit to what is essential to his heart. As such, more churches should choose to welcome and integrate immigrants into their communities of faith. Religious leaders should also use their moral authority and experience with immigrant communities to advocate for the fixing of the broken immigration system.⁴⁵ Sorens and Hwang also assert that, “The American church’s role in welcoming and speaking out on behalf of all people groups will be pivotal in providing kingdom perspective on the immigration debate.”⁴⁶

According to Sorens and Hwang, Christians in the US have a biblical mandate to respond to the immigration dilemma. Scripture makes it very clear that there should be special concern for the stranger, to love him or her as oneself, and to welcome him or her into places of worship and residence as if

⁴² Ibid., 13.

⁴³ Ibid., 107-108.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 174.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 174-175.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 175.

serving Jesus himself. As followers of Christ, God's commands must be obeyed wholeheartedly. The Christian then who seeks to biblically address the immigration situation should do so through: prayer for those immigrants who are suffering and for policies that honor God and reflect His justice; knowing, learning from and serving immigrant neighbors; giving to organizations and ministries that serve the poor and are prohibited from serving undocumented immigrants due to inadequate financial resources from funding sources such as government agencies; educating their churches and communities; biblical advocacy for justice that gives voice to the voiceless and illuminates the current realities of injustices; and by addressing the root issues of immigration which are often as a result of difficult and sometimes unlivable conditions in other parts of the world.⁴⁷

Hospitality as a Guiding Principle

The biblical vision for society is rooted in a longing for a perfect community of love that facilitates the harmonious communion of all humanity with each other and with God. All human beings have a legitimate claim to resources that allows them to function fully in human society.⁴⁸ The church should proclaim and represent a kingdom of righteousness, justice, and peace among the widows, orphans, sick, poor, exploited, and marginalized. Scripture shows that even in simple societies, individuals (Matt 25:31-46), families (1 Tim 5:8), and even governments (Dan 4:27) have responsibilities to take care of each other.⁴⁹ Christians should therefore endeavor to treat all persons humanely and justly while doing all they can to be hospitable to undocumented immigrants.

Carroll asserts that it is a virtue to be hospitable to the stranger. It was evident throughout the Old Testament that protocols and expectations were in place for host countries to be openhanded as they respond in hospitable ways toward the stranger. This hospitality came with the assumption that acts of kindness would be reciprocated if the host journeyed to the guest's homeland. This custom of hospitality was displayed by Job who stated that "no stranger had to spend the night in the street, for my door was always open to the traveler" (Job 31:32). Other examples of hospitality in the Old Testament include Abraham's dealings with the three strangers who appeared to him in Genesis 18, the self-sacrifice shown by the poor widow of Zarephath who was willing to share the little food she had remaining for herself and her son with Elijah in 1 Kings 17, and the care given to Elisha by the Shunamite couple in 2 Kings 4. These examples highlight that generosity toward those in need is an attribute of God himself. Subsequently, the people of God must be distinguished by this same charitable spirit. The cultural impulse to be

⁴⁷ Ibid., 177-185.

⁴⁸ Kent A. Van Til, *Less Than Two Dollars a Day: A Christian View of World Poverty and the Free Market* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2007), 83-84.

⁴⁹ Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor...and Yourself* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 44.

hospitable to the stranger in ancient times must be just as relevant today because “to be hospitable is to imitate God.”⁵⁰

Daniela C. Augustine⁵¹ points out that hospitality, *philoxenia* in Greek, literally means “love for strangers” and connotes “benevolence and justice” for the other, especially those in the vulnerable group including the orphan, the widow, and the stranger. Furthermore, this hospitality to sojourners is based on the covenantal relationship that was instituted by God and does not require that they conform to the prevailing culture of the land before they receive the gift of hospitality. Additionally, *philoxenia* signifies a form of hospitality that is not natural but more so divine and supernatural since it is a gift of the “Creator sharing Himself with His creature.”⁵² In other words, hospitality is a “work and gift of the Spirit expressing the charismatic presence of God in and with His people on earth – the community of the saints – the embodied human form of the Trinitarian communal life.”⁵³

Consequently, the Christian who practices hospitality to strangers or immigrants allows them to experience the justice of God as they experience discrimination and other forms of injustices as a result of a broken and racialized immigration system. In other words, “humane treatment of aliens follows the spirit of the hospitality code, but it also recognizes a class of persons who are not citizens and who could be subject to discrimination or abuse if special provision were not made for them.”⁵⁴

Todd M. Johnson and Cindy M. Wu⁵⁵ argue that “hospitality is key to developing friendships that promote reconciliation and unity.” They posit a covenantal form of hospitality that has the power to transform people’s hearts toward others. Furthermore, hospitality is a moral practice that carries the understanding that all human beings are the *imago Dei* or image bearers of God. This helps to establish a common humanity and enriches one’s understanding of hospitality. Johnson and Wu suggest that Christians can be hospitable to the stranger by opening their doors and welcoming others into their lives, by opening their tables with homecooked meals and through the Eucharist, and by opening their arms and minds to those who share different ethnicities, cultures, or religions. “Christian hospitality, therefore, is to be an ordinary, daily pursuit, not limited to times of crisis, special needs, or holidays.”⁵⁶

Augustine further states that:

⁵⁰ Carroll, *Christians at the Border*, 76-78.

⁵¹ Dr. Daniela C. Augustine is a Reader in World Christianity and Pentecostal Studies in the Department of Theology and Religion at the University of Birmingham, UK.

⁵² Daniela C. Augustine, *Pentecost, Hospitality, and Transfiguration: Toward a Spirit-inspired Vision of Social Transformation* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2012), 44-45.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁵⁴ John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 101.

⁵⁵ Todd M. Johnson is director of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity and associate professor of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts. Cindy M. Wu has served in various church planting contexts.

⁵⁶ Todd M. Johnson and Cindy M. Wu, *Our Global Families: Christians Embracing Common Identity in a Changing World* (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 138-147.

The Church, conversely, is free from the restrictions of legislated hospitality to the stranger and can function as a true public welcoming community on the threshold between cultural, linguistic, and racial divides. The Church – herself a community of aliens, strangers, and pilgrims from every tongue and nation – is a continual recipient of the hospitality of God and her cultural marginality delineates her status as both the guest and host of the Kingdom in the midst of alternative socio-political contexts of this world.⁵⁷

Augustine is therefore saying that churches, especially those in the US, should gladly welcome the stranger because in doing so they showcase God’s divine hospitality to the world. Additionally, churches should be free from the prejudice of the current immigration system because they comprise many immigrants who are familiar with or have suffered discrimination. Christians today can, and should, demonstrate of genuine love and hospitality towards all people regardless of ethnicity and immigration status. By reflecting on the deep-seated meaning of the *imago Dei*, all people groups will recognize that diversity, which is God’s intent for humanity, does not mean that individuals should be indifferent to each other.

Conclusion

The pathway to biblically addressing the treatment of undocumented immigrants in the US will require intentionality and must be undergirded by genuine love that fosters mutual respect and human dignity. The US immigration system is fraught with restrictive exclusions and inherent racialization that decries the Christian principles and biblical values on which the nation prides itself. Furthermore, the current immigration situation shows that hospitality is not being emphasized in the US immigration debate. There is a great need for racial reconciliation and reemphasis of the biblical view of hospitality in response to strangers or immigrants.

Sorens and Hwang make the point that many Christians are uncomfortable with the idea of, and some are even hostile toward, undocumented immigrants. Though Micah 6:8 gives the instruction “to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God,” they claim that some Christians feel a tension between doing justice and loving mercy. On one hand, these Christians have no problem following and enforcing the law but, on the other hand, they view mercy as excusing those who have violated a law even without malicious intent in doing so. Soren and Hwang continue by stating that many Christians have pointed to Romans 13:1 which says, “Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities...the authorities that exist have been established by God.” A warning is given in verse 4 of the same chapter which plainly states that those who disobey the civil authority should expect judgement. This produces a dilemma: scripture mandates the

⁵⁷ Augustine, *Pentecost, Hospitality, and Transfiguration*, 61-62.

welcoming of the stranger without reference to legal status, but it also instructs us to obey and respect the law instituted by government authorities.⁵⁸ What then is the solution to this paradox? Would God be on the side of those who uphold the law at the expense of human dignity? Absolutely not!

While Christians must submit to the governing authorities, which were established by God, they must at the same time recognize that the laws were created for the well-being of human beings and society. If Christians are to seek God's justice, then it becomes a matter of not only following the law but knowing if the law itself is just. Sorens and Hwang emphatically assert that the law must ultimately answer to God's higher law, which requires us to treat all humankind with sanctity. All persons bear the *imago Dei* and as such must be treated with dignity and respect. The argument at hand is not advocating for a person to enter the country without a visa. Those who desire to enter the United States legally to visit, work, study, or reside should be welcomed by the church when they arrive. The issue for many undocumented immigrants is that "there is no restorative measure to address the infraction of entering illegally or overstaying a visa." In these instances, the bible should be consulted to help inform the Church and the nation about "justice, restitution, redemption, restoration and integration into covenant communities." Immigrants should be given "an opportunity to admit unlawful behavior of maintaining undocumented presence in the United States, but the punishment should correlate reasonably with the offence committed."⁵⁹

It is imperative to point out that the extension of such hospitality to undocumented immigrants comes with the responsibility to conform to the law of the land as they are being fully integrated into the Church and society. Johnson and Wu refer to this as covenantal hospitality. They state that hospitality to strangers was commanded by God to reflect his generous and inclusive love and mercy and is also connected to God's invitation to His kingdom.⁶⁰ The Church in the United States is poised to extend this invitation to the immigrants when they welcome and entreat them. Immigrants, regardless of legal status, need to experience covenantal hospitality as they assimilate into the host country. Many who have fallen prey to injustices could have been helped by Christians who were not afraid to "open their doors" to aid a stranger.

In summary, immigration is about people who have been created in the image of God ("So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" Gen. 1:27). This should be the starting point of the pathway to biblically addressing the exploitation of undocumented immigrants. This is a major implication for the Church as it considers immigration policies. Christians must endeavor to live with a deep yearning for greater social justice as they consider the plight of the undocumented immigrants who face grave oppression due their vulnerable status. Immigration is indeed a fact of life in the US so hospitality should be a

⁵⁸ Sorens and Hwang, *Welcoming the Stranger*, 108.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁶⁰ Johnson and Wu, *Our Global Families*, 139.

cultural value. The Church should offer a louder voice in the immigration debate, but one that presents a biblical perspective as she guides the nation back to its Christian foundation that fosters genuine love, mutual respect, and human dignity for one's neighbors.

The viewpoints of Hoffmeier, Carroll, and Matthew Sorens and Jenny Hwang challenge Christians to reevaluate their approach to dealing with the pervasive issue undocumented immigrants. They point out how easy it is to ignore illegal immigrants as they exist in the shadows of society while being subjected to unending discrimination and exploitation. The law of the land should always be held in tension with God's divine justice. God hates when vulnerable people, including foreigners, are unjustly oppressed. Biblical laws exist to govern the treatment of foreigners. God is sovereignly involved in the migration of all peoples. This would mean that God is present in some way in the migrations that are being witnessed worldwide. Consequently, immigrants and refugees are involved in the plan for the progressing of world history and the divine mission.

Scripture shows that justice included special provision and protection of the weakest, and oftentimes defenseless, in Israel – the widows, orphans, and foreigners. God's people were called to emulate God's character, which includes doing justice, mercy, and righteousness. This also applies to the church and by extension Christians today within in the United States. God was and is still very concerned with meeting the needs of all His people especially *strangers* who find it difficult to adequately take care of themselves and their families in a country that is not their native homeland. The people of God should endeavor to treat all persons humanely and justly while doing all that they can to be hospitable to undocumented immigrants. Hospitality, not immigration status or ethnicity, should be the guiding principle for the dignified treatment of all immigrants.

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**OVERCOMING SYSTEMIC BARRIERS FOR WOMEN IN
LEADERSHIP
AT CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

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“It’s not the ceiling that’s holding women back; it’s the whole structure of the organizations in which we work: the foundation, the beams, the walls, the very air. The barriers to advancement are not just above women, they are all around them.”-- Myerson and Fletcher¹

Abstract

This essay illuminates several vital themes and their implications concerning the future of women in Christian higher education. Leadership from women has been steadily increasing over the years in Christian higher education, which warrants further discussion. This paper delves into the work of two interlocutors, Karen Longman and Caroline Turner, analyzing their views on this topic, and drawing out implications for the future of women in leadership in Christian higher education. The above quote just scratches the surface of what many women leaders are feeling at Christian higher education institutions. Systemic barriers are present in many institutions that limit the ability of women to lead in these contexts, promoting frustration and further demoralization. Therefore, this essay examines the barriers that inhibit women from advancing in leadership at these institutions and argues that Christian higher educational institutions should be at the forefront of seeking diversity in their leadership. The discussion concludes by offering ideas to help propel women into positions of leadership as a demonstration of just and biblical practices for the benefit of women, the students they impact, and their institutions.

