



# THE CHALLENGE OF CULTURE

**Articulating and Proclaiming the  
Wesleyan-Holiness Message in the  
Asia-Pacific Region**

**Papers Presented at the  
Asia-Pacific Region  
2001 Theology Conference**

**Edited by  
David A. Ackerman**



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How can the church articulate the gospel message in ways relevant to the many diverse cultures of the Asia-Pacific region? To what degree can and should theologians, educators, pastors, and missionaries contextualize this message in this pursuit of relevancy? How can we bring our theology to culture without losing theology to syncretism or the plague of pluralism? How does the dynamic understanding of holiness in the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition address these issues?

The contributors at the 2001 Asia-Pacific Region Theology Conference wrestled with these and similar questions in their efforts to present a practical theology faithful to scripture and tradition yet flexible to the needs of community. The keynote speaker, Roderick T. Leupp, called the conference to do some “street theology”: “We must put in our time in the library, but perhaps even more importantly, we must put in our time with ordinary people in the ordinary places where they do ordinary things.”

Readers will be challenged and inspired by the commitment of the authors of these articles who represent at least eight different cultures but share in the common passion for heart holiness.

David A. Ackerman, Editor

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# The Challenge of Culture

## Articulating and Proclaiming the Wesleyan-Holiness Message in the Asia-Pacific Region

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2001 Theology Conference

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Cover Design by Scott Griffiths, Brisbane, Australia. In the design, the hand is reaching out in compassion and love, while at the same time holding up the Asia-Pacific region in support. The heart captures the thrust of the Wesleyan-Holiness message of holiness. The goal is to bring this message of holiness to the Asia-Pacific region in relevant ways that speak to the needs of people.

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## Introduction

The papers presented at 2001 Asia-Pacific Region Theology Conference wrestled with the theme of the “Challenge of Culture.” Many modern thinkers recognize that the church is in the midst of a transition. Examples of this transition are myriad, but closer to home, the Church of the Nazarene is now known as the *International* Church of the Nazarene with *international* headquarters located in Kansas City, Missouri, U.S.A. Moreover, the majority of the members of this denomination now live outside of the U.S.A. and Canada. This transition poses significant challenges in polity, organization, and at times, even articulation of doctrine.

The growth of information during the 20<sup>th</sup> century has left little of life untouched, and theological study is no exception. Theology has made major advancements (or declines, as some might say), from Barth to Bultmann, from Schweitzer to Moltmann, or closer to home, from Wiley to Grider. Some of the greatest minds of church history lived in the last century. Most of these advancements in theology have served the church well, laying the groundwork for the present growth of the church. One factor that is becoming more apparent, especially through ease of travel and the proliferation of access to the Internet, is that the world is becoming smaller. At the same time, the world of theology is expanding beyond old borders. Earned doctorates in all areas of theological studies and practical ministry are proliferating. Yet, the church and the church’s theology are no longer confined to or dominated by North America or Europe. Old paradigms are shifting and at times even being replaced by newer perspectives.

The question we are confronted with in the midst of this transition is, Can the Gospel and church speak with one voice in an age of relativism and pluralism? Can the church articulate the Gospel in such a way that it neither distorts the message nor finds itself irrelevant to the new world?

Jesus came preaching the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:15). He prayed, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, *your kingdom come*, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:9-10). Where is this Kingdom and how is it made manifest in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Jesus taught that the

Kingdom of God is separate from the kingdoms of people (John 18:36). The Gospel transcends culture just as the Kingdom transcends human institutions. But can we see the Kingdom? The Kingdom is like a seed that grows secretly night and day and soon ripens for the harvest (Mark 4:26-29). Like a mustard seed, the Kingdom began small but is growing until someday it will be the largest of all garden plants (Mark 4:30-32). The Kingdom is like yeast that slowly but surely penetrates the whole lump of dough (Matt 13:33). The Gospel is assuredly penetrating all cultures and language groups in an unprecedented advancement of the Kingdom. In Jesus' teaching, the Kingdom was a gift to be received (Luke 18:16-17) but also a treasure to be sought after (Matt 6:33). God's prevenient grace has prepared the way, but is the church ready to seek after the latent Kingdom?

The Apostle Paul made a profound statement when he wrote to the Corinthians, "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Cor 9:22). This is a statement of relevancy. Paul recognized that for him to bring the Gospel effectively to the cities of the Roman Empire, he had to know his context. He had to adjust his message accordingly. That is why in 1 Corinthians he used sapient (wisdom) terminology to describe the holy life in Christ, while in Romans and Galatians he used legal metaphors (justification, slavery, etc.), and in Philippians relational terms (3:10). In each of these situations he used whatever terms or descriptions he needed to make the message of communion with Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit clear to his readers in order that they could decisively choose this higher way of life. He had the Gospel in his mind and was living it out on a daily basis, but his background and life situation were different from his churches. True, they shared some common cultural norms (a debated issue among Pauline scholars), but can the new life in Christ ever conform completely to the paradigms of the world? Even to the Jews, his own people, Paul had to become like one under the law, not for self-glorification or legalistic righteousness, but so that those under the law could see a transformed life with which they could identify (1 Cor 9:20). Paul had the concept of "gospel" in his mind as he wrote his letters, but this was not so much a cognitive, theological understanding as it was a reality of life expressed most profoundly in his fellowship "in Christ" through the indwelling Holy Spirit. I would suggest, therefore, that Paul began with this spiritual

experience and all it entailed for him and let his theological contextualizing be molded to the situations calling for relevancy.

The contributors at this conference also wrestled with the question of relevancy. The task Paul faced is still the task of the church today. How do we bring our theology to culture? Is it as simple as modeling an experience? Is it a matter of language? Do all we need to do is come up with “new” terms, even biblical terms, that express our faith in “new” ways? (Paul pioneered some of our treasured terms and images.) Should we completely abandon the old paradigms, old vocabulary, old ways of doing things in order to be relevant? (It seems Paul was unwilling to go this far.) Can we “forsake all,” including our own cultural heritage, in order to be relevant to a new age or new mission field? (Paul never really stopped being a Jew.) These are not easy questions to answer, neither are they easy questions to ask of ourselves.

Perhaps we should reconsider a definition of *theology*. Simply stated, theology is a “word about the triune God.” The words that we use (called the “vehicles”), however, are only metaphors or symbols representing some other concept, reality, being, action, or thought (called the “tenor”).<sup>1</sup> The “vehicles” used to describe the “tenor,” in this case, God, are different among dialects and language families. The tenor cannot be defined without the vehicle, but the tenor is also beyond the vehicle. What this concept does to theology when applied is that it wedds theologizing to language and culture, but it also realizes that God as the tenor is beyond the definition of any possible vehicle used to describe God. The word “about” in the above definition is also worthy of note. “About,” as used above, is a preposition of description or reference. In common English usage, it is used when two words are sequentially in relationship, with one word somehow modifying, defining, qualifying, or describing some aspect of the other word. For example, with the phrase, “a man about six feet tall,” the concept of six feet is describing how tall the man is. When applied to the definition of theology, the “word” is *describing* “the triune God.” Thus, theology is an articulation determined by language and culture of the greater being of God who is beyond the capacity of language and culture to describe.

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<sup>1</sup>See William F. Thrall and Addison Hibbard, *A Handbook to Literature* (New York: Odyssey Press, 1960), 281-82.

Much of the Christian “theology” that has been taught in the Asia-Pacific region has been cloaked in “words” from Western languages and cultures. This theology is valid and needed and should not be discarded. Much of it has direct descent from the Bible and the languages of the Bible. Consequently, we are left with this question: Is Christian theology wedded to Western Civilization so much that to rise above this culture would mean discarding theology as we know it? Paul may offer us a model at this point, for he was unwilling to completely abandon his culture (a Jew steeped in biblical terminology and concepts) to reach his target audience (more often than not, syncretistic Greco-Roman pagans), but willing at the same time to cloak his (Hellenistic) Jewish ideas in terms with which his audience could identify. Every minister within every culture faces the same hermeneutical issues that Paul faced, whether Western, Eastern, Southern, or Northern!

A definition of *culture* is also worth visiting. Conrad Phillip Kottak defines culture as “traditions and customs, transmitted through learning, that govern the beliefs of the people exposed to them.”<sup>2</sup> E. B. Tyler defines it as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society.”<sup>3</sup> Like language, culture is symbolic, both verbal and nonverbal, to symbol, order, and maintain a society.<sup>4</sup> People act in patterns according to these learned symbols. To communicate effectively within a culture, these symbols must be learned to some extent or communication breaks down. The *challenge* of culture lies in this idea of symbolism, for as cultures change (generational sub-cultures) or as new cultures are reached with the Gospel, theological truths must be clothed in symbols relevant to those cultures.

Both theology and culture are also in a constant state of flux and transition. H. Richard Niebuhr states that culture is human achievement, purposiveness, and effort: “A river is nature, a canal culture; a raw piece of quartz is nature, an arrowhead culture; a moan is natural, a word cultural.

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<sup>2</sup>Conrad Phillip Kottak, *Anthropology: The Exploration of Human Diversity* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1991), 2.

<sup>3</sup>E.B. Tyler, *Primitive Culture* (New York: Harper, 1958), 1.

<sup>4</sup>Kottak, 40-41.

Culture is the work of men's minds and hands."<sup>5</sup> As thinking grows so does culture. Because theology focuses upon the Living God who is dynamically involved in this ever changing canal of culture, theology also is in a constant state of flux. This is not to say that theology has no static elements to it, but if theology is to be relevant, it must keep pace with culture, if not one step ahead of culture.

The *challenge* is quite self-evident when put in the context of the Kingdom of God. In Jesus' prayer, "your kingdom come" is a hope for transformation. When the Gospel invades a culture, culture comes in contact with the very power of the Creator who brings new from the old (2 Cor 5:17). Culture is human, therefore, it contains both good and bad. The taint of sin is everywhere felt, but if we look closely, we will also see the prevenient grace of God ever drawing people closer to the Living Word. Therefore, we can approach the task of theology not with fear of the unknown—a position too easily assumed in upholding our time honored traditions, but with the optimism of divine grace that transcends our mundane understanding of divine ways in the world around us. Theology transcends culture because it studies the Transcendent One. Thus, it must be ready to critique and challenge culture if indeed it has the authority it claims to have. Theology transcends culture but must also be immanently involved with culture. Theology must be immanent (cultural) because God loves the least in society. In a word, theology must be *incarnational*, in the model of the incarnational God.