Current Trends for Women in Leadership in Christian Higher Education

“Dealing with the senior, [mostly white] males in my department has been a huge challenge. . . . I don’t know if they tend to discount my contributions because I’m new, female, Latina, young, or what. Perhaps a combination of all of the above.”²

¹ D. E. Myerson and J. K. Fletcher, “A Modest Manifesto for Shattering the Glass Ceiling,” *Harvard Business Review* (2000, January-February), 136.

² Caroline S.V. Turner, “Women of Color in Academe: Living with Multiple Marginality,” *Journal of Higher Education* 73:1 (2002) 77.

Through a brief look at literature and the world around us, it is evident that women have faced several challenges to equality in numerous aspects of life. From basic liberties to a more equal and fair treatment between genders, women have fought and suffered for true equality since what seems like the dawn of time. Barbara Solomon,³ considered by many to be a pioneer in women's studies, starts her book on the history of women in higher education with the following statement: "Colonial Americans in the 1600s would have dismissed summarily the notion of women attaining, or even wanting, a college education."⁴ In particular, leadership has historically been thought to be a man's duty only. This is evident by the fact that very few women hold positional leadership in the corporate world. Karen Longman offers much insight into gender inequality. She has been a professor at Azusa Pacific University (APU) in Azusa, CA since 2006. She is the program director of the Ph.D. in Higher Education program at APU. She received her degree from the University of Michigan and has served in several administrative roles in higher education throughout the years, including Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dean of Faculty, and more. She is currently a senior fellow for the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU) and continues to lead professional development and research programs. Longman writes, "Across the Standard & Poor's 500 companies, women currently hold 4.6% of the CEO positions, 19.2% of the board seats, and only 25.1% of those in the ranks of senior-level officials and management."⁵ The most shocking aspect of these statistics is not the numerical underrepresentation, but the fact that this study was published in 2015.

As one focuses on higher education, the gender inequality continues along the same trend. Pamela Eddy writes, "Currently, women represent 27% of all 2-year college presidents relative to 18% at baccalaureate colleges and to the 13% of women leading doctoral universities."⁶ It is evident that although women are entering educational institutions in large numbers as students, the same trend is not occurring in terms of filling positions as faculty and senior leadership at these same institutions. Despite this travesty, many Christians would hope and expect that the statistics in Christian higher education would be much different. As Longman et al. points out, "Christian colleges and universities should be setting the standard across higher education for identifying, encouraging, and deploying the gifts of individuals across racial and gender lines."⁷

³ She was a prominent educator and taught many courses as a faculty member of Harvard. She taught Harvard's first course on the history of American women and was a leading historian in this field.

⁴ Barbara M. Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 1985), 1.

⁵ Karen A. Longman, "Women in Leadership: The Future of Christian Higher Education," *Journal of Christian Higher Education* 15:1 (2016) 25. The Standard & Poor 500 is a stock market index of 500 large companies on the stock exchange in the United States.

⁶ Pamela L. Eddy, in Chapter 1: "Leading Gracefully" by Diane R. Dean, Susan J. Bracken, and Jeanie K. Allen in *Women in Academic Leadership: Professional Strategies, Personal Choices* (Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2009), 8.

⁷ Longman, "Women in Leadership," 25.

The biblical mandate to promote equity and fairness cannot be more concrete, yet it seems to be ignored due to a variety of reasons which will be discussed later. Scripture unmistakably shows the intention of God's heart to expose injustices, including the oppression of women (John 4:1-42; Luke 8:2), polygamy (Mark 10:1-12), segregation, slavery (Gal. 3:28), and more. Jesus constantly went to the marginalized and those segregated from society. He went to the oppressed women as seen in the report of his conversation with the woman at the well in chapter 4 of John's gospel. He went to those hated by society and viewed as sinners. He went to places that a savior never would have gone by society's standards.

Focusing on data from the member institutions of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU), the statistics worsen. In 1999, none of the 90 member institutions had a female president. "Today there are only three women presidents out of CCCU's 105 member colleges and universities."⁸ These issues pervade into other areas of Christian institutions, including both faculty and senior leadership. Currently, 19% of individuals holding Chief Academic Officer (CAO) positions are women.⁹ In addition, although women are the student majority at Christian higher education institutions (67%), only a third of all faculty are women at these institutions.¹⁰ Despite claims that this is a coincidence or that women are simply not applying for these jobs, the numbers simply do not add up when comparing men and women at these institutions. For example,

Among this small cadre [women faculty], only a third are tenured (32%) and less than a fifth (18%) hold professor rank. In comparison, half of men faculty are tenured (50%) and over two fifths (42%) hold professor rank. At the other end of the continuum, 15% of women faculty are instructors – a proportion three times higher than that for men faculty. Aggregating all faculty ranks, women faculty are paid roughly 20% to 25% less than men faculty are, even after controlling for experience.¹¹

The disparity and inequality could not be more evident. Again, should not Christians be examples living out the biblical mandate for equality found in Galatians 3:28? At the very least, Christian institutions should definitely not be the perpetrators of such inequitable treatment.

Unfortunately, the imbalanced treatment does not stop there as one begins to explore how ethnic and racial differences impact the data. Caroline S.V. Turner is a professor at Arizona State University (ASU) in Tempe, AZ. She is the program director of the doctoral programs in higher and

⁸ Diane F. Wood, in Chapter 4: "Barriers to Women's Leadership in Faith-based Colleges and Universities" by Diane R. Dean, Susan J. Bracken, and Jeanie K. Allen in *Women in Academic Leadership: Professional Strategies, Personal Choices* (Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2009), 76.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 76-77.

postsecondary education at ASU. Turner received her Ph.D. in Administration and Policy Analysis from the University of Stanford and has won several awards, including the 2009 American Educational Research Association (AERA) Scholars of Color in Education Distinguished Career Contribution Award. She has researched extensively on women of color in higher academe, including Latino faculty in theological education. According to Turner, the issues of race and ethnicity simply compound the issue of marginality and inequality in Christian higher education institutions. “Only 3 percent of all college and university presidents are women of color.”¹² She goes as far as to state, “Pervasive racist and sexist attitudes continue to limit educational opportunities for women of color.”¹³

It is unmistakable that higher education is an Anglo dominated domain. The underrepresentation of minorities in senior administration and faculty as a whole is evident at many institutions of higher education. “Fewer than 12% of full professors in the United States were people of color: 6.5% Asian, 3% Black, 2% Hispanic, and 0.3% American Indian.”¹⁴ Unfortunately, as one looks into the current trends of women of color in higher education, the reality only gets worse. “For female faculty of color, the numbers are even more dismal: In 2005, only 1% of full professors were Black, 1% Asian, 0.6% Hispanic, and 0.1% American Indian.”¹⁵ Mark Labberton, president of Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA states that this is an issue that has persisted since the foundation of higher education institutions in America.¹⁶ As the number of underrepresented students entering higher education continues to rise, why has the number of women of color administrators not followed the same trend? One faculty member recounts her experience in higher education: “I am struck by my lived contradiction: To be a professor is to be an Anglo; to be a Latina is not to be an Anglo. So how can I be both a Latina and a professor?”¹⁷ The perpetuation of such inequalities, especially in Christian domains, continues to demarcate a lack of true understanding in regard to biblical values. Although efforts toward gender and ethnic parity have been increasing, a problem still persists and has yet to be resolved.

Despite legal initiatives, such as *Gratz and Grutter* that continue to support the diversity of faculty, Turner notes that continued issues persist as women of color in higher academe are viewed of as tokens.¹⁸ Women of color continue to suffer from feelings of isolation and marginalization,

¹² Caroline S. V. Turner, “Pathways to the Presidency: Biographic Sketches of Women of Color Firsts,” *Harvard Educational Review* 77:1 (2007) 1.

¹³ Caroline S. V. Turner and Janelle Kappes, in Chapter 7: “Preparing Women of Color for Leadership” by Diane R. Dean, Susan J. Bracken, and Jeanie K. Allen, *Women in Academic Leadership: Professional Strategies, Personal Choices* (Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2009) 149.

¹⁴ Caroline S. V. Turner, Juan Carlos González, and J. Luke Wood. “Faculty of Color in Academe: What 20 Years of Literature Tells Us,” *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 1:3 (2008) 140. *Ibid.*, 140.

¹⁵ Mark Labberton, Zoom interview with Professor Anna Droll in the course Administration and Management at South Florida Theological Seminary, October 13, 2020.

¹⁷ Turner, “Women of Color in Academe,” 75.

¹⁸ Caroline S.V. Turner, Juan Carlos González, and Kathleen Wong, “Faculty Women of Color: The Critical Nexus of Race and Gender,” *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 4:4 (2011) 199.

discrimination in hiring and promotion processes, and unrealistic expectations. They go as far as to express feelings of psychological division between home and career or in many instances between community and career. “Faculty women of color mentioned hostile, racist, sexist classroom experiences despite their field of study, types of institutions, and faculty ranks.”¹⁹ This may be due to several reasons, such as hair bias or other stereotypes found in the workplace. There are both subtle and overt racist and sexist behaviors towards minorities that are often found within the workplace.²⁰ For example, “individuals’ feelings about their hair also appear to stem from pressures that they experience in their workplace to conform to expectations about what is viewed as appropriate.”²¹

Kim Phipps, the President of Messiah University, could not describe the need for Christian educational institutions better in her following statement: “We need to honestly examine the weaknesses and flaws of our institutions, particularly the inadequate level of institutional commitment to gender and racial justice.”²²

Systemic Barriers for Women in Leadership in Christian Higher Education

“I felt that if I were a white male, my name would have been out there. I mean I am sure of that. But it never was and, you know, . . . there is no question in my mind that race and gender influenced that.”²³

It cannot be plainer, based on the statistics above, that there are significant roadblocks to both women and underrepresented minorities in Christian higher education. If there were not, women of color would be entering higher education administration at higher rates more closely reflective to the demographics of the students entering these institutions. The question then immediately arises, “What are these barriers that have been set up?” What are the roadblocks impeding women and minority groups from entering Christian higher education as faculty and administrators? Are they imposed by institutions or do women simply not desire to work in higher academe? Before barriers can be torn down, they must first be identified.

Theological Underpinnings

One of the most evident barriers to women in leadership in Christian higher education is theological in nature. Scholars point out how “Barriers to

¹⁹ Ibid., 205.

²⁰ Amanda J. Anderson, Afra S. Ahmad, Eden B. King, and Veronica Gilrane, “Subtle and Overt Behaviors Toward Ethnic Minority Leaders and the Moderating Role of Competence,” *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies* 26:3 (2019) 372.

²¹ Gail A. Dawson, Katherine A. Karl, and Joy V. Peluchette, “Hair Matters: Toward Understanding Natural Black Hair Bias in the Workplace,” *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies* 26:3 (2019) 398.

²² Wood, “Barriers to Women’s Leadership in Faith-based Colleges and Universities,” 78.

²³ Turner, “Women of Color in Academe,” 79.

women's advancement in faith-based institutions emanate from theological foundations and denominational belief systems concerning women's role in the church and society."²⁴ Various theological belief systems have implications that set up barriers to women in leadership. A short description of these theological beliefs shows how these are a clear barrier to the increase of women in higher academe.

Many denominational belief systems have clear and distinguished roles for both men and women based on scriptural references. Traditionalist and complementarian views on this matter highlight 1 Tim. 2:11-13, which states "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve."²⁵ Clearly, certain interpretations of this verse can prove problematic for women who would aspire to instruct men in seminaries and other faith-based educational contexts. As a result, many institutions have created systemic barriers through policies that prohibit women from teaching at their institutions altogether. Other institutions have prohibited women from teaching in theological and ministerial departments only. Moreover, these theological views have great impact on the climate for women in these institutions, whether as faculty or staff, creating invisible roadblocks that limit advancement of women within the institutions and support a continued inequality between men and women that impacts staff, faculty, and even students.

Limitations in these institutions are countered by the advancement of women in other Christian higher education institutions that hold to a more egalitarian view on the roles of men and women. Egalitarian views support an equality between male and female roles, based on the scriptural reference of Gal. 3:28-29, which states, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."²⁶ Egalitarians also point to the life of Jesus, such as in Luke 8:1-3, where women openly traveled with Jesus, which would have been "quite unusual in Palestinian Jewish circles where women were often, but not exclusively, restricted from public appearances, especially when men outside their families were present."²⁷ Supported by these and other scripture verses, egalitarians hold to God's desire and intention for equality among all of humanity. This can greatly shape an institutional ethos and culture towards women and can have a greater impact than one might think.

Nonetheless, simply holding to these views does not fully determine the culture towards women on these campuses. For instance, Wood states, "Some campuses have made significant strides toward supporting gender equity and social justice while remaining consistent with the roots of their traditionalist denominational origins."²⁸ She goes on to discuss how the

²⁴ Wood, "Barriers to Women's Leadership in Faith-based Colleges and Universities," 78.

²⁵ 1 Tim. 2:11-13. Scriptures are taken from the NIV.

²⁶ Gal. 3:28-29.

²⁷ Alan F. Johnson, "Gender and Justice in the New Testament," *Priscilla Papers* 23:1 (2009) 23.

²⁸ Wood, "Barriers to Women's Leadership in Faith-based Colleges and Universities," 81.

converse can also be true for institutions that hold to egalitarian views. While holding to a theological stance of inclusivity, the institutional culture may still harbor biases against women.

Although much more scriptural reference and theological analysis could be undertaken here, the aim is not to detract too much from the intended point. It is clear that theological belief systems concerning the roles of men and women have great impact on the educational climate for women at faith-based institutions. However, doctrinal beliefs shape the culture on these campuses in other ways, as well. For instance, there is the case of the poor treatment of women faculty by students on these campuses. Another result of the lack of real implementation is the inequitable pay structure between male and female faculty and staff. The devaluing of women also takes place when there is the assumption that they are unable to complete certain job duties due to lack of God-given gifts or skills. The list goes on and on in terms of the ways that bias can shape the culture and ethos of an institution to the detriment of women on campus.

Invisible Barriers

In addition to the barriers that are in plain sight, there are many barriers to women in higher academe that are seemingly invisible in nature. The culture of many organizations has an impact on women in leadership that is often detrimental to their formation. Helgesen views many organizational cultures as an “inhibitory environment [in which] women often struggle, particularly in the formative years of their careers, to find and use their voices.”²⁹ Many researchers believe this is the case because many organizations still employ policies and structures that are completely built around an all-male leadership culture. “The result is deep, even if unseen, currents of cultural forces that need to be recognized and named if they are to be addressed or even considered for possible change.”³⁰

Many of these invisible barriers have been ignored out of convenience and preference for what is seemingly “normative” and simply understood as “the way of doing things.” For example, many women in higher academia feel excluded from possible networking due to the discomfort of trying to network outside of their gender. One woman recounts her experience: “I think the biggest barrier is the ‘good old boys’ club, it’s the informal networking to which women have no access.”³¹ Many male leaders in faith-based institutions also employ what they describe as protective measures to guard their hearts against sin or temptation by not fellowshiping and networking with women. Although this may have noble motives, it creates systemic barriers for women due to an inability to properly network amongst

²⁹ Karen A. Longman, Jessica Daniels, Debbie L. Bray, and Wendy Liddell, “How Organizational Culture Shapes Women’s Leadership Experiences,” *Journal of Administrative Sciences* 8:8 (2018) 2.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

their peers in higher education. This leads to the isolation of many women in higher academe.

In addition, many institutions of higher education reward individuals whose main focus is on work alone. Work and family balance is not something that has historically been valued and cherished within the culture of faith-based institutions. There is a perception at these institutions that women should do a majority of the child-rearing, which creates inhibitions to their advancement in systems that are not supportive. Many women in these contexts are looked upon with a negative perception, perceived as women who should be home taking care of their children. Women even describe openly rude comments that they believe hindered them from feeling at ease in their institutions.

Moreover, women of color in higher education are often expected to serve as mentors to students from similar ethnic backgrounds, and as the number of students from minority populations has continued to rise, the task for faculty women of color has become insurmountable. As a result, women of color have increased difficulty in achieving promotion of faculty rank, as the echoes of *publish or perish* reverberate through the minds of many promotion committees all over higher education institutions. Higher education as a whole has made the work life for women of color nearly unbearable. It is simply their “love of teaching”³² that is the primary reason for the persistence of women of color in higher education.

Lastly, policies and procedures are also inhibitory for the advancement for women in leadership at Christian higher education institutions. As institutions develop policies and procedures for hiring, promotion, termination, leaves of absences and more, they have historically forgotten to account for gender inclusivity. For example, faculty promotion systems are more apt to serve men as opposed to women. “The accountability and time demands that the female ethnic professor encounters are especially pressing, given the fact that minority women occupy even fewer positions than minority men.”³³ As a result, women (especially of color) are placed in a position in which they must choose their communities or themselves, and as these women continue to choose their communities they are past up for tenure and faculty rank promotions. “In most instances, service does not lead to tenure or to prestigious positions related to committee service, such as administration.”³⁴

The barriers to women are nearly endless in these faith-based institutions. Although a few were touched on, there are many more that were not described. Through all of them, an isolation and lack of respect is perpetuated. Unfortunately, women typically do not find community with other women in higher academia due to ethnic differences. “Despite shared gender discrimination, women faculty of color cannot always expect support

³² Caroline S. V. Turner, González, Juan Carlos, and J. Luke Wood, “Faculty of Color in Academe: What 20 Years of Literature Tells Us,” *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 1:3 (2008) 143.

³³ Turner, “Women of Color in Academe,” 82.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 82.

from their white female colleagues.”³⁵ As a result a racial divide is created among women in higher education, and seclusion persists, especially among women of color.

Benefits of Women in Leadership in Christian Higher Education

“The idea that the best faculty is always a White man is so engrained in women’s and men’s brains . . . there are a lot of mediocre White guys here and that doesn’t seem to bother anybody.”³⁶

One of the strongest motivating factors for institutions to make systemic changes that help accommodate women in higher academia should be the benefit of having women in leadership positions. Several scholars have noted the positive impacts women in higher academe have been having on the holistic development of students in higher education, providing them an expanded outlook on life and current societal trends.

Caroline Turner claims the following benefits after an in-depth study over the last 20 years of women in higher education:

- Satisfying the need to prepare students for a diverse society
- Diverse faculty is important to the development of the student body
- Diverse faculty assist in the recruitment of students of color to education
- Contributions of diverse faculty to the engagement of new scholarship³⁷

Turner outlines a good introductory understanding of how an increasingly diverse faculty and leadership can have major positive impacts on student development and higher education institutions. Turner accurately states, “To better prepare students for an increasingly diverse society, campuses across the country are engaged in efforts to diversify the racial and ethnic makeup of their faculties.”³⁸

However, with such efforts, why have Christian higher education institutions lagged behind in diversifying senior leadership and faculty on campuses? The secular assessment that Longman brings concurs with Turner’s statements above, highlighting the value that women add to the arena of higher education. “Finally, the contributions of female leaders have been affirmed by the findings of numerous studies and argue for organizations to proactively pursue the participation of women in organizational leadership.”³⁹ Women have proven time and time again to be instrumental in the mission of God.

³⁵ Ibid., 80.

³⁶ Turner, “Faculty Women of Color,” 203.

³⁷ Turner, “Faculty of Color in Academe,” 139.

³⁸ Ibid., 139.

³⁹ Longman, “How Organizational Culture Shapes Women’s Leadership Experiences,” 13.

Examples like Amy Carmichael⁴⁰ and others attest to this fact. Hudson Taylor⁴¹ even realized this important principle, as “he sent a staff of two-thirds women to evangelize China.”⁴² The Bible even gives us clear examples of the need for women in leadership positions, as “Paul refers to a total of thirteen women, of which five had leadership roles in their respective communities: Chloe (1 Cor. 1:11), Prisca (Rom. 16:3; 1 Cor. 16:19), Euodia and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2), and Phoebe (Rom. 16:1–2).”⁴³

One of the main areas of benefit that women bring to the table at institutions of higher education is the value of diverse perspectives. It is evident that a majority of our world is becoming increasingly globalized and diverse. Christian higher education institutions would be missing the mark if they did not prepare their students for such a world. Numerous studies point to the tremendous value of greater diversity in higher education if institutions are to truly prepare students for an increasingly pluralistic world. By having women in senior leadership positions in higher education, institutions are in less danger of the snares of groupthink. The diversity of perspectives in decision-making positions enables these institutions to have broad representation from various perspectives. Women from diverse populations would only add to the diversity of perspectives that can enrich the experiences for students at institutions of higher education. “Institutional leaders must signal their desire to hear from diverse voices, both formally and informally.”⁴⁴

When women are not involved in leadership roles, the loss to Christian higher education extends far beyond the lack of role models for students—both women and men. Numerous studies have affirmed that the skills and perspectives that women bring to leadership enhance the culture of the workplace and improve decision making. For example, after conducting an international study involving 26,000 participants, Gerzema and D’Antonio (2013) concluded that ‘many of the qualities of an ideal modern leader are considered feminine.’⁴⁵

The value of women of color in higher academia is undeniable, and as Christians seek to find ways to have impact in a growingly pluralist world,

⁴⁰ Amy Carmichael was a missionary to India for 55 years who opened an orphanage and wrote many books about her missionary work there. Her writings and work in India are still referenced today in numerous contexts.

⁴¹ Hudson Taylor is sometimes considered the father of missionaries, as he pioneered the China Inland Mission and trained numerous amounts of other missionaries. He served China for over 51 years and saw a myriad of converts.

⁴² Kari T. Malcolm, “Why We Need Women Evangelists Around the World,” *Priscilla Papers* 3:2 (1989) 9.

⁴³ Anonymous. “Women and Early Church Authority,” *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 1:4 (1996) 1.

⁴⁴ Longman, “Women in Leadership,” 34.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

Christian higher educational institutions should be at the forefront of seeking diversity in their leadership.

In addition to the added value of diverse perspectives, women from diverse populations contribute to the holistic development of students. By modeling “inclusive and support environments,”⁴⁶ Christian higher education institutions can promote a positive formation that helps students recreate the same environments in their own contexts. As Christian institutions develop cultures that show value to women and individuals from underrepresented populations, students will learn to promote similar inclusive and caring environments for individuals in their settings. This holistic development is not meant just for women, but for men also. “Men students equally need more women role models and a culture that values women.”⁴⁷

Lastly, women of color serve as role models and benefit the contexts of Christian higher education by improving enrollment trends for women and diverse populations.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2010), the percent of degrees earned by women in 2007–2008 exceeded those of men; women earned 57.3% of bachelor’s degrees, 60.6% of master’s degrees, and 51% of doctoral degrees. Such enrollment and graduation patterns accentuate the importance of having women as role models in faculty and senior administrative positions.⁴⁸

As the diversity of the population of the United States continues to increase, Christian higher education institutions would remain stagnant and growth would slow at these institutions numerically if they did not remain intent on improving the diversity on their campuses in more ways than just the student body. As a result, there is a need to diversify faculty and senior administration at higher education institutions to remain viable and continue positive enrollment trends.

Conclusion: A Model to Propel Women in Leadership in these Contexts

“Diversity—in the people, the ideas, the theories and the perspectives, and experiences and the pedagogy in American higher education—is crucial to a quality education. Such support promotes a comfort level that can increase productivity at work and persistence on campus.”⁴⁹

Changes have been noted that institutions can make to improve the quality and satisfaction for women in these contexts. For example, criterion for

⁴⁶ Turner, “Faculty Women of Color,” 201.

⁴⁷ Wood, “Barriers to Women’s Leadership in Faith-based Colleges and Universities,” 77.

⁴⁸ Longman, Karen A., and Patricia S. Anderson, “Gender Trends in Senior Level Leadership: A 12-Year Analysis of the CCCU U.S. Member Institutions,” *Journal of Christian Higher Education* 10:5 (2011) 3-4.

⁴⁹ Turner, “Women of Color in Academe,” 86.

faculty promotion can be changed to more adequately account for the involvement of women faculty in community initiatives, which will in turn lead to increased opportunities for faculty promotion. Institutions can also place a stronger emphasis and desire for involvement in the community and not continue to place a strong emphasis on a *publish or perish mentality*. Institutions can pursue options such as a daycare on campus and other policy and organizational changes that would make the environment more conducive to women and their professional development. This list of potential changes is by no means complete. Colleges and universities can continue to make changes in order to create a better learning environment for their students with an increased diversity in leadership and faculty.

The benefits of women in leadership positions have been clearly displayed throughout this discussion. The biblical mandate for equality and the examples of women in leadership in the early church is undeniable. However, has Christian higher education continually ignored this biblical mandate? Christian higher education institutions have made strong claims that they seek a diversified faculty and administration, yet the numbers remain the same as women and minorities continue to be underrepresented in higher academe. How can educational institutions continue to make the same mistakes? A world continues to be created where women are “perfectly articulate, but [appear] to say and do nothing.”⁵⁰ How can institutions and churches continue to silence the role that is intended for women in carrying out the mission of God?