Is there a uniquely Wesleyan interpretation of these issues? The authors of the following papers attempt to address that question from the context of their own cultural challenges. They share the basic conviction that the message of holiness of heart and life truly can make a difference in a culture because this message contains the very power of the transforming God. The challenges are not insurmountable because we are optimistic in grace of the transforming God.

The papers from the conference have been organized in this book around three key themes: articulation, proclamation, and application. Each of the sections begins with a paper from our keynote speaker, Roderick Leupp. Articulation involves knowing theology and culture in order to

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<sup>5</sup>H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), 33.

address the challenge of bringing the Gospel to culture. This section includes the majority of the papers presented at the conference. Proclamation involves taking the Gospel to culture, based on the solid work of careful articulation. A significant part of the conference involved times of worship. Included in the second section of the book are the sermons preached at the beginning of the morning sessions. Finally, we must make the Gospel relevant through application. The book ends looking forward and within. We are reminded that the Gospel of the love of God is really what the world needs.

Though the presenters come from different levels of theological training and ministry involvement, they represent their current context of theological development, thus making their presentation not only relevant but also appropriate. One of the purposes of this conference was to give non-Westerners the opportunity to articulate and proclaim theology from their own context, rather than simply translate the inherited Western theology into a different language. A significant objective of the conference was to empower young and developing theologians. All those who participated in the conference hope that the thoughts and discussion shared there can bear fruit through the printing of this book.

David A. Ackerman, *Editor*



# **Part One**

## **Articulation**



# 1

## Some New Days for Christian Holiness

Roderick T. Leupp

Thank you for this invitation to share in this conference. It is a great honor to me personally to have been asked. My prayer is that the Holy Spirit would move in our midst in a gentle yet decisive way. Isaiah 11:2 reminds us of the seven-fold gift of the Holy Spirit. This verse was treasured by the ancient exegetes, because it showed yet again that God desires to visit us with his Holy Spirit.

Let us hear the word of the Lord: “A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him.” That is the first gift of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit of the *Lord*, the Spirit of the one true God. The Asia-Pacific region is probably the most religious place on earth from the standpoint of having virtually all of the world’s great religious traditions abundantly represented. As we think together about speaking the truth of Christian holiness across this region, we need a criterion of discernment. We need not just any spirit, for there are millions of spirits across this great territory. We need the Spirit of the Lord.

The remaining six gifts of the Holy Spirit are given in the rest of verse two: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. My years of living in the Philippines have certainly helped me to appreciate more fully those six gifts of the Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and the fear of the Lord. Each of these six may prove to be a small window into understanding the respective cultures represented in this room. That is, each culture here represented may have its own view of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and the fear of the Lord. Views that are different are not necessarily views that are incompatible. One of the great benefits of a conference like this is cross-fertilization.

We are all here to learn from one another. We should not expect uniformity, for we come from different places. But we should expect and strive for unity.

It has been claimed that there are only three theological doctrines upon which all Christians everywhere agree in broad outline. The first one is the trinity of God. The Trinity is the Christian understanding of God. The second one is orthodox Christology, that Jesus Christ is fully human as well as fully divine, what might be called the Person of Jesus Christ. The Christian church has never really formulated to everyone's satisfaction exactly *how* the divine and the human interact within Jesus Christ, but confesses Jesus to be fully and completely human and totally divine. The third area of broad agreement might be called the Work of Jesus Christ. The work that he comes to do is salvific, although there are obviously tremendous disagreements as to the extent and degree of human depravity, and how God's grace interacts with the human will.

We all have heard, and we all enjoy repeating, words that Phineas F. Bresee learned from someone else, but made his own: **In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity.**

As I envision this conference's purposes, some of what we are hoping to accomplish is wrapped up in this motto. What are the *essentials* of the doctrine of holiness, upon which all should be agreed? If we put the essentials in Column A and the non-essentials in Column B, how much interchange might there be between the essentials and the non-essentials? Is what is essential at all shaped by the culture in which we find ourselves thinking about and proclaiming this doctrine? Is doctrine that is influenced by culture still "pure" or even true doctrine?

If we agree with the writer John Updike that by its very nature theology must unravel and then be knitted together again, can we even agree that Christian holiness is predicated on a handful of essentials that cannot be negotiated away?

I believe that all Christian theology is a pilgrim theology, a theology on the way, as opposed to a perennial theology that is impervious to change. What Wesley Tracy called the "prairie theology" of American revivalists and holiness preachers may not be the best theology for the Asia-Pacific region, although there are elements of the prairie theology we would not want to discard or abandon without thinking. For one thing, the immedi-

acy of God. I now live in the state of Oklahoma, where the wind comes sweeping down the plain. I do not like the wind, and yet I think if you checked, in the Bible and in Christian tradition, the wind is a more potent symbol of God's presence than is the lack of wind. A mighty and rushing wind disturbed the world on the Day of Pentecost. Prairie winds symbolize the divine immediacy.

A pilgrim theology often uses the materials it has close at hand. A pilgrim theology might also be called a local or an ethnic theology. The incarnation of God's eternal Word in Jesus Christ is the strongest foundation for any pilgrim theology. Only Jesus Christ is the Incarnate One, and yet through the prevalence of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ may be discerned everywhere.

During my years of teaching in the Philippines I am sure I saw very many examples of a pilgrim theology. Most of the time I was simply too dense to see what was there to be seen. Any pilgrim theology is sacramental in the sense of using outward signs to convey and teach inward and spiritual graces. I am obviously here using *sacramental* to point to an entire theological world perspective, rather than only to specific means of grace the Christian church practices. Thank the Lord that in some parts of the worldwide Church of the Nazarene sacramental renewal is now going forth.

One striking example of an enacted pilgrim theology came from the broad hands of Alofa Nofoa, a Samoan graduate of Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary, during one culture night at the seminary. Within a period of three or four minutes, and maybe less, he made a very serviceable basket out of an ordinary, if large, palm branch. From the stuff of everyday life Alofa made something useful.

That is one criterion of any mature holiness theology. Is it useful? By useful we mean nothing less than the Wesleyan definition of "practical divinity," not useful as in whatever is expedient or easy to accomplish. Useful is what is a good fit with God's ongoing economy of salvation. Useful is the means of grace. Useful is the bridge between God's grace and our human nature.

Throughout the Asia-Pacific region, not all of you live in places where there is an abundance of Christian symbols, practices, institutions, or history. Christianity is simply not a part of the recognized landscape in your country. A pilgrim theology needs *true* entries into the local culture,

not necessarily a lot of entries. As the Chinese say, one picture is worth ten thousand words. If we use, for example, rice, pan-de-sal, bread, bananas, even natural phenomena such as mountains, lakes, oceans, fields, volcanoes as stepping stones for our pilgrim theologies, we are not thereby worshipping these things. But we are understanding incarnation as something that ultimately graces all of the created realm. We understand that the Holy Spirit has preceded us wherever we go.

Can you theologize after a trip to the market? Or while waiting to catch a jeepney? I believe that our theological method needs to be at least partially a method “from below,” which is only to say that like John Wesley, we must endeavor to become a “folk theologian,” as Albert Outler so well described Wesley. Tracy’s description of a “prairie theology” is a kind of folk theology, common to the middle section of the United States. But there might also be a volcano theology, a rice field theology, an ocean theology.

A folk theologian’s main resource is of course prevenient grace. This is grace that goes before us and arrives at our intended destination before we have even taken the first step of our journey.

We must put in our time in the library, but perhaps even more importantly, we must put in our time with ordinary people in the ordinary places where they do ordinary things. I earlier made this comparison, and I think it is still valid. Today’s practitioner and proclaimer of Christian holiness is no longer like a neat and tidy physician who makes polite hospital rounds in a white coat that never gets spotted or soiled while checking on his patients. Today’s proclaimer of holiness works in the emergency room, where there is real blood, mucus, and excrement. In his book, *A Life of Jesus*, the late Japanese Roman Catholic novelist Shusaku Endo takes us to first-century Palestine where insects bite, babies wail, and the Savior of the world is crucified hanging between two thieves. Not so very different from the Tondo district of Manila.

Bob Dylan once sang, “It’s easy to see without looking too far . . . that not much is really sacred.” Well, Bob Dylan never visited Taiwan, home to more religious statues and shrines per capita than any other place on earth. Bob Dylan never rode a tricycle, jeepney, taxi, or bus in the Philippines, most of which are strung with religious messages.

Across the Asia-Pacific region the gap between the sacred and the secular is not as broad as in the West, and may be non-existent. Dylan's conclusion, "It's easy to see without looking too far . . . that not much is really sacred" is much more true in diagnosing the Western world than in describing most parts of the Asia-Pacific region, although Australia is one of the most secular places on earth.

**Diagnosis** is always crucial. Henri Nouwen reminds us that the original meaning of diagnosis is to know through and through. *Gnosis* means "knowledge" and *dia* means "through and through." He remarks that the renowned psychiatrist Karl Menninger one time asked a class of psychiatric residents what was the most important part of treating mental patients. After hearing several answers that did not satisfy him, Dr. Menninger said that what was crucial was knowing the patient through and through, or diagnosis. Obviously, each of you knows your culture far better than any outsider ever could. God has granted you discernment into what makes your culture unique, what gives it coherence, shape, and hope.

The doctrine of holiness simply states that through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, all human beings can share in the life that God intended for us originally. Holiness theology takes very seriously Paul's message to the Corinthians: "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" Renewal and recreation are what God intends for us.