Christian higher education institutions, which are meant to equip and bring out skills and talents, have produced a culture where the talents of women of color are hidden or buried. When will Christian institutions move past reflection to action and promote an environment that not only honors and values women, but recognizes the immense need for them in the equipping of future leaders? It seems necessary to repeat the words of Kim Phipps who accurately describes the need of Christian institutions across the United States, “We need to honestly examine the weaknesses and flaws of our institutions, particularly the inadequate level of institutional commitment to gender and racial justice.”⁵¹

⁵⁰ Alan F. Johnson. *How I Changed My Mind About Women in Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 61.

⁵¹ Wood, “Barriers to Women’s Leadership in Faith-based Colleges and Universities,” 78.

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A CALL TO RESPOND TO THE PROBLEM OF BURNOUT IN THE LIVES OF FEMALE PASTORS

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Abstract

Considering that today women have earned a place among leaders in many Christian denominations and now dedicate their lives to pastoral ministry, it can be affirmed that female pastors and women in ministry who are married with children are highly vulnerable to “burnout.” However, they tend to keep silent about it in order not to put their leadership position at risk, or not prejudice the Church's view on female leadership. This paper's primary purpose is to highlight the need to care for women in leadership positions in Christian ministries. It brings the voices of female Christian leaders center stage and offers an analysis of their cases along with suggestions for how female pastors and other female Christian leaders can be cared for.

Mental Health and Christian Leadership

The clergy's emotional and physical exhaustion is not a new theme to psychologists and health professionals. According to Rodney J. Crowell, for more than 80 years researchers have been studying signs of an "unhealthy condition" among pastors and ministers.¹ The author affirm that studies on Christian leaders' work and its mental health effects date back to the 1930s. In 2010, the *New York Times* published an important article where the author stated that members of the clergy were suffering "from obesity, hypertension, and depression at rates higher than most Americans."² Today it is common to hear about pastors who leave the ministry, who suffer from depression, and even pastors who commit-suicide. Much of this suffering is what specialists call "Burnout Syndrome," which is a negative response of the body when subjected to prolonged and intense stress, both physically and emotionally. According to Scott Ream the Burnout Syndrome is also a "physical and mental exhaustion and a feeling of being overwhelmed by the problem of others."³ The emotional suffering derived from work continues to affect many Christian pastors and leaders.

¹ Rodney J. Crowell. 2016. "Musical Pulpits: Clergy and Laypersons Face the Issue of Forced Exits." In "Pastoral Health Burnout: Spiritual Maturity, Emotional Health, and Physical Environment." Presented to Alliance Theological Seminary by Scott Ream.

² Paul Vitello, "Taking a break from Lord's work" in *The New York Times*, posted August 2010, accessed November 15, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/02/nyregion/02burnout.html>.

³ Scott Ream. "Pastoral Health Burnout: Spiritual Maturity, Emotional Health, and Physical Environment." Doctoral Thesis presented to Alliance Theological Seminary, ProQuest LLC. Ann Arbor, MI, April 2016.

Burnout Syndrome

No matter the profession, stress is part of everyday life. According to Professor Christophe Dejours, satisfaction related to work activities is measured by favorable or unfavorable feelings and thoughts a person has about his or her work.⁴ Even though Dejours writes from a secular perspective and did not write about ministry life, his contributions help understand how work, and in this case, ministry, can cause emotional suffering and burnout in many people. For him, satisfaction is the difference between what a person needs (hopes, goal, and plans) and what he or she receives from work. To achieve some satisfaction in their work, it is necessary that any suffering produced by daily work activities be transformed into something that enables the person to do the work and remain psychically and emotionally healthy. However, this process does not depend only on the person who works, but mainly on how the organizational institution conducts work-related issues.

Dejours explains that psychological suffering is understood as a dynamic-caused both by elements that favor health and by elements that foster the process of illness.⁵ In the case of suffering that creates health, Dejours explains that some people can become more creative in the face of challenging situations. Therefore, it is necessary for the suffering experienced to be correlated to concrete work/ministry situations in order to gauge that a person is suffering from work-related issues. The two types of suffering, according to the author, are "creative suffering and pathogenic suffering." Pathogenic suffering is caused by work pressures that arise for which there are no possibilities for freedom or organizational changes. In these instances, a person experiences fear and continuing pressures from the organization, without achieving any emotional gains. When all the defensive emotional resources are used up, a process of "destruction of the mental apparatus and the psychic balance" begins, leading to decompensation or illness.⁶

Burnout Syndrome is the ultimate consequence of this process. It is a state of emotional tension and chronic stress brought by exhausting working conditions. The very term "burnout" demonstrates the damages experienced by the person's physical and psychological aspects. The term was first described in the late 1960s by the psychologist Herbert Freudenberg to refer to the suffering of parole officers. Burnout, as it was defined, is a "state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by long-term involvement in situations that are emotionally demanding." According to Christina Maslach, burnout is the wearing out of oneself by excessive striving to reach unrealistic

⁴ Christophe Dejours. *A Loucura do Trabalho: Estudo da Psicopatologia do Trabalho*. (São Paulo, BR: Cortez-Oboré, 1988), 53.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁶ Christophe Dejours, Elisabeth Abdoucheli and Christian Jayet, *Psychodynamics of work: contributions of the school in the analysis of the relationship pleasure, suffering and work*. São Paulo: Atlas, 1994), 119-123.

expectations imposed by oneself or society's values. She described a person experiencing burnout as "someone in a state of fatigue or frustration brought about by devotion to a cause, way of life, or relationship that failed to produce the expected reward."⁷ This concept sought to describe energy exhaustion resulting from poor adaptation to stressful, prolonged work with a high-tension load.

Some authors affirm that today women have been the biggest victims of burnout. This is true especially of mothers who work at least a three-day work week. The main problem is that Burnout Syndrome causes many symptoms that are easily confused with other diseases. It also causes psychosomatic symptoms such as recurrent headaches, insomnia, severe fatigue, and gastrointestinal difficulties, accompanied by some emotional symptoms such as anxiety, depression, irritability, and emotional detachment. Ultimately, many people experience intense feelings of helplessness or despair. If this problem is not treated, the person may suffer from anhedonia, that is the loss of the ability to feel pleasure. These authors also affirm that one of the most significant stressors in a woman's life is the intense concern with the appearance and performance in front of people. The pressure put by the media on the "perfect body" also affects many women called to ministry.

In a thesis for the Master in Biblical Studies at South Florida Bible College, Raquel Rangel presented the longitudinal survey made by Victoria Blom on performance-based self-esteem (PBSE). Blom sought to understand how people strive to validate self-esteem and its relation to burnout and discovered a high correlation between burnout and "significance for other individuals."⁸ The analyses made by Rangel brings to the light the fact that this correlation reveals that individuals who do not receive support from their families, or other significant people in their lives, exhibit increased rates of burnout. It also demonstrates that people who seek approval from others in the workplace or who have a prominent position, or much social exposure position, are more prone to experience emotional suffering and burnout.

Female Christian Leaders and Mental Health

Many women in ministry are possibly suffering from mental health issues but are not being cared for because they are not perceived as someone under pressure and suffering. One of the reasons for this is that the conversations around mental health and Christian leadership usually emphasize male pastors/leaders. It is challenging to find materials on the mental/physical health of female pastors and female Christian leaders. It is common to see materials about (and for) Christian female leaders that analyze

⁷ Christina Maslach, "A multidimensional theory of burnout," in C. S. Cooper (ed.), *Theories of Organizational Stress*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 68–85.

⁸ Victoria Blom, "Contingent self-esteem, stressors, and burnout in working women and men," *Research Gate – Work*, posted on June 2012 accessed in February 2019, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/230749164> (2010). (also cited by Raquel Rangel. Masters Seminar Thesis. 2019. pp.11 – not published.)

the impacts of male pastors' emotional health on their wives. It is also common to find literature on women's ministry, or "how to" material about being a virtuous woman according to God's word or how to be a good wife. Nevertheless, despite all the advances that can be seen in recent years within Christian denominations pertaining to female leadership it continues to be rare to find literature on female leadership in the Christian Church. Consequently, women who accept the mission of pastoring or hold a leadership position in ministry today are vulnerable when they become emotionally ill.

Researchers from Montreal University analyzed participants' emotional exhaustion, cynicism (a psychological defense), and professional effectiveness in different sectors. They concluded that women are more prone to work burnout than men. According to Quinn and Smith "Women and men can have different experiences of work exposures and health due to their sex, (referring to biological differences) or to their gender (referring to socially constructed differences)." ⁹ When considering the effects of work on the emotional health of men and women, the authors studied several articles containing epidemiological studies from six countries (Canada, Chile, Finland, France, Italy, and the United States). Among the results, the authors identified some critical points. For example, women and men experience differences in occupational exposures and health throughout all phases of professional life. Also, women experience more post-traumatic stress reactions to stress/violence/harassment in the workplace. Moreover, work impacts women and men differently in their lives outside of work. In addition to that, according to the CDC, heart disease is the leading cause of death for women in the United States, killing 299,578 women in 2017—or about 1 in every 5 female deaths. ¹⁰ It is possible that many female pastors may be suffering in silence, to the point that it affects their physical health.

Researchers also agree that women tend to accumulate functions between home, work, and other activities. The pressures of society that establish high standards of beauty and performance for women also affect women in ministry. ¹¹ The increase in technology use that has blurred the boundaries between job, home, and many other living spaces directly impacts women who tend to have multiple roles. Being a mother is a full-time job, but add to this the fact that many women have their ministries activities and also perform most of the household chores. Many Christian women tend to be overly concerned about the organization of their home, their children's education, and being a better companion to their husbands, including maintaining a healthy sexual life. Because of how Christian women (and girls) are still taught, there is a pressure that likely forms in their hearts that compels

⁹ Margaret M Quinn and Peter M Smith, "Gender, Work, and Health," *Annals of Work Exposures and Health* 64:4 (May 2018), 389-392. <https://doi.org/10.1093/annweh/wxy019>

¹⁰ "Women and Heart Disease," in *Center for Disease Control and Prevention* <https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/women.htm>

¹¹ Chardine Taylor Stone, "The pressure of perfection: five women tell their stories," *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/oct/14/perfect-girls-five-women-stories-mental-health>

them to manage every facet of their lives in an orderly and organized fashion.¹²

The standard of excellence for many Christian women is represented by the text about the virtuous woman (Prov. 31). In this sense, many still believe that it is the woman's responsibility to keep everything in order at home so that life can flow more smoothly for everyone in the family. Many of these women believe that it is also their responsibility to maintain the home's emotional atmosphere. Despite the emotional pressure that many Christian women are subject to, there is a tendency to silence. More than that, unlike men, women are affected by an unplanned pregnancy, mood swings due to hormonal causes, insomnia, and other health issues. Also, women still have concerns dealing with harassment from ministry colleagues—and men from their congregation.

Often, the female clergy is supervised by a senior male clergy who may lead the female pastor into situations where she is made vulnerable. That is the topic of a beautiful article called "Silent Sufferers: Female Clergy Sexual Abuse."¹³ Wanda Lott Collins, an associate professor at the University of Louisville, explains how female clergy endure some difficulties being a woman in ministry. She cites Sentilles who states that "women endure sexual harassment, individual discrimination, and systemic discrimination regularly, and yet when asked, most congregants do not think sexism is a problem in the church."¹⁴ Also, she points out that "while female pastors are concerned about protecting themselves from unwelcomed approaches. Male pastors are concerned about protecting themselves against unfair allegations." According to Collins, only a few harassed women, 5% to 15%, formally report harassment problems related to church work. However, sexual harassment has a severe and negative impact on these women's physical and emotional health. According to the author, reactions frequently reported by women include anxiety, depression, sleep disorders, weight loss or gain, loss of appetite, and headaches. She explains that:

Feeling bonds of trust and affirmation, female clergy may bring the vulnerable, wounded, and intimate sides of themselves into the relationship, seeking acceptance, emotional support, and a role model. When the male clergy exploits his privileged position for personal sexual satisfaction, he violates a sacred trust that is contrary to Christian morals, doctrine, and canon laws.¹⁵

¹² Luciano P. Subirá, "Os Deveres das Esposas," *Orvalho.com*

<http://www.orvalho.com/ministerio/estudos-biblicos/os-deveres-das-esposas-por-luciano-subira/>

¹³ Wanda Lott Collins, "Silent sufferers: Female clergy sexual abuse." *Baylor University School of Social Work*, 10. <https://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/145861.pdf>

¹⁴ Sarah Sentilles. *A Church of Her Own: What Happens When a Woman Takes the Pulpit* (Orlando, FL: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing), 17.

¹⁵ Collins, "Silent sufferers," 12-13.

As already mentioned, this paper's primary motivation is to highlight the need to care for women in leadership positions in Christian ministries. It is believed that many of these women have suffered in silence so as not to bring any harm to their pastoral work or because they refuse to transmit an image of fragility with their behaviors. Special care is needed to ensure the emotional and physical health of these women.

Unique Issues for Women in Pastoral Ministry

American female clergy have encountered serious challenges. According to Frame and Shehan, the first women known to have set out to preach in America were two Quakers, Elizabeth Hooten and Joan Brocksopp, who arrived in Boston in 1660 but were "promptly arrested, imprisoned, and returned to England."¹⁶ Antoinette Brown was the first woman to be ordained in the Congregational Church in 1853, and in 1890, "about 7% of U.S. denominations gave full clergy rights to women." Today, approximately half of the U.S. denominations permit women to participate fully in the ministry. According to these authors, despite the exponential growth of women in the ministry over the past 30 years, clergy continue to report a significant tension in developing their roles and activities. Often, they find themselves caught up in conflicts between pastoral duties and family responsibilities.

Women in pastoral roles face unique challenges. Many female pastors have to deal with insecurities about their role and the maintenance of their leadership position within their denominations. Maintaining a ministerial position as a woman requires a call from God. However, it also requires the ability to manage personal life and the chores in the house and family (children and husband), and still be able to present the same results as their fellow male pastors on the team. Another fact that can add stress upon stress in this matter is the pastor's husband's call and ministry life. Many denominations still defend the idea of a hierarchy ordering the relationships of males and females. Therefore, a woman with a pastoral call or call to exercise leadership in ministry who is married to a man who does not exercise any pastoral work can have her call questioned and her confidence shaken.

Biblical Precedence for Women in Ministry

The Bible is clear about the place that women have in God's mission. Genesis 1:26-31 reads: "Let us make man (*adam*) in our image (...) So God created man (*adam*) in His image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them." The Hebrew word *adam* is used inclusively to describe God creating man and women equally in God's likeness. About that, Brauch explains that in the text of Genesis 5:1-2 in which it is written that *adam* is created "*in the likeness of God*," the generic noun is used, showing

¹⁶ Marsha Frame and Constance L. Shehan, "Care for the Caregiver: Clues for the Pastoral Care of Clergywomen," *Pastoral Psychology*, 52:5 (2004) 369-380.

that male and female together were designed as adam.¹⁷ Both were equally human and *made* in the likeness of God. This explanation is fundamental for the clarification about gender-exclusions or hierarchy between men and women in Christian thought. However, being made in God's image does not mean that humans are identical to God. Rather, it means that they are made to portray His image to the world, using the abilities God gave to them, including cognitive, emotional, and work abilities.

As presented in a previous paper, I point out that it is certain that many women are mentioned for their remarkable qualities throughout the entire Bible. For example, Mary, mother of Jesus, was "blessed among women" and Elizabeth, her cousin, was chosen to be John the Baptist's mother.¹⁸ Also, the Bible tells the stories of Mary, the sister of Lazarus, who sat at the feet of Jesus to hear His word, and who afterward would anoint Him for His burial. Mary Magdalene was given the honor of conveying the message of the resurrection of Christ to His disciples: "Tell them that I am going up to my Father and your Father, my God and your God."¹⁹ After Christ ascended into heaven, and the Holy Spirit had already been sent, the book of Acts reports that "Greek women of the noble class" believed in the message.²⁰ The whole New Testament is filled with virtuous women, praised by Jesus, the disciples, and the apostles.

However, the participation of women in the evangelistic mission of the early Church, and their role in the current Church, continues to be a theme of discussion among Christian scholars. Some suggest that there are different interpretations of the Bible's verses about this theme, especially about Apostle Paul's words. Nowadays, many traditional denominations, such as the Baptist and Presbyterian Churches, and some historical Pentecostal churches, such as the Christian Congregation, are still reluctant to yield to the ordination of women to the pastorate. On the other hand, denominations such as Methodist and Lutheran stand out as the first historical churches that order women to the pastoral and leadership ministry, defending the full equality in Church's service between men and women. Many women do not find this same approval in their Christian churches, and many still do not have a place to stand.

This aspect of resistance alone would be enough to cause suffering in many women who have the conviction of their pastoral calling. Although the biblical texts are explicit, many denominations are still reluctant to expand the functions of women pastors. Many women may advice and counsel but are not welcome to preach. Furthermore, when they take a more strategic position in the organization's management, many feel that their functions are always at risk. It is certain that this causes insecurity and generates suffering in the

¹⁷ Elizabeth Beyer, "Back to the Beginning: Man and Woman in the Image of God" in *Mutual by Design: A Better Model of Christian Marriage* (Minneapolis, MN: Christians for Biblical Equality, 2017) 5.

¹⁸ Ana C.P. Mafra, "The Western Evangelical Church and Its Relation to the Issue of Violence and Exploitation of Women: Does It Matter?" 2019. A paper written for the course Global Christianity and Ministry at South Florida Theological Seminary.

¹⁹ John 20:17.

²⁰ Acts 17:12.

hearts of many women who love God and who wish to exercise their callings fully but find in their denominations doctrinal impediments to their actions. It is vital to call the Church to reflections that denounce the suffering that these women of God have been subjected to because of non-legitimate challenges to their work in ministry.

Case Studies

To better understand the suffering of women in ministry, informal conversations were held with female pastors who are active in the pastoral ministry. The information presented below results from those conversations with female pastors and ministerial leaders. Their names have been changed so that their identities remain confidential. As prompts for the conversations two main guiding questions were asked: In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges to leading in the church as a woman? Do you think the church deals differently with men and women in leadership?

Rose

Rose is a 50-year-old Latin American pastor who came to the United States with her husband to establish a Pentecostal church. Rose has a strong temperament and has strong leadership characteristics, as well. Her husband is the senior pastor of the Church and has a sociable and very communicative personality, and together they have two daughters and two little granddaughters. Rose took over the management of the whole financial part of the church, the social work, the women's ministry, the children's ministry, and the counseling ministry. She is an excellent problem solver, and because she knows many things related to the immigrant's life in America, the members of her congregation tend to call her at all times, and sometimes, in the middle of the night. If they need a doctor or a translator, they call her. Their congregation now has around 300 people with more than 10 years of existence, and the community relies on her. She is a woman who takes care of her health and her emotions. However, she has just discovered that she has a chronic heart problem and will need to slow down her activities. When questioned about the biggest challenges of leading the Church as a woman, she said that she believes that one of the biggest challenges is reconciling family life, personal life, and the ministry's chores. Today, after discovering that she needs to slow down because of her heart, she realizes how important it is to find a better balance. She explained that if she could go back to the start of her ministry, she would learn to put in place more healthy boundaries. She shared that she already had to deal with harassment from members of her church, but she also needed to mediate women who had "bad intentions" with her husband. She stated that she has no doubt about her calling and that it is what strengthens her. She said she loves the people the Lord has entrusted to her and that she feels prepared if the Lord calls her to heaven.

Mariah

Mariah is a 41-year-old leader of a YWAM base in Brazil. She is married and has two children. While her husband has a missional and evangelistic calling, she manages all the activities of the base. Also, she manages and coordinates training development for missionaries. She coordinates a team of 3 worker couples and missionaries who come to the training and stay for four months at the base. Mariah says that she was always sure of her missionary calling and that is undoubtedly what sustained her in the difficult moments of her life. She says that she had to give up many things, especially financial ones, to be where she is, but she knows that she is obeying God. She says that one of the biggest challenges is to reconcile her calling with her children's education. She says that she often had to expose her children to situations that generated anguish in her heart, but she believes that God has guarded them. She says that she learned to deal with harassment, and with people that do not accept women in leadership, and respect people who do not understand her call. She explains that one of the most challenging situations was when she found out that her daughter (13 years old) was being harassed by one of the base's missionaries. She said she dealt with the man's expulsion with a "lot of pain in her heart." She said that although many decisions were shared between her and her husband, she took on a large part of the base's management tasks.

Ruth

Ruth is 39 years old and married and has two boys. Ruth founded a non-profit organization to help girls and women at risk of sexual exploitation. She is Brazilian and moved with her family to the United States to "fulfill the call of God." Her husband has a secular profession, but he supports her on all projects. He is responsible for the evangelism and teaching of men. Ruth recently discovered that she is suffering from burnout and was evaluated by a psychiatrist who said she needs to slow down. She lost her grandmother and many things happened to her family in Brazil, but she says that "she can't think much about the pain because she has a lot to do." She recently moved to a new church, because in the previous one, the pastor did not fully support women in the ministry. In addition, she observed cases of harassment in the church, but when she decided to bring it to the attention of the leaders they "did nothing." Ruth states that if she could go back in time, she would be less concerned with what people think of her. She explained that people often invited her husband to meetings hoping that he would be actively engaged in ministerial work, and that in other situations, people were surprised that she alone is responsible for the ministry. She said she feels very lonely, but she prefers not to share her sadness and frustration because she is afraid that people will see her as an "emotionally weak person."

Analysis

When considering, even briefly, that pastoral activity demands emotional strength from women in ways that differ from the demands for male pastors, it is evident that more in depth study is in order to better understand all aspects involved. When considering these female pastors' reports, one observes that the absorption of different roles and activities it is not seen by them as being problematic. It is possible that these women are so used to the overload of activities that they have lost the ability to perceive when they arrive at exhaustion. In no instance were the multiple functions and the addition of assignments considered to be something out of the ordinary. None of them stated that the illness, or the emotional difficulties experienced by them, is due to or correlated with their ministry activities. They demonstrate high resilience and a high tolerance of their suffering and the suffering of their loved ones.

Upon hearing these pastors testify, it is possible to think that many female leaders end up showing a lack of confidence in the Lord's care for their ministries by not admitting their own limitations. They perhaps try to be "in control" of everything. It was evident in the conversation with them and observing other pastors in their ministry that they often work despite personal challenges because they think they will not have another chance to minister. Besides, they are afraid of losing their position in the church. Unfortunately, this attitude leaves them vulnerable to anxiety disorders, burnout, and depression.

It is interesting to highlight that all women reported some harassment event, experienced by them or by someone they knew. It would be necessary to investigate more deeply in this study to understand the emotional implications of these situations for the women in the ministry. It is possible that they express underlying insecurity and fear beyond what is visible.

Conclusion

After reflecting on female pastors and burnout, it is clear that cooperative work between Christian Counseling professionals and the Christian community can be fruitful for leaders who need help. According to Christophe Dejours, the solution to the situation of burnout is, among other things, the creation and organization of spaces for conversations about work and the situations that generate suffering. These would not be designed to force talk about personal problems to emerge but would be spaces for discussion about the relationship between work/ministry and the meaning that pastors and leaders give to it. Women could be led to reflect on how to perform their functions without the pathological suffering resulting from labor conflicts. The "space to speak" is fundamental to discussing real work/activities behind the suffering and the emotional defenses created to cope with it, and which may even perpetuate it.

Moreover, it is necessary to develop Christian communities more aware of the social and familial roles of men and women so that neither of

them feels burdened. In this regard, men need to be taught early, as a child, how to take the lead in their homes to strengthen their spouse emotionally so that she can also be a healthy partner, one who does not have to experience living overwhelmed. It is important to reassure them that God created men and women with a purpose, and within this purpose, a functional partnership is needed in the family. Families should be a place of emotional strengthening for all, a place in which each one recognizes his or her own gifts and talents.

It is also true that all communities should collaborate to strengthen the male figure to continue to partner with the woman in ministry. Prevention education is important. According to Collins:

Providing care to female clergy may include advocating for prevention education within churches and faith-based conferences, assisting congregations in creating safe environments for vulnerable women, establishing protocols for reporting and investigating reports of sexual misbehavior, developing proper training in boundary violation, and identifying community resources that will address intervention and elements of healing following reports of sexual misconduct.²¹

Finally, women in ministry need to prioritize the right tasks by doing only those that are most important. They need to learn how to delegate and how to ask for help. They need to learn how to "choose the right battles" to save themselves from an emotional breakdown. A female pastor must become aware of society's values and how accepting them can destroy her self-esteem. She needs to establish limits in order to pursue a healthy life. Every woman needs to know herself and her gifts and talents. Furthermore, it is important to know that there is no one best solution for the problem of burnout in women. However, all the solutions mentioned above combined can help generate a happier woman with good self-esteem who allows herself to make appropriate choices for her family, ministry, and spiritual life.

²¹ Collins, "Silent sufferers," 16.

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DREAMS AND VISIONS IN THE HISTORY OF BIBLICAL RECEPTION IN THE CHURCH

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"And thus we---who both acknowledge and reverence, even as we do the prophecies, modern visions as equally promised to us, and consider the other powers of the Holy Spirit as an agency of the Church...commemorate them in reading to God's glory..."

Tertullian, 3rd century¹

"I wake up. My wife wakes up. We ask each other, "What message did you get during the night?" And we discuss our dreams..."