It is a holy God who sanctifies wholly. Holiness people have perhaps not lingered long enough before the holiness of God. We have been too eager to rush ahead to the benefits of what God's sanctifying Spirit can create within us. With the Reformer Philip Melancthon, we have believed that to know Christ is to know Christ's benefits. That is true enough, but benefits can never finally be disjoined from the one who gives them, because any gift is a real and true representation of the one who gives it. How very true that often is for missionaries, because missionaries often receive from native peoples costly gifts and benefits that are given at a great sacrifice to those who give. And that is often a true statement about the giver, that the giver is indeed someone not afraid to sacrifice.

We start our theology of Christian perfection with the holiness of God, but we seldom end there. We end with ourselves as those who have received, with the believer being made Christianly perfect by the Holy Spirit.

We are the ones who receive sanctifying grace, but it is the **Holy Spirit** who sanctifies. We cannot and should not attempt to unlink those who are being sanctified from the one who sanctifies, although the natural human drift is toward self-absorption. From beginning to end, God is the sanctifying God. Our theology of sanctification should begin with God, and should end with God.

It has been claimed by some in the United States that the holiness movement is dead. Some who agree with this assessment want to revive the movement in one way or another, while others are sad to see the movement gone, but expect that the Holy Spirit will have something better.

I hope all here today would agree that one definite act of the Holy Spirit in our time is the spread of the gospel outside of the traditional centers of Christendom, a Christendom that probably is now dead. Some estimate as many as 75% of the world's Christians now live in Africa, South and Central America, and Asia.

These places are ripe for receiving the gospel because, as Jesus Christ said, those who are well do not realize their need of him. The wealthy Western world has largely chosen the easy path of secularism over the hard path of righteousness. In *this* time, the Holy Spirit is raising up new peoples in surprising and unexpected ways. The Holy Spirit is working among the poor of the world. That is perhaps the chief grace of the Holy Spirit for our time, to show himself among the poor of the world. In time this showing will lead to a truly indigenized theology, and away from theologies that have been transplanted from foreign and even alien lands.

My own eight years in the Philippines reflected a sort of pilgrimage toward a more indigenized theology. Within the first semester or two I realized that my students should be reading at least some theology written by their own people. Some have radicalized this idea to the point of suggesting that Western theology, written and taught by old and now dead white men, had nothing to teach seminarians who were gathered from across the Asia-Pacific region. While I do not hold that view, I do believe that one main reason we imported so many books from the United States is that evangelical theology around the Asia-Pacific region was and to some degree remains underdeveloped. A conference like this one should at least inspire people to go forth and produce theological works that can be used in the teaching, nurture, and evangelization of their own people.



One time a missionary told me that Tagalog, spoken by millions of Filipinos, lacked a technical theological vocabulary. I think my answer to that, if indeed it is true, would be to encourage Tagalog speakers to work with what they have, within the riches offered by the language. They will likely find that these riches are more than enough to state the truths of entire sanctification and other central teachings in fresh and vital language that will move those who hear and read it. No language on the face of the earth is static. Languages change and develop. Theologians working in Tagalog can begin to develop technical vocabulary as it is needed.

I believe that the Church of the Nazarene as a whole should devote relatively less money to translating works written by American Nazarene theologians, however good those works may be, and relatively more money to training indigenous theologians to the point where they can indeed produce works of indigenous theology, on their own, for their own. The continuing importation of American Nazarene theology around the world, even in translated form, will in the long run impede the growth of a genuinely indigenized theology. Many will want to say that the Church of the Nazarene is not yet ready for a truly indigenized theology. But if not now, when? If not today, when?

If we are committed to the holiness movement, our first concern must be with God the Holy One. It is a dangerous thing to come too close to the Holy God. Moses and other Old Testament heroes of faith were surprised when they looked upon the Holy One of Israel and survived.

Wolfhart Pannenberg reminds us that one of the definitions of holiness in the Bible is the opposition to all that is profane. I think we need to recapture some of that holy otherness of God. We may want to return to Rudolf Otto's great work, *The Idea of the Holy*, where he stresses that the holy is a non-rational idea, a concept that is not contrary to reason, but a truth that is simply not open to traditional rational investigation. We might say that the non-rational, or the *numinous* as Otto calls it, simply runs on a different track than does the rational.

He develops this of course in three related ways. God is *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. God is an overpowering mystery who fascinates us and overwhelms us at the same time, perhaps even attracts and repels us at the same time. Otto says that the fundamental religious attitude is the one displayed by Abraham, who when he appears before God says, "I am only dust and ashes."

For Rudolf Otto God's otherness is not necessarily opposed to his moral qualities of faithfulness, mercy, and love, but the otherness is in some ways *prior* to these moral qualities. At least one Nazarene theologian took issue with Otto's interpretation of God's holiness in the early parts of the Old Testament, claiming Otto was simply wrong to place God's otherness before his moral attributes.

The otherness of God translates directly into a healthy respect for what is sacred, or in Christian terms we would rather say "who is sacred." A central part of the Asian approach to life is respect for the sacred. We see this in the Confucian sense of filial piety. Even Rudolf Otto sensed this yearning for the holy during a journey across Asia. He tells of being overshadowed and overawed by a giant image of the Buddha, although he saw himself as a Christian historian of religions. We do not necessarily need to make the same pilgrimage as Otto to reach his conclusion that the sense of the sacred is very much alive across Asia.

The sacred as respect is abundantly seen in the way elders are honored across this region. During one of my first visits back to the United States, after being more respected by my Asian students than I probably deserved, I briefly stopped by my old school, where I had attended the third and fourth grades. A girl of only twelve or thirteen rudely asked me what time it was, or perhaps for directions to get some place, and when I could not supply what she needed, she abruptly disregarded me, without a word of thanks. I was home again, yet the home I had left was not the home to which I had returned. For in the interim both home and I had changed. By God's grace I hope I had changed for the better. I was not sure I could say the same about my home.

Any one who enters an unfamiliar place for the first time should first of all show respect. A great mystery should attend our arrival. We should hold our tongues and open our eyes, ears, and hearts. We should not get too familiar with a new place, and we should *never* get too familiar with the Lord God. Take off your sandals, Moses! Come no closer! The place on which you are standing is holy ground (Exodus 3:5).

*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; The whole earth is full of his glory. The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" (Isaiah 6:3-5)*

We know how this story ends. One of the seraphs takes a live coal and touches Isaiah's lips. The prophet's guilt and sin are blotted out. When the Lord asks who will go for him, Isaiah resolutely answers, "Here am I; send me!"

It is good to get to the end of the story, but we must not forget how we got there. No angel comes *to us* with a live coal unless we say with Isaiah, "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips."

In Isaiah 6 we can see how the non-rational moves to the moral. To say "woe is me!" is to recognize with Abraham that before God we are but dust and ashes. It is to recognize our smallness before the Lord. As C.S. Lewis said, when we are truly in God's presence, we should look upon ourselves as an insect. God's otherness is never the final word, but I believe we need to speak "woe is me!" from the depths of our hearts before the angel can purify our lips. It is always God who invites himself into our lives, not we who dictate the terms of our knowing God. We often forget this.

We commonly say that the proof of the doctrine of holiness is experiential, which is true enough. However, we seldom go on from there to try to define or illustrate by example what we mean by experiencing in a religious or spiritual way.

At a minimum, in describing religious experience I think we must say that event and context must come together to form a coherent whole, and if event and context are discrepant or not in harmony, then the experience is less authentic than it might be otherwise.

Let me try to illustrate with two or three examples taken from my time of living in the Philippines. One hot January afternoon I was walking through San Juan when all of a sudden I was hit by a water balloon on my shoulder. It bounced off to the pavement, not bursting, although bursting might have felt good in the tropical heat. Of course I wondered why someone had tossed a water balloon my way, and continued on walking. I soon realized it was the feast day of John the Baptist. How better to celebrate the one who *baptized* than by throwing water around? When I realized this I did not exactly welcome the water that came my way, but did not dread it either.

The many times I watched Filipinos practicing their Roman Catholicism were intensely interesting to me personally, but because I am neither Roman Catholic nor Filipino, these experiences were not as forceful or even as true as they would otherwise have been. Trying to see Pope John Paul II with Doug Flemming in Manila, trekking through Quiapo on Good Friday, walking to Antipolo on Maundy Thursday were all memorable experiences. They were *clarifying* but not *converting* experiences.

A man I highly regard, Hitoshi Fukue, has often reminded me that the thought world of Asians is more cosmocentric than in the West, where the view might be called anthropocentric. For Asians the human element finds its place on a cosmic grid, against a cosmic backdrop.

The doctrine of holiness is called to be theocentric, centered on the Triune God, although in the case of much traditional Nazarene theology it seems to be more anthropocentric. The quality, depth, immediacy, and perhaps frequency of religious experiences may be more important than the God who grants them. The subjective, personal, existential element is never far from the center of Nazarene piety. The personal overwhelms the cosmic and may even overwhelm the divine.

The danger of this sort of piety is that the personal can quickly degenerate into the private. The cosmic framework of Eastern thought seems to me to be a better fit with such classic Christian doctrines and expectations as the sacraments, the church, and the communion of saints.

I believe that holiness theology should therefore not shun or ignore the cosmic to which Eastern thought is naturally drawn. Remember, Christianity started on the western edge of Asia, so in that regard Christianity should share some elements of the Eastern cosmic view. Parts of the New Testament can be read to support a cosmic worldview. To say, as Paul does in 2 Corinthians 5, that “in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself” is a cosmic statement. Traditional holiness theology has said that God sanctifies the world one individual soul at a time. Paul, however, speaks boldly of the entire world. The Acts of the Apostles looks ahead to a time of universal restoration and Colossians chapter one is the classic text for a cosmic Christology.

When John Wesley proclaimed “the whole world is my parish,” he was not thinking cosmically in exactly the same way a Hindu or a Buddhist might. Yet in his own Christian way he was thinking cosmically. In one of

the final sermons John Wesley wrote, when he was an old man, he exulted over the possibility of *full and final redemption*, not only for each person, but for the whole of creation. For his sermon “The New Creation,” Wesley chose for his text Revelation 21:5, “Behold, I make all things new.” Here is how he ended this visionary sermon, “And to crown all, there will be a deep, an intimate, an uninterrupted union with God; a constant communion with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, through the Spirit; a continual enjoyment of the Three-One God, and of all the creatures in him!” (sermon “The New Creation,” section 18).