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Abstract

This essay examines the reception history in the Church of the biblical passages that report on the dreams and visions (D/Vs) experienced by prophets and other persons of Old and New Testaments. The presentation is offered in three sections. The first section relies heavily on the work of Morton T. Kelsey.³ He provides a careful examination of the way that biblical passages about D/Vs have been interpreted by the early Church and through subsequent centuries. The second section engages the influences of Thomas Aquinas and Immanuel Kant. In the third section, the Pentecostal-Charismatic voice is brought in, including the pneumatology of the African Pentecostal-Charismatics who participated in this author's Dreams and Visions Project. These visionaries give evidence that the biblical readings of the early Church can still be found among today's Pentecostals of the global South.

¹ Found in the introduction of Tertullian's work *Martyrdom of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas* and cited in Morton T. Kelsey, *God, Dreams, and Revelation: A Christian Interpretation of Dreams* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Press, 1991), 110. Kelsey points out that it follows Tertullian's discussion of the prophecy of Joel and the pouring out of the Spirit in connection with D/Vs.

² Umar Danfulani took part in an interview with me in 2017 as part of the Dreams and Visions Project.

³ The phrase in the title of this article, "neglected heritage," is borrowed from Kelsey who uses it as a subheading. He reflects there on the lack of theological engagement in the modern West with D/Vs when he writes, "The Christian clergy, the theologians, are still silent, and this is surprising in itself in a group not noted for silence." See Kelsey, *God, Dreams, and Revelation*, 24.

Biblical Reading about Dreams and Visions in the First Centuries of the Church

Morton Kelsey offers the most informative material on the history of reception of biblical references to D/Vs. As he shares in his book, accessing important indicators of the value of D/Vs was not easy. He writes, "There are thirty-eight thick volumes of ante-Nicene, Nicene, and post-Nicene fathers that seem to have been rather carelessly indexed in relation to dreams and similar subjects."⁴ As historians point out, edits or omissions reflected in what is copied or cited have to do with the biases or preferences of the editors and can therefore be poor reflections of the material that was actually *available*. Transmission (or lack of it) reflects a censorship indicative of a value system in terms of what was deemed important for ecclesiastic or academic consumption. In light of his findings, Kelsey observes, "...There has been no serious study of the thinking of the church fathers on the subject of dreams for at least two centuries..."⁵ In fact, Kelsey's line of research required that several works be translated from Latin into English. These include some of the pertinent works of Augustine and Gregory the Great that had been overlooked by translators, along with a 16th century volume written by Benedict Pererius. That volume investigates the value of dreams to Christian spirituality.

D/Vs in the Early Church

The climate reflective of the attitude toward D/Vs in the days of the Apostolic Fathers is portrayed in several volumes that Kelsey highlights as being treasured among early Christians. Two of these are the *Shepherd of Hermas* and the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* and both of them feature dreams and visions. Of apocryphal writings, Kelsey lists the *Acts of the Holy Apostle Thomas*, the *Consummation of Thomas, the Apostle*, the *Testament of Abraham* and other volumes in circulation as works containing anecdotes regarding dreams and visions. Kelsey shares that rather than communicating caution in regards to visionary experiences, the Fathers continued in the spirit of the New Testament. "...I found that when these men spoke of dreams, it was almost always to express a positive view."⁶ It is to some of these articulations that we turn here.

Irenaeus was the bishop of Lyons in the second century and he followed in the understanding of D/Vs held by Justin Martyr. That understanding maintained the value of these experiences for Christian spirituality. In *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus makes at least three references to biblical D/Vs: the dream of Joseph in Matthew's gospel, the vision of Peter in Acts 10, and the dream of Paul in Acts ch.16. These instances were held up as evidence of intimacy with God and authentication of those who received them as followers of the true God. Origen of Alexandria followed in the interpretation of the Bible of his spiritual mentor Clement. Both of them

⁴ Kelsey, *God, Dreams, and Revelation*, 99.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 103.

understood D/Vs as significant for Christian life. Origen makes reference to the experiences of Jacob, Daniel, the dreams and visions surrounding Jesus' birth, and the paradigm shifting vision received by Peter in the New Testament. He refers to them as revelatory works of God.

Tertullian of Carthage discussed sleep and dreams in eight chapters of his *De Anima (A Treatise on the Soul)*. In the introduction to his volume the *Martyrdom of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas*, he links the experience of dreams and visions to Joel's prophecy and to God's concern for the Church. The bishop of Carthage in 250 AD, Thascius Cyprian, about 100 years later, made reference to Job and to the patriarch Joseph when defending visionary experiences. Hippolytus of Rome referred to the prophet Daniel when explaining the value of dreams. In the days of the emperor Constantine, the tutor of Constantine's son, Lactantius, produced the volume *Epitome* in which he showed that Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of the Spirit-inspired visions of the Old Testament prophets.⁷

D/Vs in the Era of Orthodoxy

The fourth century ushered in an era of deliberations among Christian leaders confronted with heretical influences such as Arianism and the sectarianism of the Donatists. It gave rise to a flock of theologians and apologists of both the Latin and Greek speaking Church who each contributed to the work of theological self-reflection. Understanding where the concerns of the Church lay in that era is helpful to understanding the content of the writings produced at the time. Kelsey points out that, in spite of the dominant preoccupations, the works of Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, also share regarding his attitude toward D/Vs for Christian spirituality.

In his work *History of the Arians*, Athanasius includes a reference to the visionary experience of Daniel regarding the Antichrist. Athanasius presents Daniel's experience in a positive light, even suggesting a link between the vision and the appearance of Constantius as emperor of Rome. But Kelsey sees the work of Athanasius in his later years, the writing of *Life of St. Antony*, as even more indicative of the approval of dreams and visions. There Athanasius cites St. Antony's references to the revelatory capacity of Elisha the prophet who exemplified for Antony a truly intimate relationship with God. Kelsey comments, "His interest in Antony shows his own religious aspiration and his belief that the soul can be given direct communication with the nonphysical, the spiritual world, without the mediation of reason..."⁸

In the Eastern Church, Gregory wrote a major work titled *On the Making of Man* in which he discusses sleep and dreams. There he references the D/Vs of Joseph and Daniel and holds the men up as "worthy of evident Divine communication."⁹ In his sermon titled "In Praise of Forty Martyrs," Gregory shared his own personal dream of a visitation from the martyrs, a dream which impacted him to seriously undertake his own Christian life and

⁷ Ibid., 99-114.

⁸ Ibid., 122.

⁹ Ibid., 123.

witness. Gregory's brother, known as Basil the Great for his courage displayed in confronting the Arian emperor Valens, and who was bishop of Caesarea of Cappadocia, echoed the opinion of Gregory. In his work *On the Spirit*, Basil discusses how the Spirit communicated through dreams with Joseph and Jacob. In *The Hexaemeron*, Basil refers to Numbers 12:6-8 where it is stated that God spoke to prophets through a dream or vision. Nevertheless, he did warn Christians regarding some dreams that deceive, and that in response to the dreams of a certain Eustathius who claimed to have had dreams of Basil which he interpreted with a negative slant.

John Chrysostom, known as John the Golden-mouth, was the ascetic of Antioch who became known for his passionate and direct preaching in his role as Archbishop of Constantinople. Kelsey notes that his word was authoritative for the Church, to the point that he maintained influence even from a distance when banished. Most important to this discussion is his definitive approval of D/Vs as biblically sanctioned and spiritually significant as sources of revelation. Chrysostom referred to Pentecost and the book of Acts when referring to the "grace" of dreams or visions, dreams being phenomena given to "those whose wills are compliant to God" and visions reserved for those in need of more startling manifestations. In his discourses he cited the examples of Joseph the father of Jesus, Peter, and Paul, as well as the dreams of the Old Testament, those experienced by Joseph, Daniel, and Abimelech. Also, Chrysostom's theology of dreams offered a sophisticated distinction among dreams. He understood some dreams to reflect the state of one's soul, either one's "bad conscience or bad character," but also as experiences meant to "reveal spiritual reality," bring comfort from God, or give needed divine guidance.¹⁰

The Western Church and D/Vs

The voices of the Church in the West that figure prominently as ecclesiastic commentaries on dreams and visions are those of Ambrose, Augustine, and Jerome. Ambrose was bishop of Milan in the latter portion of the 4th century. Ambrose's letter to Theodosius, in which he calls him to repent because of a dream Ambrose had, is indication of Ambrose's attitude toward dreams. Another of Ambrose's dreams was actually shared by Augustine, who was his junior and who had been impacted by the life of the bishop. In *The Confessions*, Augustine explains that the whereabouts of the bodies of the martyrs Gervasius and Protasius had been revealed to Ambrose in a dream. But the high valuation of D/Vs that Ambrose had is best manifested in his book on the duties of the clergy. In it he calls attention to the experiences and abilities of Solomon, Joseph, and Daniel as coming from the Holy Spirit.

Augustine of Hippo believed that dreams and visions are given by God. He is credited with a sophisticated theory of epistemology in which the "inner eye" is capable of perceiving other than the corporeal or physical. So,

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 128.

for Augustine, "spiritual realities...can present themselves directly to the inner eye."¹¹ Therefore, D/Vs can be sources of knowledge and the abilities of the human psyche for these mental/visionary experiences serve as evidence of human existence after the death of the body. While Augustine offers a number of dream anecdotes, including the dream of his own mother Monica which encouraged her in regard to her son eventually coming to faith in Christ, it is Augustine's contemporary, Jerome, who offers biblical support for their value for Christianity. Jerome discusses dreams in his commentary on Jeremiah 23:25-32. He reflects on the responsibility of the Church to interpret dreams since believers have the word of God. As Kelsey reports about Jerome's thoughts, "Dreams can become idolatrous...when they are sought and interpreted for their own sake by those who are serving their own self-interest instead of God."¹² He also reflected on Paul's visionary experience recorded in Acts 16 when he wrote on Paul's epistle to the Galatians. Therefore, Jerome followed suit with the positive attitude toward D/Vs that had been sustained through roughly the first four hundred years of the church's history.

The Eclipse of Dreams and Visions in the Church of the West

This essay has argued that the early Church read the passages on dreams and visions in the Bible in a positive way, putting credence in visionary experiences as valued elements of Judeo-Christian tradition. The discussion has also mentioned some of the dreams that were recorded as significant in the lives of the Fathers and theologians of Christianity's early history. In this second section, the contours of the eclipse of dreams and visions are traced by first showing how, later, the medieval works of Thomas Aquinas began to cast a shadow on these biblical passages. That pessimism was ultimately intensified by the ideology of Immanuel Kant.

D/Vs and Thomas Aquinas

To be fair, the turn away from D/Vs in Christianity can be spotted long before Aquinas, as John C. Lamoreaux points out. Lamoreaux highlights the monastic Antiochus of the 7th century who wrote about the dangers of paying attention to dreams in his instructions to monks of the Mar Sabas monastery near Jerusalem. Antiochus used Jude's epistle and the book of Sirach to support his view.¹³ Thomas Aquinas had considerably more influence on Christian thought than individuals such as Antiochus. It is not difficult to see how Thomas Aquinas' role as *doctor angelicus* of the Roman Catholic Church in the 12th century caused his word on dreams and visions to carry significant weight. His views on all that pertained to the Church were crucial in those times. That is because the tide of interest in the works of Aristotle had risen by then and it required that the Church wrestle with how

¹¹ Ibid., 134.

¹² Ibid., 137.

¹³ John C. Lamoreaux, *The Early Muslim Tradition of Dream Interpretation* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), 136-137.

Aristotle's works were being used to critique long held Augustinian views. Aristotle's influence was alarming to many in the Church, as Kenneth S. Latourette points out. Aristotle resisted the Platonic understanding of the real standing beyond the perceived. Yet, Plato's worldview had been adopted by Augustine, that is, to the degree that there was interface with biblical revelation. Latourette writes, "...It is quite understandable that the authorities of the Catholic Church took alarm at the popularity of Aristotle as interpreted by Averroes. Here was a heresy that might lure the intellectuals..."¹⁴

Thomas Aquinas was able to navigate these precarious theological waters by formulating Christian theology using Aristotelian logic. Therefore, before examining Aquinas' views on D/Vs, it is necessary to share more about Aristotle's influence and how it challenged the epistemology embedded in the neo-Platonic views of the Church. Plato had certain ideas that Augustine felt could be viewed as intuitions of the fuller revelation of Christ and a biblical worldview. One important aspect of Plato's philosophy was the existence of the world of Forms crafted by a nondescript intelligent agency. In regard to how Plato saw the relationship between that world and what can be perceived in this realm, Diogenes Allen and Eric Springsted explain, "The gap between the world of Forms and sensible reality is bridged."¹⁵ Aristotle, on the other hand, "emphasized a study of the sensible world."¹⁶ Aristotle did not hold to the concept of Forms, at least not in the sense of existence outside the cosmos, but rather "Aristotle found the permanent and the sources of order *within* the cosmos."¹⁷ Therefore, for Aristotle the principles to be concerned with do not belong to Forms of another realm but are rather principles inherent to the things themselves. The concepts challenged the other-worldly aspects of Christian tradition, along with revelation through dreams and visions. Therefore, the assumption that God can be known through biblical revelation was challenged. Aquinas' epistemology included the belief that knowledge of the "nature of the divine being" was not possible, but only inferences regarding his attributes as could be deduced by reason.¹⁸

Another point for reflection is that Thomas Aquinas was reading Aristotelian philosophy as interpreted by the Islamic philosopher Averroes. According to Rena D. Dossett, Western accounts do not register how impactful Averroes himself was to the development of Western humanism in European scholasticism. Dossett also comments on Averroes' influence on Thomas Aquinas. "His influences can be strongly felt in writings of St. Thomas Aquinas and the scholastic movement as a whole."¹⁹ According to Morton Kelsey, "The Islamic medicine and astronomy and philosophy in that era was beginning to flood Europe...There seemed to be no choice but to

¹⁴ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity: Beginnings to 1500*, Vol. 1 (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1975), 508.

¹⁵ Diogenes Allen and Eric O. Springsted, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology*, 2nd edition (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 10.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

¹⁹ Rena Dossett, "The Historical Influence of Classical Islam on Western Humanistic Education" in *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, 4:2 (2014) 88.

translate Christianity and the Bible point by point into the language of Aristotle."²⁰

Kelsey shares passages of the writings of Aquinas and argues that he was ambiguous about dreams and visions and Christian spirituality.²¹ Aquinas' writings on the subject are found in *Summa Theologica* in which he reasons with careful adherence to Aristotelian emphasis on the senses and causality. Aquinas discusses dreams according to biblical references in Genesis, Job, and Daniel and admits that dreams might have a divine source, but Kelsey points out that Aquinas "gave no directions on how we can be sure that they are from God...The general attitude is that dreams are dangerous and rarely give us an experience of the Divine."²² This author finds the clearest expression of pessimism in a comment Aquinas offers about dreams that might foretell the future. Here, there is no reference to the possibility of God giving divine revelation about the future through dreams. Rather, Aquinas explains that the dreams may accidentally coincide with real future events by chance.²³ In another place, though, he admits that the soul may perceive divine revelations through dreams when the bodily senses are subdued.²⁴

While this author knows too little of Aquinas' works to agree indiscriminately with Kelsey's assessment of Aquinas and D/Vs, it seems clear that Aquinas offered no clear instruction and little to no enthusiasm for dreams and visions.²⁵ The omission is even more obvious when a study of D/Vs in Islam is laid alongside Christian reception history. Despite sharing the same sacred writings which feature Abraham and his visionary descendants, especially Joseph, Christianity and Islam have taken different approaches. The volumes of dream manuals produced by Islam's scribes and theologians over the centuries attest to the fact that Islam's interaction with D/Vs was a prominent feature of their spirituality. The genuine engagement with D/Vs among the religious elite clearly fostered the development of philosophical thought about the experiences. Yet, the Roman Catholic Church lacked that authoritative voice on the matter, and Aquinas' tepid contributions did not help the situation. The stage was therefore set for even more definitive discounting of D/Vs. The discussion turns now to the influence of Immanuel Kant.

²⁰ Kelsey, *God, Dreams, and Revelation*, 154.

²¹ If Averroes' influence discouraged attention to D/Vs, it is safe to say that the attitude did not represent the general Islamic understanding of dreams and visions. Islamic spirituality has embraced D/Vs as sources of divine knowledge since Muhammad until today. Also, Islam has produced an astounding amount of literature over the centuries dedicated to dream lore. See Lamoreaux, *The Early Muslim Tradition of Dream Interpretation*.

²² Kelsey, *God, Dreams, and Revelation*, 153.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 155.

²⁵ There are writers who refer to visions that Thomas Aquinas had during his life, even mentioning one which impacted him significantly at the end of his life. I cannot verify the reliability of the sources, though Kelsey shares that before his death Aquinas referred to experiencing revelations and that he "did come into direct relationship with God and ceased to write and dictate." See Kelsey, 156.

Immanuel Kant and the Eclipse of D/Vs in Christian Thought

In this part of the discussion, the idea that the 18th century German philosopher Immanuel Kant fostered the eclipse of dreams and visions in Christian thought is considered. Kant was one of the major contributors to developing Enlightenment thinking in his day. A product of the rationalist tradition, he was schooled in the theories of Christian Wolff and the understanding of the importance of sense experience to epistemology. He explored how perception and experience was linked to distinguishing knowledge as "a priori" or "a posteriori."²⁶ Along with many other deep thinkers, he had felt the impact of Sir Isaac Newton's *Principia* (1687), a volume which brought to light a universe operating by rational, mechanical principles. The influence of the "new science of nature" brought optimism about a new age of intellectual development, while at the same time severe critiques of Christian ideology were being voiced.²⁷ Kant was the contemporary of those bringing allegations against the Church. Pierre Bayle, Voltaire, and Edward Gibbons reported that Christianity stifles true rational understanding. Allen and Springsted write, "Bayle, although he claimed to be a believing Christian, never tired of claiming that the contents of Christian revelation were irrational..."²⁸ Kant, on the other hand, sought to salvage Christian thought by means of incorporating new understanding and fresh articulation drawn from rationalist arguments. It can be argued that he did more harm than good in terms of imposing limits on Christian knowledge.

Kant's pursuit of a rational metaphysics led him to make conclusions about human perception, its limits, and how the human soul finds itself situated in the universe and in relation to God. David Hume of Scotland had made the assertion that there was a distinction between viewing events as "according to history" and viewing them "in the eyes of faith," placing biblical scholarship in its own category, presumably over against "scientific history."²⁹ Kant read this and other ideas of Hume and is credited with bringing Hume's thinking, for the sake of wrestling with its philosophical gaps, to the forefront. He pursued filling those gaps by articulating a metaphysics by which the processes of reason interacting with phenomena (appearances) could be rationally explained. Kant's reasoning led him to the conclusion that *noumenal* reality could not be verified since knowledge was limited to what could be perceived by the senses in contact with the material world."³⁰ By the same token, the existence of God could not be deduced through pure reason or through experience. For Kant, these were assumptions that necessarily showcased the distinction of faith.

It was Kant's interaction with visionary Swedish Emanuel Swedenborg, though, that some commentators register as the turning toward the devaluation of D/Vs in Western Christianity. It will be argued here that

²⁶ Allen and Springsted, *Philosophy for Understanding Theology*, 155-157.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 141.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 148.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 161, 163, 165, 167.

Kant's contact with Swedenborg did put D/Vs under theological scrutiny with little yield for encouragement for visionary Christian spirituality. At the same time, Kant later made a turn toward Swedenborg and addressing noumenal reality within the metaphysics of spiritual life in a positive way. Yet, it reported that Swedenborg's assertions of dreams and visions and contacts with spirits and otherworldly knowledge annoyed Kant. Geoff Nelson writes, "Kant's ridiculing of Swedenborg, particularly as it focused upon Swedenborg's use of his dreams as the motivation for this change, seemed to lead the way for Western culture in general to devalue dreams."³¹ To help examine Kant's critique of Swedenborg, the discussion here will engage Gottlieb Florschütz as an interlocutor. His commentary on the matter offers a closer look at Kant's objections to Swedenborg and Kant's own understanding of the limits of spiritual knowledge.

Florschütz engages with Kant's polemic titled, *Träume eines Geistersehers--erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik* (1766). In it, Kant describes Swedenborg's assumptions as "hopelessly ill-conceived and absurd testimony."³² It should be noted, though, as Florschütz asserts, that Kant does not argue against the position of the human soul as a member of two spiritual worlds. Kant's strong stance on the immortality of the soul does not allow for truncating human existence from the other-worldly. Absent from the body after death, the soul returns to the "community it has always enjoyed with spiritual beings."³³ So, in regard to the position of the human soul within two realms, the two theologians concur. It is the question of being able to perceive and interact with the other world while still resident in the body that Kant is concerned about. While Kant asserts that the human only experiences the present world, he does go as far as to articulate some experiential/ontological quality of this duality: "However, as a member of the spiritual world, it experiences and imparts the pure influx of non-material nature..."³⁴ That influx marks the human soul as resident of the unseen world, and therefore Kant believes that death reopens "consciousness to clear perception."³⁵ So, matters of perception are the key to Kant's tension with Swedenborg. It therefore piqued him that Swedenborg admitted that humans live "in the company of spirits...although...quite unaware of it" but claimed in his own experience that God had opened his inner "reach" so that he could communicate with spirits.³⁶

³¹ Geoff Nelson, "Dreaming through the Bible with Luther and Calvin," in *Dreaming in Christianity and Islam: Culture, Conflict, and Creativity*, eds. Kelly Bulkeley, Kate Adams, and Patricia M. Davis (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press), 67.

³² Immanuel Kant, *Träume eines Geistersehers--erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik* (Riga: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch, 1766), 96 in Gottlieb Florschütz, "Swedenborg and Kant: Emanuel Swedenborg's Mystical View of Humankind, and the Dual Nature of Humankind in Immanuel Kant" *Swedenborg Studies* 2, West Chester, Pennsylvania, 1993, E-book, 158.

³³ *Ibid.*, 36 in Florschütz, 76.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ First quote found in Emanuel Swedenborg, "The New Jerusalem and its Heavenly Doctrine," 1857 in Carl du Prel, *Kants mystische Westanschauung*, (Leipzig: Günther, 1889), XXXIV in Florschütz, 76. Second quote found in Swedenborg, "Why the Lord was Born on Earth" in *Miscellaneous Theological Works* (London, 1758) in du Prel, p. XXXIV, in Florschütz, 95.

According to Florschütz, it was not that Kant had not considered the possibility of the experience of insights regarding, or sensations of, the "simultaneous spiritual and physical being."³⁷ He had been musing over the possibility within his metaphysical framework prior to serious engagement with Swedenborg. But as Florschütz points out, it is Kant's "critical theory of cognition" that weighed in heavily to temper his theology of the dual nature of humankind.³⁸ Kant could not agree on Swedenborg's terms with his "empirical dreams" and concluded that Swedenborg's claim that he was locating the thoughts of other beings in his spiritual interactions was in error. Kant was more comfortable with the "dreams of metaphysics" and the assumption that Swedenborg was being influenced by his own mind and intellect during his mystical episodes.³⁹ As an interesting twist, Kant made an unusual return to the topics after the publication of his polemic. Florschütz comments, "The elderly Kant returned in a startling, radical way to Swedenborg as an individual and to his basic conviction that the sensible world was permeated by the other, spiritual world and affirmed this esoteric doctrine..."⁴⁰

What can be concluded about Immanuel Kant's influence on the eclipse of dreams and visions in Christian thought? It seems clear that Kant's theology did promote the eclipse of dreams and visions. Perhaps, though, he did not see it as an entirely closed subject, since he returned to engage with Swedenborg's epistemologically permeable metaphysics. It can be concluded, though, that Kant's understanding of the believer's cognitive limits does not allow for contact with the Holy Spirit, angels, or other spiritual entities through D/Vs. In light of his willingness to acknowledge the other-worldly realm as the home of spirits and the realm to which humankind returns after death, Kantian epistemology seems to tip the hat to the noumenal while keeping it classified as unverifiable. In other words, there *is* a veil and there *is* something behind it, but penetrating it is another matter. For Immanuel Kant, Christians, or anyone else for that matter, cannot "go there" because all knowledge is subject to the constructs of Enlightenment rationale. His conclusions are in stark contrast to the theology and praxis of Pentecostal-Charismatics, and as will be shown here, in contradiction to the theory and praxis of contemporary Christian visionaries in African contexts.

Pentecostal-Charismatics and Dreams and Visions

It is argued here that in the wake of Enlightenment impact, and in spite of Immanuel Kant's influence, Pentecostal movements of the last hundred years plus have stewarded a traditional reading of the Bible that has validated D/Vs in their Christian experience. While D/Vs in Christian spirituality had been downplayed or ignored, or only included for their role in European history (as in the D/Vs of Catherine of Siena, Joan of Arc, and Teresa of Ávila), they *were* a reality within the Christian Church. In the recent decades,

³⁷ Florschütz, "Swedenborg and Kant," 200.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 297.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Pentecostal-Charismatic historians and their friends have been intentional about documenting the experiences, and Pentecostal-Charismatic theologians, philosophers, and missiologists are weighing the implications of the phenomena.