A cosmic perspective on the doctrine of holiness stresses harmony between the human subject and the universe. Cosmic holiness, as H. Ray Dunning and others have stressed, emphasizes the importance of four relationships as constituting the holy life. First, of course, is our relationship with God. Our relationships with others, the physical creation, and our own persons are the other three.

While our relationship with the Triune God is the most important of the four, this one relationship can never stand alone. It is only as healthy as the other three relationships. There is here perhaps a rough analogy with the Wesleyan quadrilateral. We all know that Scripture is the chief source of theology, yet Scripture is a dead letter unless examined by God-graced reason, renewed through Spirit-led tradition and lived through Christ-centered experience.

Much Eastern philosophy understands the cosmic as ultimately absorbing the personal. The universe itself is non-personal or possibly even impersonal. For some kinds of Buddhism, the question of God is not even all that important. The idea of God may be one more obstacle or roadblock that stands in the path of complete enlightenment.

Wesleyan holiness theology should be cosmic in the sense of believing in and working toward the restoration of all things. To be a cosmic Christian and a world Christian are one and the same thing. But holiness theology must never be cosmic in the sense of absorbing the individual into an impersonal whole. Knowing the Triune God accentuates our personhood. Eastern cosmological thought may work in the direction of destroying our personhood through diffusion and absorption. However, we must be certain that our ideas of the personal are firmly rooted in the Trinity, and not in secular individualism.

Listen once again to three particular phrases Wesley used to close that sermon: “an uninterrupted union, a constant communion, a continual enjoyment.” Union, communion, and enjoyment are all affirmations more than they are denials and negations. Union, communion, and enjoyment speak first of all of what God wants to give us, rather than of what we have to forsake.

One lingering regret I have after leaving Asia is never having learned to speak Tagalog. The excuses as to why I never studied that language are largely self-justifications. Filipinos were always kind and polite, not embarrassing me with my lack of knowing Tagalog.

Culture is so largely defined by language that it seems impossible for anyone really to know any culture without knowing the language that it uses to express itself. To some degree, of course, language is unspoken, but rather expressed by the ways in which we move our bodies, hold our heads, gesture, even walk. And I do think I came by and by to be able to read Filipinos’ non-verbal language to one degree or another.

One Sunday morning when Judy Pabilando was still Judy Solito, my wife Stephanie and I visited the church that Judy was helping to hold together with her persistence. She started to pray in English, and it was a very good prayer, an expressive prayer, a prayer of hope, faith, and love. But about halfway into her prayer she switched to praying in Tagalog. Now there was not only faith, hope, and love, but urgency, passion, and power.

How can I express this difference that seems so clear in my mind but so difficult to speak? We sense intuitively, but perhaps cannot speak clearly, what it means to be raised to a more true and deep awareness. It has happened to all of us. Call it the difference between praying with an understandable voice and praying with a native voice. Call it the difference between a green banana and a ripe banana. Call it, perhaps, the difference between initial sanctification and entire sanctification.

The relationship between grace and nature is one of the defining criteria for any Christian theology. In one way or another, every doctrine of holiness addresses how grace and nature are to be related to each other. The grace of God, which I think in this case is a virtual synonym for the love and mercy of God, is the one thread that runs throughout the doctrine of Christian perfection. Whether we speak of prevenient grace, justifying

grace, sanctifying grace, glorifying grace, or even sacramental grace, it is still God's undeserved mercy made present to us in Jesus Christ.

In his famous sermon, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," John Wesley seemed to recognize the organic quality of salvation. His text was Ephesians 2:8, "Ye are saved through faith." The salvation promised in this pivotal text "might be extended," Wesley thought, "to the entire work of God, from the first dawning of grace in the soul, till it is consummated in glory."

Any journey is conceived in wholeness, treasured in completeness before it has even started, and yet necessarily undertaken and carried forth in definite steps, even fragments.

Poetically, and for that matter theologically, the reality of Christian perfection has seldom been better expressed than in Charles Wesley's magnificent hymn *Arise, My Soul, Arise*.

The hymn begins by rousing the slumbering soul to shake off its guilty fears, yet this hymn is not primarily about *our need* to be saved. The provision God has made in Jesus Christ is uppermost in this hymn. Jesus Christ lives above, continuing his unfinished priestly intercession for us and for all humankind. Even in his exalted state, the Son of God evidently still bears the five bleeding wounds. These wounds

*pour effectual prayers,  
They strongly speak for me:  
Forgive him, Oh! forgive, they cry,  
Nor let that ransomed sinner die.*

The prayers of God the Son are heard by God the Father. The Holy Spirit who is the bond of love between the Father and the Son "answers to the blood, and tells me I am born of God." The final stanza is the climax:

*My God is reconciled,  
His pard'ning voice I hear;  
He owns me for his child,  
I can no longer fear:  
With confidence I now draw nigh,  
And, Father, Abba, Father, cry!*

# The Challenge of Articulating the Doctrine of Holiness in Japanese Culture: Japanese Conception of Sin and the Doctrine of Sanctification

Makoto Sakamoto

## I. Introduction

To the ordinary Japanese, it is hard to understand many doctrines of Christianity. I had difficulty understanding the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. My field is Wesley's Theology. So my role here is to articulate Wesley's theology, especially the doctrine of holiness to Japanese society. In order to do that, we need to discuss how we Japanese understand the concept of sin.

## II. Introducing Japan<sup>6</sup>

Japan is a land where the values and traditions of the past flourish alongside ideas and practices of the present. It is the eighth most populated nation in the world with millions of people crowded into a relatively small island chain . . . millions of people in a highly technological society, moving fast toward material and secular goals . . . people who need the message of holiness to steer them through the fast track of one of the most advanced industrial nations in the world.

“Materialism” is a key word to describe the Japanese society. Gucci . . . Chanel . . . we live in a money-oriented, brand name culture. Television commercials have convinced us to create an artificial beauty, and so we shun oldness and dirtiness. Psalm 104.24 says, “How many are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.”

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<sup>6</sup>Part of this paragraph is taken from my essay, “Holiness Today, ‘Steering Through the Japanese Fast Track,’” *Holiness Today* (January 1999), 19.



But our situation is entirely different. Japan is satisfied only with more and more human-made things. We Christians must be careful not to be influenced by secular values. In short, we must have the holiness message to keep us from falling into the errors of our materialistic culture.

“Indifference” is, unfortunately, another key word in our Japanese collective conscience. The most challenging religious threat to Christianity in Japan is not Buddhism or Shintoism but rather indifference to religion. The younger generation flirts with an interest in fanatic religion, but they shun traditional Christianity. In a selfish world, they generally try to avoid relationships with anyone, including Christ and his disciples.

Yet our religious statistics are misleadingly high. A person may go to a Christian church at Christmas or have a chapel wedding because of an admiration for the beautiful traditional wedding garments. The same person may also go to a Shinto shrine to worship on New Year’s Day and insist on a Buddhist funeral after he or she dies. As a result of this syncretism, Japanese will respond positively to all these religions in a poll, making our religious population twice our actual population.

Now, in the midst of materialism, selfish indifference, and religious syncretism, we are currently experiencing deep economic recession. After the economic success myth has ended and the bubble has burst, we are finally realizing the need to change our direction. We recognize that we have wasted too much food and too much time for temporary joy. We are beginning to realize that we cannot live by ourselves; we must live in relationship with God.

### III. Japanese Way of Understanding the Concept of Sin

When we try to think about the doctrine of sanctification, we need to make clear the conception of sin. In order to do that, I would like to start with understanding Japanese Culture.

#### A. A Culture of Shame

Let me start with a quote from the book called, *Chrysanthemum and Sword*, by Ruth Benedict.<sup>7</sup> Ms. Benedict wrote this book in 1967 in order to

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<sup>7</sup>Benedict, Ruth, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (Houghton Mifflin Company: Boston, 1946).

analyze the Japanese mind and to create a strategy for treating the Japanese people.

Ms. Benedict distinguishes culture into two. Western culture is called a “culture of sin.” Japanese culture is called a “culture of shame.” The former consists of an absolute moral standard, so man tries to reach this absolute. The latter has a relative moral standard. The Japanese people are apt to decide their behavior through the judgment of an opponent. So if there are no opponent’s eyes, one can do even an immoral thing. Ms. Benedict believes the Japanese are lacking an absolute moral standard. She says,

A failure to follow their explicit signposts of good behavior, a failure to balance obligations or to foresee contingencies is a shame. Shame, they say, is the root of virtue. A man who is sensitive to it will carry out all the rules of good behavior. A man who knows shame is sometimes translated as a “man of honor.”<sup>8</sup>

She continues,

Shame has the same place of authority in Japanese ethics that “a clear conscience,” “being right with God,” and the avoidance of sin have in Western ethics. Logically enough, therefore, a man will not be punished in the afterlife. . . . They do not recognize post-death reward or punishment or a heaven and a hell.<sup>9</sup>

Her way of analyzing Japanese mentality is very interesting. This lack of absolute conception of sin will even affect Japanese behavior and moral values.

So relative thinking is a Japanese characteristic. Sometimes it is said that Japanese have always two minds. The most characteristic of this contradiction is connected to this book title. On one hand, the Japanese love to create the most beautiful Chrysanthemum flowers. The Japanese love the arts and the beauty of nature. On the other hand, the Japanese respect swords and honor the Japanese warriors called Samurai. They change their attitudes according to the opponents. Therefore, to cope with the Japanese people is sometimes difficult. Japanese surface thinking and

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 224.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

actual thinking are most of the time different. And this is deeply connected to our group-oriented character.

## B. A Group-Oriented Character

In Japanese society, how does one come to realize one's guilt? One feels guilty when one realizes he or she is betraying one's group. So next we would like to consider "group-oriented" character. If you come to Japan and look inside a company, the rooms have no barriers. All the workers face each other. This is totally different from the individualism of Western culture. Every Japanese needs to belong to some group because the Japanese are afraid of isolation from the group members. Many college students and office workers must participate in drinking parties after school or office work. This is because the fellowship creates oneness inside the group. A group atmosphere decides what way one needs to behave inside the group. So one can say this relationship is not dictator-slave type; it is deeply connected with loyalty, faithfulness, and thankfulness to the boss, and obligation. (An example is that one has to give a return of any congratulatory gift one may receive from a friend. We call it *giri* in Japanese.) These attitudes create negative sides.

1. Because one must follow the group decision, one cannot decide by oneself. One always asks the boss what one should do. Group decisions precede individual decisions.
2. Indifference to or Ignorance of another group. They respect only their own group, so a group easily becomes a sect. A charismatic leader will dominate the group and refuse different types.
3. Each group has its own value and rule only applicable within the group. One needs to behave in accordance with it. Otherwise, one may be punished.

Consequently disobeying the group decisions is considered to be sin against the boss or the other group members. But this does not include any religious/Christian understanding of God. One may feel jealous when someone inside the group is treated better than that person is. Within the group everyone must maintain the status quo of the group. If he or she does not, he or she will be excluded by the rest of the group. Boys or girls in the elementary school may hide their full mark grade because if they say it publicly, they may be excluded by the rest of the class. So we may say this is not actually a "culture of shame," but a "culture of jealousy."

This kind of attitude can affect churches because they are apt to limit their membership to only insiders. It can be a barrier to the evangelism of the church. They are sometimes not open for new people to come. Isn't there any positive side? I believe we can apply it to a small group ministry in every local church. Once new people can be inside this group, they can really contribute to our church. So the pastors need to be careful not to have an exclusive attitude.

### **C. A Clear Concept of Sin**

It is crucial to have a clear concept of sin, especially for Japanese culture. When the Japanese think salvation, they think salvation comes by their own effort. We can call this "self-help" (*jiriki*). Ms. Benedict describes the character of "self-help" as follows. Some of them (Buddhist and Shintoist sects), of which Zen is the paramount example, rely only on "self-help," *jiriki*. The potential strength, they teach, lies only within oneself, and only by one's effort can one increase it.<sup>10</sup>

This kind of self-power belief is very strong in Japan. What does the Bible say against this? The biblical concept of sin is missing the mark, which means we are not in a right relationship with God. It also means total depravity of the human condition. We have no power to act properly with our own merit in Christianity. We can say that this kind of self-confidence comes from a lack of a clear concept of sin and an absolute God.

Why do the Japanese have only a vague concept of sin? It is because the concept of sin is deeply connected to the doctrine of creation. We think that nature created God rather than that God created nature. This is due to the mild weather in Japan (except the northern part of Japan). Nature has always been a friend and not an enemy to the Japanese. But all Japanese people must understand that God is the creator of humans and that humans are creatures. As creatures we need to worship God. The true meaning of justification comes not by human effort but from God's grace. To realize the existence of an absolute God is difficult for ordinary Japanese, but we need to establish the clear concept of God and sin.

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 242. "Zen seeks only the light man can find in himself."

## IV. Sanctification

### A. The Definition of Sanctification

What is sanctification? Wesley defines sanctification in two ways. One is a “circumstance of sanctification,” meaning the way God applies sanctification to us. Wesley stresses the instantaneous and gradual sides of sanctification.<sup>11</sup> Wesley has an order of salvation. He stresses that salvation begins with prevenient grace and goes on to repentance, justification (new birth), sanctification, Christian perfection and final justification. It needs to develop day by day. It also is an instantaneous work done by the Holy Spirit. The grace of sanctification enables us to be transformed into the image of God. Therefore, Wesley has a subjective view of understanding one’s state. He has both time order and cosmological conception. Individual holiness is needed to go on to social holiness. Wesley also stresses the “content of sanctification.” The substance means the contents of sanctification, which is “purity of intention, faith works by love.”<sup>12</sup> I believe the content of sanctification is holiness, which means the lifestyle of Christians. Wesley stressed “holiness of heart and life.” It is important how we connect individual salvation to life. The inclusiveness and synthesis of individual holiness and social holiness is important.

### B. Articulating the Doctrine of Holiness to Our Culture

To articulate the doctrine of holiness, we have to cope with two major barriers of Japanese character.

The first one is the antinomian attitude of the Japanese. Many Buddhists say that grace is from the benevolence of Buddha. Some Japanese claim the result of self-help training as evidence of the grace of God and base their philosophy on the “help of another.”<sup>13</sup> Most Japanese believe they do not need to do anything after they have asked something from God. When they pray to God, they only ask for something they want

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<sup>11</sup>John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed. 14 vols., edited by Thomas Jackson (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872; reprint ed., Kansas City, MO.: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1979), 7:329-29, hereafter cited as *Works*.

<sup>12</sup>*Works* 11:444. “A Plain Account of Christian Perfection,” §27.

<sup>13</sup>Benedict, op.cit., 242.

and they easily forget to thank God. Wesley saw that Calvinism had a danger of antinomianism and only stressed imputed righteousness. Wesley stressed the human role in salvation while emphasizing God's initiative. Wesley stressed not only imputed righteousness but also imparted righteousness. I believe this balance is very important. So it is important for us to teach God's initiative and human responsibility. And it will lead to a true understanding of sanctification.

The second barrier is the way to introduce holiness doctrine. When the doctrine of sanctification was introduced to Japan, it was introduced in a way that only stressed inward holiness. The emphasis was on the holiness state rather than the sanctification process. So it was introduced as a kind of ascetic type. Many pastors were taught this wonderful doctrine only in a disciplinary way. Too much stress on the state of holiness causes us to forget the true relationship with Christ. The Japanese also have a tendency to measure one's state by comparing one's position with the opponent and are apt to forget the true aim of becoming Christ-like. It has caused much misunderstanding of Wesley's doctrine and also has caused a lot of negative feelings towards sanctification. It also has caused another serious problem. We lost the connection with Wesleyan-Armenian theology. We are still captive to German theology. This kind of approach is presenting only the first half of the doctrine of sanctification.

Wesley stressed that the image of God is created inside us to bring us to transformation. So our aim should be to transform ourselves to the image of God by the grace of God. And this transformation should occur not only in individual hearts but also in our life. This will lead to a social holiness.

In this sense, I would like to stress the role of the means of grace. Wesley had two means of grace. One is "works of piety" and the other is "works of mercy." "Works of piety" mean scripture reading, prayer, receiving Holy Communion, and reading spiritual books. "Works of mercy" mean responsible activities including acts of mercy. What is necessary to go on to perfection from "works of piety" to "works of mercy" and to have an inclusive understanding?

I believe it is the sacrament of Holy Communion. Holy Communion is a bridge between two works. Wesley understood Holy Communion as a means to bring acknowledgment of the sin and give one a sense of repentance and conversion and let him go on in the process of sanctifica-

tion. In this way, all believers know where and in what position they are standing. I believe Wesley understood Holy Communion as a place to confirm one's sure salvation. The presentations of inclusive understandings of individual and social sanctification are key to articulating the doctrine to Japanese culture.

## V. Conclusion

In order to articulate the doctrine of holiness to our culture, I believe a clear concept of sin is necessary. Once a Japanese becomes a Christian, he or she has a drastic change in his or her conception of God, creation and sin. This change may bring us to separate from other people and the Japanese way of understanding sin. This God is not a compromising God, but he transforms us into having holiness of heart and life. God gives us the ability to be responsible. Christ gives his life to us; we can and must devote ourselves to God and people around us.

In all of this analysis of my culture, I am reminded of the Hebrew word *sharem*, which means "wholly" or "completely." It also means "a part of a pot." In the Hebrew world, when people discovered a piece of a pot that could be created into a whole pot, they named it *sharem*. Though we are not perfect in a sinless sense, we are *sharem*, we have the possibility of becoming holy by the power of God. Through His Holy Spirit we can enter a process of sanctification. This is the answer for Japan. We Nazarenes in Japan are sharing God's love with our neighbors. We live to become peacemakers and to bring the holiness message not only to individual hearts but also to our society. We join as partners with all Nazarene churches around the world. Let us express holiness by creating peace and wholeness and responding to God's sanctifying grace.

## Teaching and Preaching Biblical Holiness In the South Pacific Island Context

Peniperite Fakaua

### I. Brief History and Cultural Background

Samoa is made up of nine inhabited islands. Upolu, Savai'i, Manono, and Apolima are the four islands now known as the Independent State of Western Samoa. Great Britain made Western Samoa her colony under the supervision of New Zealand after World War II. The other islands are Tutuila, Ta'u, Olosega, 'Ofu and Aunu'u. These five smaller islands, as compared to those of Western Samoa, have been a territory of the United States of America since World War II. The "big boys" (world powers) divided up these islands to their liking. Despite becoming two separate countries, these islands are inhabited by people of one culture and one language. The vast ocean is the boundary of the Samoan islands, but these islands have been able to keep the oneness of their identities. They are known as Samoans who belong to the Polynesian race of chocolate brown skin colour. Samoa is the biggest of the Polynesian races that have survived the western encroachments of intermarriage and trading.

Most South Pacific Island nations are small but vastly spread out in the Pacific Ocean. There are three major divisions of people in the region: Melanesians, Micronesians and Polynesians.<sup>1</sup> The Melanesians are dark skinned, tall and medium in size; the Polynesians are brown skinned, tall and big in size; whereas the Micronesians are a mixture of both, but generally shorter and smaller in size.

The people think and behave communally. Individualistic thinking and behavior are definitely offensive to the habitants of these islands. For example, when you travel with a group and desire a drink and want to

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<sup>1</sup>Augustine Kramer, *The Samoa Islands*.



purchase a coke for yourself, you would have to buy for everyone if you had enough money; otherwise you would have to share that one drink with everyone else if there were enough. If you did not have enough money to buy everyone a drink, and one drink would not feed everyone, you would have to stay thirsty until you were alone and away from the group where you would not be seen drinking. If you slipped away and got a drink and got caught by one of the friends, that would not be nice and it could cost your friendship. If you were deadly thirsty and did not have enough money to buy for everyone, you could excuse yourself and let the others know your financial restraint and your thirstiness, then they would excuse you and understand, but that is not a normal practice of the islanders. You cannot just go and buy yourself a drink without communication to the group regarding the reason you are not buying for everyone and drinking in their sight. It is not that you have to get permission to purchase a drink with your own money, but it is just a matter of courtesy and being considerate of others. This is the normal and general practice for all the islanders, black and brown or both.