Historian of Pentecostalism Walter J. Hollenweger writes, "The critics of the Pentecostal movement who accuse it of neglecting the written word in favour of individual illuminations by the Spirit are ignorant of the role which the Bible plays in the Pentecostal movement. Pentecostals live with the Bible."⁴¹ Beyond noting the emphasis of the Bible for Pentecostal praxis, Hollenweger gives D/V reports. For example, American C.H. Mason, founder of the Church of God in Christ denomination and partaker of the events at the Azusa Street Revival (1906), was called to ministry through a vision. Hollenweger also writes about Daniel Berg, a Swede who had immigrated to the U.S. The man was directed to begin missions in the state of Pará in Brazil through a dream and he eventually founded the *Assembléias de Deus* there.⁴² Gary B. McGee reports on D/V experiences outside of the U.S. even prior to the Azusa Street phenomenon. In the revival of South India in 1905, dreams and visions figured among many other manifestations of the Holy Spirit. For example, "In the Khassia Hills, girls sang "The Heavenly Songs" and "The Angels' Hymns," while experiencing visions."⁴³ In regard to other locations, McGee also shares, "Whether in India, China, Manchuria, Korea, Africa, or Madagascar, some or all of the following dynamics appeared or had been noticeable for some time [including] dreams and visions..."⁴⁴

Pentecostal scholars have been pointing out for some time that the knowing associated with Pentecostal spirituality is ill-accommodated by mainline and evangelical theologies. The lacuna in terms of actual engagement with the way many in the Church experience the voice of God was spotted by missiologist Allan H. Anderson almost thirty years ago when he recognized the significance of dreams and visions in African spirituality. He offers, "The evidence of the Spirit in the AIC [African Initiated Churches] movement means that we should consider whether traditionally western concepts of revelation are adequate. What theological value should be given, for example, to direct "revelation" (prophecy) given to individuals, or to dreams and visions?"⁴⁵ Theologian Mark J. Cartledge suggests that issues of truth and epistemology, those elements by which the Pentecostal may engage in the broader conversation with philosophy and religion, are better explored and substantiated by means of understanding the role of experience in spirituality. That investigation for understanding is best suited to an interdisciplinary approach. As an example, he states that for adequately assessing the experiences of ASCs (altered states of consciousness associated with visions)

⁴¹ Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals* (London, UK: SCM Press Ltd., 1972), 321.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 482.

⁴³ Gary B. McGee, *Miracles, Missions, and American Pentecostalism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 82.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁴⁵ Allan H. Anderson, *African Reformation: African Initiated Christianity in the 20th Century* (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, Inc., 2001), 239.

the insights "gained from other disciplines" are invaluable.⁴⁶ Philosopher James K.A. Smith sees Pentecostal knowing as "antirationalist," not "antirational," an epistemology that is "proto-postmodern" and therefore one that critiques modern criteria for knowing and is founded on epistemic commitments that differ from those construed by disciples of Descartes and Kant.⁴⁷ Finally, according to theologian Peter D. Neumann, the issue of experience and theology has been "on the table" for some time, especially since Friedrich Schleiermacher's work in the nineteenth century which highlighted the appeal to the interior, immediate, self-conscious experience of God.⁴⁸ Moreover, missiologist David Bosch affirmed Schleiermacher's theological affirmation of experience. Bosch was not unaware of the reductionist aspects of Enlightenment ideology. He writes, "We are called to re-conceive rationality by expanding it...This means that the religious dimension has to be incorporated into our overall vision of reality."⁴⁹ While Bosch may not have been specifically referencing D/V phenomena, he was surely aware of the lacuna as far as attention to the value of experience to Christian spirituality.

This paper argues that readings of the Bible which inspire the high valuation of dreams and visions for Christian spirituality, and which were typical of believers of earlier centuries, have not died out. They are very much alive, and endure to challenge the constrictive limits of Enlightenment philosophy as well as the ideology's influence over Western theology. These readings are found in the most robust branches of the contemporary Church, those of the regions of the global South, and to these readings we turn now.

Dreams and Visions in the Contemporary African Church

One of the most interesting of case studies in the Dreams and Visions Project was the interview with lecturer Umar Danfulani of the University of Jos, Nigeria. Danfulani has been an educator for three decades in the History of Religions and has written eight volumes, multiple chapters in other texts, and a host of articles. He currently serves as a pastor, with his wife, at God's Grace Divine Mission in Jos. He participated as a lead researcher on a team funded through the John Templeton Foundation and Centre for Religion and Civic Culture at the University of Southern California (USC) for Pentecostal and Charismatic Research Initiative (PCRI). The research was under the direction of Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori.⁵⁰ Danfulani has therefore thought deeply along the lines of Pentecostal Charismatic theology

⁴⁶ Mark J. Cartledge, *Practical Theology: Charismatic and Empirical Perspectives*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003) 190.

⁴⁷ James K. A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 50-54.

⁴⁸ Peter D. Neumann, *Pentecostal Experience: An Ecumenical Encounter* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012), 2-3.

⁴⁹ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 361-362.

⁵⁰ Miller and Yamamori published the volume *Global Pentecostalism: the New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007).

and praxis in Nigeria. He contributed significantly to the Dreams and Visions Project due to his ability to present a cohesive perspective weaving historical, religious, and cultural elements of Nigerian spirituality with his own theology and spiritual praxis.

The objective of my research was to understand the extent of the significance of D/Vs among the Pentecostal-Charismatics in African contexts.⁵¹ There were indications that the research would be fruitful. The experience of seeing in a vision a piece of white paper with the statement written on it "Jesus for addicts" was offered to me (unsolicited) as the reason why a Togolese pastor was drawn into ministry to the addicted. As well, a BMB (believer of Muslim background) in Ghana shared about a vision he had by which he was healed of sickness by two men wearing white and then instructed to preach about Jesus Christ to his fellow villagers. As well, this author's own visionary experiences had already piqued the curiosity about whether D/Vs were burrowed underneath Christian missional impetus in African contexts.

Umar Danfulani's understanding of the relevance of dreams runs parallel with his view of the role of the Spirit and pneumatology. He reported of the revival in 1972 that swept his region and resulted in the Holy Spirit radically transforming the lives of college students. He said, "The Spirit was so strong that more than half of the students just became preachers and they just went away preaching..." Danfulani, himself a prolific visionary, also explained how the Holy Spirit was (and is) also made evident in the D/Vs of believers. In Danfulani's "cosmology," he explains his understanding of what Swedenborg also claimed, an inter-relationality between humans and the spirit world.⁵² For Danfulani, the spheres of existence which host humans and other beings share an interface in and by which mystics, also known as "religious specialists" (Christian prophets guided by the Holy Spirit being included) can have influence in both realms. Dreams can be part of that mystical realm since they are at times locations for encounters where God, or others, can speak. Danfulani asserts that in his past two to three years in counseling ministry at God's Grace Divine Mission he has known many counselees who have received dreams that reflect God speaking to them about their own lives. He is learning more about the interpretation of dreams in his ministry role, but it is evident to him that the Holy Spirit may be understood in some spiritual dreams through the symbols of the dove, of water, or of bright light. Danfulani and his wife interpret their own dreams together, or seek out Christian counsel for deciphering dreams they cannot interpret themselves.

⁵¹ Data collecting was done from July 14 through Sept. 9, 2017 in Ghana, Togo, Nigeria, and Tanzania. The collection process involved 6 research escorts and required the consent of faculty at three seminaries and an institute for training in evangelism and counseling. Data was gathered in the form of written surveys along with personal recorded interviews. I examined 357 D/V narratives gathered from 212 participants.

⁵² The term "cosmology" I coined to portray the African concept of a stratified cosmos hosting beings of different types. I regret that the fascinating topic of how D/V valuation in African traditional religion has been recontextualized in the Christian Church cannot be explored in this paper.

Danfulani's expertise in religious history proved crucial to an understanding of how the Bible has funded a positive disposition toward D/Vs in Nigeria, and how D/V valuation has played a role in the breaking away from mission churches. That phenomenon resulted in the emergence of independent churches and fostered a positive climate for other indigenous church planting initiatives. I presented Danfulani with a question that had been stirred up by exposure to the research of Nelson Hayashida on the dreams of Zambian Baptists. Is it possible that the high valuation of D/Vs was one of the issues that contributed to the emergence of independent churches? Zambian contributors to Hayashida's study shared, in Hayashida's words, that "Because missionaries set less store by dreams and visions as channels of divine revelation, African believers did not share their dreams with missionaries..."⁵³ And Allan Anderson asserts, "The power of the Holy Spirit liberates from the oppression of both the traditional spirit world, and Western 'colonial' forms of Christianity."⁵⁴ Danfulani responded to the query, "I don't have any doubt that dreams and visions were part of it, particularly when the AICs have a verse, or two or three, from the Bible to back up each and every of their practice."

There were many references made to the Bible during interviews and reported in written surveys. One interviewee in Togo cast the teachings of Pentecostal foreign missionaries in a favorable light, in contrast to the influence of missionaries according to Zambian Baptists. The Togolese pastor of the Assemblies of God (AG) shared that the foreign AG missionaries who brought Pentecostal teachings to them instructed them on dreams using the Bible and sharing from their own D/V experiences. In Nigeria, Umar Danfulani offered his own understanding of how the Bible supports the interpretation of D/Vs for Christian spirituality. As did Basil the Great in his writings, Danfulani referred to Num. 12:6 in which God states that he speaks to a prophet through a dream or vision. He shared that for many prophets, as is evident looking as far back as the book of Job, and for kings, D/Vs were important. Danfulani also commented that the Holy Spirit at times "touches" him and induces visionary trances.

In another interview, a female pastor commented, "When I was reading the Bible I could read that God was giving the people the dreams and visions, even some strange animal with strange feet, so I said, "Okay those were strange but even this same God can bring me strange dreams..." In another interview with the founder of The House of Recab, a home hosting over 200 orphans in Jos, Nigeria, the director shared that he was referred to the book of Jeremiah chapter 35 through a dream. He reported that in the dream he was instructed to raise up an orphanage where he and his wife would teach children according to a "principle-centered model of education." In another part of Nigeria, a certain bishop referred to Prov. 29:18 and stated that where there is no vision the people perish. He commented, "You see, if you don't

⁵³ Nelson Osamu Hayashida, *Dreams in the African Church: The Significance of Dreams and Visions Among Zambian Baptists* (Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1999), 280.

⁵⁴ Allan Anderson, *Moya: The Holy Spirit in an African Context* (Pretoria, SA: The University of South Africa, 1991), 125.

have dreams and visions you're just walking in darkness, you can't go far." Another visionary shared that he was instructed in a dream to read Matthew chapter 5:38-40 when he was struggling to be patient with a classmate who would not return his shoes. This same man explained the collaboration of the Holy Spirit with the human spirit, by which people receive divine revelation, by referring to Rom. 8:16 and 1 Cor. 6:17. Another participant commented, "The method of my interpretation is I refer to the word of God to see whether such dreams or visions are connected anywhere in the word. Then I use the word to interpret it. Or at times God will just give me direct revelation of those dreams and visions, I will tell them this is what it means." For many participants of the study, the biblical practices of prayer and fasting are part of the D/V narrative. For one Assemblies of God pastor in Nigeria, prayer and fasting opened the way to multiple dreams and visions which have guided him through almost 30 years of ministry.

Biblical concepts and symbols were frequently reported in the D/Vs narrated. For one pastor who dreamt that a snake was in bed with him, his fears of his wife's attachment to the devil through occult practices surfaced during the interview. One man from Ghana shared that when he was 17 years old, after having fasted, he had a life transforming experience of seeing the heavens opened to show Jesus weeping on the throne. Another man shared the ecstatic vision of being transported through the literal body of Christ up through the veins into Christ's heart. In yet another revealing interview, a remarkable dream was reported by a pastor who was shown the architectural structure he should use for his new church building. Frequently visionaries dream of Bibles, preaching, hearing God's voice of direction, or visitations from esteemed loved ones or respected church leaders who call them to the Church and to ministry. In summary, these visionaries hold to a biblical reading of dream and vision accounts that points to them as encounters of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, believers are encouraged by their reception and interpretation of the experiences because they esteem them as spiritually relevant and even crucial to Christian life.

Conclusion

A Christian history of the reception of the biblical references to dreams and visions is described in this essay. It traced a trajectory grounded in the biblical understanding recorded in the era closest to the inception of the Church, a period of high valuation of D/Vs. It then proceeded to note the less than encouraging influences of Thomas Aquinas and Immanuel Kant. It ended with a window into Pentecostalism and the contemporary reception of the Bible regarding D/Vs in African contexts. It has been argued here that the Church in Africa took measures to fend off the effects of Enlightenment pessimism regarding D/Vs that infected the Western Church. They did so by preserving their biblical reading of D/V experiences within indigenous expressions of Christian faith in Pentecostal-Charismatic churches. Today, African visionaries articulate a pneumatology drawn from biblical

understanding which supports the value of the experience of D/Vs for believers as the evidence of the activity of the Holy Spirit.

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