Either the council of chiefs or the tribal head controls the village life in decision making for the affairs that affect the whole village. There is no majority ruling in the village setting. It is a society of hierarchical structure.

All island countries are strongly knit together by a family spirit. Family is a big word. When an islander uses the word “family,” it is totally different from what the western mind thinks of family. Islanders think of family as inclusive of all their blood relatives. Anyone they know they are related to is part of the family. Blood relation is the key word to the island family. It does not matter how distant you may be, as long as you are blood related.

There are slight degrees of family ties in different island countries, but there are no significant differences. Family is highly valued by the islanders. To disgrace a family name is almost as destructive as death. That is the core of the controlling value in the South Pacific Island life. Every activity in the village is geared toward family. It is family, family, family. That must be the controlling motif when preaching and teaching holiness in the South Pacific Islands.

The islands have customs that are very crucial to non-island teachers and preachers when doing ministry in the setting. There are customs such as respect of older people by the young ones. There is a respect language

when talking to the chiefs. Some islands have two classes of chiefs, where each class has different phrases and words to be used when addressing them. Sometimes there is a certain gesture such as sitting down when talking to a chief or an older person. In all the islands, there are different terms that should be used sometimes only to the pastor. In Samoa it is *Fa'afeagaiga*, and in Fiji it is *Talatala*. These terms you cannot use to a chief but only to a pastor, yet they have other usages. In Samoa, there is a general word used to refer to the pastor, which is not appropriate to be used in certain places and certain times. Many instances are alike in the island context. Different islands have their own version of paying and saying respect. Some islands say it faster and more than once, while some say it once and slower. Often, the term is the same. Fiji and Samoa use the same word *tulou* (toolow) when crossing, walking or cutting in front of the other person's face. The Samoan says the word slower and once, while the Fijian says it faster and usually twice or even three times.

## II. Religious Background

The South Pacific Islands were originally penetrated by Calvinistic Protestants such as the Baptists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists and even the Calvinistic Methodists.<sup>2</sup> These missionaries laid a deep foundation of Calvinism in the early stage of Christianity in the South Pacific Islands. It has now become the norm of spiritual thinking and practice. It was easier and faster to demolish the twin World Trade Center in New York than to attempt a change on this mentality that has been solidified in the hearts and minds of generation after generation in the South Pacific Islands.

During the process of planting and teaching the islanders about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the idea of earning your salvation by doing good works had become somehow integrated into the mind and everyday life of the islanders. John Garrett wrote of how cannibalism was eradicated from all of the islands. The missionaries have risked their very lives evangelizing the cannibals of the South Pacific Islands.

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<sup>2</sup>John Garrett, *Footsteps In the Sea: Christianity in Oceania to World War II* (Imprint Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of South Pacific; Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications, 1992).

Most of the islands have become so extremely religious that religion becomes an everyday activity. It has become a common affair to the life of the people. Most of the people would think they are Christians because they are involved with Churches almost seven days a week, 52 weeks a year, until they retire from this life. With all the involvement the islanders have with the Church ministries, everyone believes that since they have given their lives, time and money to God that surely they should be considered a prominent place in God's Kingdom. The early established churches, as mentioned above, have some of the most ornate buildings throughout the South Pacific Islands. These well-established churches sometimes pay more to their pastor than what the government pays to the members of the Parliament, at least in Samoa, Fiji, Tonga Tokelau, Niue and Tuvalu. The Islanders highly venerate the pastoral office. In their society, the Minister is the highest ranking person and holds the most respected office in all of the South Pacific Island community.

You can imagine, then, how difficult it is for any new faith to infiltrate this kind of religious community. We are not talking about non-Christian religions but evangelical. For this, I refer you back to the churches that pioneered the South Pacific area. Their Calvinistic theology made it extremely difficult for the holiness message to penetrate the thick wall of good works versus holy living. People give their best of everything to God through the Church but do not necessarily live a holy life. Many of the pastors in those established churches are heavy smokers and drunkards, and yet are more vocal about the will of God, sometimes even using the same terms we Wesleyans employ so emphatically to express the core of holiness. You will also find some excellent pastors in the same churches. On the other side are the extreme fundamentalists and divine healers for whom emotion determines spiritual success.

### **III. Misinterpreted Theological Terms**

Terminologies such as entire sanctification, holiness, Christian perfection, and so on, are just ideal words which only become spiritual goals that we hope and work hard for when eternity comes. These theological terms often divert and take the young island minister from doing theology in the context, for they may sound sophisticated and complex, entertaining the elite. These terminologies are to be taught and preached in family terms—such as brotherly, sisterly, distantly, relatively—as

long as a drop of blood was present. A relationship is most important, and the family is relationship. When a relationship is severed for personal benefits, family suffers. Wynkoop hit the bull's eye with her emphasis and employment of perfect love.<sup>3</sup> It is a word that is of family nature. Everyone, in spite of race, ethnicity, culture and language, can identify with this term. It is not only biblical but also relational and simple. The South Pacific islander can easily understand and catch up with what holiness means when it is presented from the perspective of relationship, family language, and family activities. It should be most simple and biblical. Jesus treated his followers as family members. That was his family circle not his biological family. The idea of a family as relationship as understood by the islanders is the way to teach and preach theology.

Dealing with the problem of good works versus faith can also be confronted from the family emphasis of perfect love. Perfect love is to be the motive of good works, not vice versa. If good works are done without perfect love, family will soon deteriorate because good works without perfect love exhaust and will surely end. Perfect love is the magic word for the South Pacific Island context. It is a universal language, it is a family language, and it is a term of relationship. The Pacific Island way of showing respect and consideration toward others could be the contribution of the South Pacific which can be encouraged and taught to the worldwide church.

Holiness is to be used more as a title identifying the doctrine, while relational and family terms of the context are to be employed in teaching and preaching holiness, with the chief and magic phrase being "*perfect love*." Personal testimonies, real life dramas, along with Dr. Neville Bartle's discovery of the use of "stories, narrations, illustrations and visual aids" that are purely of the context, are the methods and means for teaching and preaching holiness effectively in the South Pacific Islands.

Sin is one of the theological terms proven difficult to redefine for the people's thinking. Great efforts have been given to this task of redefining sin, but church people talk and act according to the general way they have been taught from their early Calvinistic influences. People understand that

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<sup>3</sup>Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *Theology of Love* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1972).

any wrong thing committed or done, whether intentionally or not, is sin. Mistakes are all sin. Redefining sin must be a continual process. An example that I have been employing is: throwing a rock at a coconut tree in order to have brown coconuts for food. After the rock hits the coconut, it comes down landing on the head of a person passing by. To ignore the hurting person because you did not intend to hit him on the head is a sin. Often pigs, dogs, chickens, oxen, horses, and sometime people get hit on the road by a car. There have been cases in the islands where the driver of the involved car got killed while the person hit by the car survived getting hit. I do believe part of this problem is because of that family spirit where people of the same village would kill the driver because he or she hits someone of your village. But the other part of the problem is their misunderstanding of the word sin.

This is one of the difficult tasks in teaching and preaching biblical holiness in the South Pacific. The people look at every other human to be all the same in making mistakes and committing sin whether intentionally or not. Grider has explained carnality and humanity well but merely theoretically.<sup>4</sup> It is the result of mistakes and sin that the people cannot differentiate, at least they find it hard to. The results of both actions could be the same and they have to be analyzed carefully in order to see the difference. Since things are easier to understand and take generally, and since living that kind of lifestyle is more convenient, there must be a pastor who is willing to take the risk of constant and painful teaching and preaching this message. There is a need to articulate this Arminian-Wesleyan concept of sin. It is much easier to live in solidarity with the existing, dominant Christianity in small, populated Island countries than to be at odds in the South Pacific where almost everyone knows everyone either by face or by name. There are the extremists who go overboard on the other side of teaching and preaching theology. Within our little circle of Arminian-Wesleyans in this tiny South Pacific Island region, a hero must rise up to spread and contaminate the South Pacific area with this beautiful concept of sin by Wesleyans.

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<sup>4</sup>J. Kenneth Grider, *Entire Sanctification: The Distinctive Doctrine of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1980).

# **Seeking a Dialectic Synthesis of Faith and Work: A Biblical Investigation of the True Meaning of “Justification by Faith” for Christians in Korea**

Seung Won Yu

## **I. Introduction**

Christian churches in Korea experienced huge growth within a short period. Some statistics show that one-fourth of their population confesses they are Christians. It is often said, however, that the Christian church has not substantially changed Korean society in spite of its growth in number and occupying a significant portion of the population. Having one Christian out of four should make a great moral impact on society. Our God in the Bible is an ethical God who requires his people to be holy. Then why can Korean Christians not demonstrate their difference in morality from their world? They have been noticed in confessing and proclaiming a sin-forgiving gospel but rather subtle in living out a life-transforming gospel. There are several factors that result in such a weak ethical Christianity.

Old Shamanism, which is deeply rooted in Korean culture, plays a significant role. The fundamental mechanism in Shamanism is to bring in “blessing” and to eliminate “misfortune” for its religious clients regardless of their morality. Shamanistic piety depends on one’s technical procedure in rites, having nothing to do with ethics in life. For the Koreans who suffered from recurring misfortunes in a long history, it was natural that a strong desire for blessing has developed. Religious Koreans who were hungry for happiness sought for such a kind of religion that provides them with blessing, easing their inner pain while loading not too much burden of morality upon their shoulders. In such a situation, the doctrine of “justification by faith alone” has been quite congenial to many religious Koreans. Faith-alone-Christianity successfully replaced old religions. An ethics-free Shamanistic mind-set at the bottom, however, did not seem to

be eradicated, rather it was well geared to a misguided application of the doctrine.

Such a trend was accelerated even by the rapid industrialization in the 1970's. President Park's government pushed the entire nation into an extreme pragmatism in which any means to economic success was easily justified for a set goal regardless of principles and morality. It happened to be the very 70's when the Korean church went through an enormous growth in its number. In order to plant the holiness of God in the peninsula of Korea, we need to overcome these three barriers—Shamanistic mind-set, ethics-free pragmatism, and the misguided doctrine of "justification by faith alone"—blended together in creating the current dilemma. As a New Testament student, I am obliged to make an attempt to correctly define the doctrine of "justification by faith" as the Scripture means to testify it.

## II. Three's Company: James, Paul and Luther

"Oh you jughead, you may want to prove that faith without deeds is useless" (James 2:20).<sup>1</sup> James deplored some people who believed that "faith alone" could save them. The Greek words, ἀήρωπε *kenev* translated into "senseless person" (NRSV) or "foolish man" (NIV), literally mean "empty person." As such James, the Lord's physical brother, almost cursed those who did not take "works proper" into serious consideration for salvation, calling them "empty headed."

For Martin Luther, on the other hand, the doctrine of justification was "the summary of Christian doctrine," and "the sun which illuminates God's holy church." Luther's assertion is quite extreme. "Nothing in this article can be given up or compromised, even if heaven and earth and things temporal should be destroyed. . . ." <sup>2</sup> Works of grace are necessary as a witness of faith to the world. However, any works should not be taken to be necessary for salvation.

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<sup>1</sup>All translations are the author's unless otherwise stated.

<sup>2</sup>*Martin Luthers Werke* 50:199, cited by Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 224.

Such a teleological significance would set aside the “by grace alone” and “by faith alone” of justification and of salvation. Luther thought that the expression that works or the new obedience are necessary to salvation raises thoughts about merit and guilt and that such questions are unbearable in the discussion of salvation.<sup>3</sup>

As far as salvation is concerned, even good works apart from faith are rather sinful.<sup>4</sup> For Luther *sola gratia* must be *sola fide*. It is no wonder that Luther was not fond of James who argued for the necessity of works in salvation. James is plainly against the slogan of “faith alone.” “You see that a person is justified **by works** and **not by faith alone**” (James 2:24). Luther thought James was full of straw, for he did not find anything evangelical in his letter.

Then, who is right? James or Luther? Does the Bible in its entirety teach us that righteousness-salvation is “by faith alone” as with Luther? Otherwise, is James in line with the overall message of the Holy Scriptures as he insists that righteousness-salvation is “not by faith alone”? Against James, Luther discovered the essence of the gospel, that is “justification by faith alone,” in Paul’s letters, especially Galatians and Romans. We need to ask whether this doctrinal phrase in fact constitutes the core of Paul’s gospel as well as the center of New Testament soteriology.

Only in Galatians and Romans out of the entire New Testament, do we have significant arguments for the doctrine of “righteousness by faith,”<sup>5</sup> and Galatians chronologically precedes Romans. In order to trace the

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 249

<sup>4</sup>*Martin Luthers Werke* 26:126.

<sup>5</sup>The meaning of the Greek word *dikaïosunh* is conveyed better by the English word “righteousness” than “justification.” The word *dikaïosunh* cannot be limited by the meaning of “legal defense” the latter carries. I will choose to follow Sanders’ decision for the translation of the word as long as I discuss the theme in the context of the Scriptures. See E. P. Sanders, *Paul* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 44-49. For terminology, I may alternate “justification” when I refer to it as a modern doctrinal phrase. It is also necessary to notice that Paul nowhere adds an adverb *monon* (= only) when he uses the phrase “righteousness by faith.” We will come back to this issue at an appropriate place.



historical development of the doctrine, we must investigate the text of Galatians first.

### III. The Place of the Doctrine in Galatians

What was Paul's original missionary preaching for the Gentiles? Was it the doctrine of "righteousness by faith"? Was the message of the gospel proper identical to this doctrinal proposition? Paul, the proponent of this doctrine, strongly insists that the origin of his gospel is definitely divine. "For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal 1:11-12, NRSV).

#### A. Righteousness by Faith as the Main Theme of Galatians

What is the actual information he received when he says he received the gospel? What is the reality to which Paul's gospel in Gal 1:11-12 points? The question should be about the first message which Paul preached as the gospel to the Galatians and aroused their full-hearted acceptance in its beginning (Gal 4:11-15). One quick possible answer would be "righteousness by faith apart from the law," which appears to be a main issue of this letter and in turn becomes a catch phrase of Protestantism when Luther appears in history. If so, Paul received doctrinal knowledge, that is, "righteousness by faith apart from law," through or at the time of God's revelation of Jesus Christ.

The central message of Galatians is undeniably "righteousness by faith apart from law." If we borrow Betz's rhetorical analysis of Galatians, after a long biographical section (*narratio*, 1:12-2:14) the main thesis set up for the arguments by the *propositio* (2:15-21) is the summary of the doctrine of "righteousness by faith."<sup>6</sup> The main thesis is supported with proofs in the following *probatio* section (3:1-4:31). The experience of the Spirit by the Galatians is the first proof for the proposed doctrine, that is, "righteousness by faith." All the subsequent argument by Scripture (3:6-4:31) is to uphold that faith argument. Is this "righteousness by faith" the very core of the gospel knowledge Paul came to understand in the revelation?

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<sup>6</sup>Hans D. Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 114.

If the essence of the gospel Paul received through the revelation and in turn preached to the Galatians is “righteousness by faith apart from law,” the main thesis of the epistle to the Galatians would be a reiteration of that same revealed propositional statement. In other words, Galatians is an expositional commentary on the already revealed message. According to such a proposal, Paul had received a propositional truth at the moment of the mentioned revelation of Jesus Christ: “one is made righteous by faith in Christ without keeping the law.” Then, Paul as an apostolic missionary preached the encapsulated doctrine to the Galatians. As some people misread the Galatians with the doctrine of the law and circumcision, Paul now returns to the very doctrine he preached and tried to bring the Galatians back to his first teaching, by writing Galatians as a lengthened doctrinal elaboration of the essence of the gospel.

Ronald Y. K. Fung suggests such a thesis in his commentary, following the tradition of J. G. Machen:

According to Paul, the gospel which came to him as a result of God’s revelation of Christ, which he had preached to the Galatians in the beginning, is the same as that which he still preaches at the time of writing and to which he is now in his letter calling the readers to return (cf. 1:6; 3:1). This, as the content of the entire letter will attest (cf. especially 2:15-4:11; 5:2-12; 6:12-16), is none other than the gospel of justification by faith. Thus, according to these verses (1:11f.), it was the gospel of justification by faith which came to Paul as the result of a direct revelation of Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup>

If Fung’s argument is accepted, the essence of Paul’s missionary preaching should be necessarily “righteousness by faith without law,” and the *Mitte* of Pauline theology is also found in no other place than in Galatians.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988), 54.

<sup>8</sup>Since Martin Luther, “justification (righteousness) by faith” has been regarded as the center of Paul’s thought. Early in the last century, however, Wrede attempted to show that the doctrine of justification by faith is only a polemical doctrine. See William Wrede, *Paul*, trans. Edward Lummis (London: P. Green, 1907), 123ff. Then Albert Schweitzer saw Christ-mysticism, which is represented by Paul’s frequent use of the phrase “in Christ,” as the key concept of Paul’s theology. See Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (New York: The

## B. As a Polemical Doctrine

However, the entire corpus of Paul's letters in the New Testament does not easily confirm this. 1 Thessalonians, the Corinthian Correspondence, and Philippians very rarely mention the concept. A couple of places where the word *dikaion* is found do not clearly testify to the complete form in Galatians. The verb is used in 1 Cor 6:11, "And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified (*ep̄dikaiōthē*) in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." However, Paul does not reject the necessity of the works but rather promotes them in 1 Cor 6:9-10: "Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God" (NRSV).

Justification mentioned in verse 11 appears to mean the actual shift from "wrongdoers" to "workers of the good," not a nominal change of status. The Corinthians are now "sanctified" and "righteoused" in the sense that they are no longer such wrongdoers (*adikoi*) in the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of God. The word "faith" is not found and "righteousness" is rather made "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."

We cannot determine whether the section to which 2 Cor 3:9 belongs was written prior to Galatians or before. That the ministry of righteousness (*h̄ diakonia th̄ dikaiosunh̄*) stands against the ministry of condemnation (*th̄ diakonia/ th̄ katakrisew̄*) may be congenial to the message

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Seabury Press, 1931), 1-25. For the relation of righteousness by faith and mysticism, see *ibid.*, 205-26. Schweizer thought the doctrine of righteousness by faith is something incomplete and unfit to stand alone. Stendahl saw that Paul's main interest was in the rights of Gentile converts and righteousness by faith is only a byproduct of Paul's such efforts. See Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, 1-77. Ed P. Sanders thinks that Paul's thought is best characterized by "participationist eschatology." See E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1977), 552-56. Utilizing Sanders' conclusion, Heikki Räisänen reads that Paul distorted Judaism by representing it as the religion of legalism. See Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1983), 162-98.

of Galatians, but the mention is made incidentally in comparing two ministries and has nothing to do with the way of being “righteoused.”

It is agreed by scholars that Philippians was written after Galatians. Phil 3:9 clearly mentions the concept of righteousness by faith apart from law. “And [I may] be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith.” This is a part of Paul’s life testimony, and even here the concept of righteousness is absorbed by “the knowing of Christ and his resurrection.”

In both Corinthian letters and Philippians, “faith” or “believing” is used in a general sense, not as the means for righteousness as in Galatians. Only in Romans, the motif of righteousness by faith plays a significant role, but its nuance is quite different from that in Galatians.<sup>9</sup> It is significant that 1 Thessalonians, which is written prior to Galatians as the earliest writing in the New Testament, does not say anything about the doctrine.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Beker compares the use of the motif between Romans and Galatians to demonstrate the “contingency” in Paul’s theology. See J. Christiann Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 94-108.

<sup>10</sup>It is not difficult to date the writing of 1 Thessalonians to about 50/51 CE owing to Paul’s mention of specific situations (1 Thess 2:2, 2:17-3:6) in terms of Acts’ report of Paul’s extended stay in Corinth (Acts 18:5-11). The date for the writing of Galatians, however, is complicated because it is hard to fit Paul’s two visits to Jerusalem (Gal 1:18 and 2:1-2) into Luke’s account of Paul’s story, which includes at least 5 visits to Jerusalem. As we consider the time span Paul mentions in his letter to the Galatians, which includes a certain period of opposition to Christians (1:13-14), his first visit to Jerusalem after 3 years (1:18), his second visit to Jerusalem after 14 years (2:1), and the afterward incident in Antioch (2:11f), it is not reasonable to date the writing of Galatians prior to that of 1 Thessalonians. However, there are some commentators who argue for an earlier date by identifying Paul’s own mention of the second visit to Jerusalem with Luke’s account of a famine visit in Acts 11:27-30 as well as opting for the “South Galatian” theory—based on Luke’s account of Paul’s visit to the southern area on his first missionary journey (Acts 13-14)—for the destination of the letter. See F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 3-18, 43-56; D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan

The contents of Paul's missionary preaching (1 Thess 1:5) are well summarized in 1 Thess 1:9-10:

For the people of those regions report about us what kind of welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming (NRSV).

Here, the essence is “turning to God who raised Jesus from death and will save them from the wrath.” Paul's earliest message does not include the motif of “righteousness by faith apart from law.” Paul's missionary message for the Corinthians, which is also prior to the incident that caused the writing of Galatians, does not contain the motif, either.

Paul writes that he determined to preach to the Corinthians nothing but “Jesus Christ and him crucified” ( Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν καὶ τούτου ἐσταυρωμένον, 1 Cor 2:2). It is hardly believable that Paul in the context of the Gentile missions, such as the one in Galatia, originally preached “righteousness by faith,” which by the nature of the concept presupposes an argument against the law.

If the gospel Paul received through revelation and preached had been a doctrinal proposition of “righteousness by faith apart from law,” Paul could have overtly made it clear that the doctrine was God's propositional revelation, as he is eager to let the Galatians believe so in the letter, for Paul's overtly saying so would have won the game in a more effective manner. Paul did not say so. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul identifies certain propositional forms of Jesus' sayings as the command or the words of the Lord (1 Cor 7:10; 9:14). He sometimes makes a certain form of teaching sound like actual words from the Lord (1 Cor 14:37, 1 Thess 4:15). In Galatians, however, we cannot find any such direct identification of the doctrine Paul militantly argues for with the words of the Lord, except a vague and confusing allusion in Gal 1:11-12.

It is most likely that the gospel Paul preached to the Galatians, before the issue of the law and circumcision arose, was the same message he

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Publishing House, 1992), 290-94; Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 9-28; Longenecker, *Galatians*, lxi-lxxxviii; James Dunn, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, Black's New Testament Commentaries (London: A & C Black, 1993), 7-8.

proclaimed in other Gentile missionary settings. Paul in Galatians recalls that he “placarded **proegrafh**, portrayed in public] before their eyes Jesus Christ as crucified” (Gal 3:1).<sup>11</sup> This fact signifies that he preached the Christ event as God’s way of salvation when he came to the people in Galatia. Paul may not have told the Galatians about the significance of the law for their personal conversion except for the need of Scriptural commandments in the ethical sense and of Scriptural proof for the Christ event as is shown by 1 Cor 15:3-4 (**kata ta~ grafata**).

The emphasis on faith was a natural consequence of the missionary preaching, for the proclamation would be in vain unless the hearers responded in positive acceptance of the message. Only when “the truth of the gospel” (Gal 2:5, 14) was threatened by some people who insisted on the necessity of the law and circumcision did Paul set up the concept of faith against the concept of the law. The argument we read in Galatians, therefore, is Paul’s interpretation of the gospel he preached for a newly developed situation in which a crisis for the identity of the gospel broke out owing to some law-observant and circumcision-demanding missionaries.

### **C. The Christ Crucified as the Essence of the Gospel**

The revelation-call experience in Gal 1:11-12 is best identified with Paul’s encounter with the risen Lord in other writings. In 1 Corinthians, Paul insists that he has apostolic authority because he saw Jesus Christ: “Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?” (1 Cor 9:1). In the list of resurrection witnesses (1 Cor 15:1ff), Paul identifies himself as the least of the apostles as the risen Christ appeared also to him (15:8-9). The Pseudo-Clementine Homilies of the second century, an anti-Pauline literature, also mention Paul’s experience of a vision in regard to his apostolic authenticity.<sup>12</sup> If Christophany, to which Paul himself refers to

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<sup>11</sup>Sanders, *Paul* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 22.

<sup>12</sup>The author of the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies criticizes Paul for seeing Jesus only in a doubtful vision: “But can anyone be made competent to teach through a vision . . . but if you were visited by him for the space of an hour and were instructed by him and thereby have become an apostle, then proclaim his words, expound what he has taught, be a friend to his apostles and do not contend with me, who am his confidant. . . .” Excerpted from “Appendices,” of Betz, *Galatians*, 333.

when seeing the risen Christ, is related to Paul's apostleship in other writings, we do not see any ground to deny that the revelation of Jesus Christ in Gal 1:11-12 is Paul's experience of Christophany, the encounter of the risen Lord.

Then the gospel Paul received through the revelation and in turn preached to the Galatians turns out more clearly to be "the Christ crucified." Paul's opposition to the people who followed the crucified Messiah, which had been understood by Paul as an ignominious curse (Gal 3:13), came to an end when the crucified one was revealed to him by God as the risen Lord. It was the moment when the crucified Christ was identified with the risen Lord, the resurrected Christ for Paul.

The Jewish Paul must have regarded this Christ event as the prolepsis of God's apocalyptic inbreaking.<sup>13</sup> Epistemologically, the Christophany was the moment of understanding God's will in Jesus Christ and his crucifixion. It was the moment of knowing for Paul, as he recalls it as the moment of "the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (th~ gnwsew~ th~ doxh~ tou qeou ejh proswpw/ [ jhsou] Cristou, 2 Cor 4:6). As the revelation of the crucified-risen Christ was accompanied with God's call to the Gentile mission (Gal 1:16) in a certain way, Paul began to preach the Christ event, that is, the crucified Christ as God's way for salvation. Likewise, the gospel Paul preached to the Galatians is the Christ crucified (Gal 3:1), the story of the Christ the *Auto-evangelion*.<sup>14</sup> This is the

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 67-74.

<sup>14</sup>Knox Chamblin, "Revelation and Tradition in the Pauline *Euangelion*," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 48 (Spring, 1986): 6-8. Chamblin sees that "the gospel" in Gal 1:11 is equated with "Christ," as it is shown in 1:16, *ih̄a euaggelion̄wmaī aujton̄* [Christ]. However, we need to make a distinction between Paul's revelation as "Christophany" and his gospel to Gentiles as "message." Gospel as "message to Gentiles" (2:2) may include some of the "story" that Paul takes for granted, especially that the God of Israel is the one God of the universe and that he sent Jesus, his son, to save humanity, as summarized in 1 Thess 1:9-10. Hughes points out that "gospel" was a flexible term not merely in its meaning but also especially in the way it was used by Paul ("The Gospel and Its Rhetoric in Galatians," 221). In 1 Thessalonians, it connotes "the Christian message," that is, "a shorthand description of what it is that he as an apostle has been believing, teaching and living" (ibid., 220). For a possible narrative structure embedded in Paul's letters, see Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 85-137; idem,

gospel Paul received from God through the revelation of Jesus Christ, not mediated through human tradition (Gal 1:11-12).

#### **IV. What Happened in Galatia**

The major theme of Galatians is “righteousness by faith apart from law,” although the concept does not constitute the content of the gospel Paul insists to have received through the revelation of Jesus Christ. Paul’s implicit claim, however, is that not only the Galatians but his opponents as well should recognize that the thesis of “righteousness by faith apart from law” also has been given to Paul “through” the revelation of the Christ because it is a necessary conclusion of the gospel he received through revelation.

For Paul, God’s revelation not only initiates his apostolate but also legitimates his authority to formulate apostolic tradition. Paul implicitly claims his epistemological authenticity in the formation of veracious knowledge on the ground of God’s revelation of Jesus Christ. The statement in Gal 1:11-12 virtually buttresses Paul’s activity of adding up authentic tradition, which eventually resulted in the letter to the Galatians. Paul’s argument of the antithesis between faith and the works of the law was not the presentation of a pre-pondered doctrinal system, though we may suppose that there had been increasing sharpness over the possible theological issues since the call.<sup>15</sup> The issue was brought up by the challenge of Paul’s competitors, and Paul accordingly exercised his authority as an apostolic interpreter of the gospel for the situation. Revelation bears the gospel, and in turn the gospel produces authentic tradition as Paul the apostle is involved in the interpretation of the gospel for the crisis management of his community.

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“Crucified with Christ,” 232-233. For a short discussion of the content of Paul’s “gospel,” see our footnote 22 in this paper.

<sup>15</sup>James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul, and the Law* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), 100-101. Dunn thinks that the antithesis owes a good deal to the debate over circumcision at Jerusalem (Gal 2:1-10) and the confrontation about covenant restraints on social intercourse at Antioch (Gal 2:11-18).



There must have been a different line of Gentile mission that was in competition with Paul's position, affecting Paul's community in Galatia.<sup>16</sup> Though Paul cynically negates its being a gospel, it may have been a gospel of a different theological line (Gal 1:6-7). Their mission is shown to highly uphold the validity of the law (4:21) and to require circumcision for becoming full participants in the people of God (2:12; 3:3; 5:2-3; 6:12). Their preaching was very eloquent and persuasive to the extent that Paul could not hide his emotional disturbance in the letter (1:6-7; 3:1; 4:17-20; 6:11-12, 14). Their eloquent exegesis of Scripture appears to center on how to be "the descendants of Abraham" (אֲבוֹתַי אַבְרָהָם). The concept is not found in other letters of Paul, and the issue seems to be how to belong to God's covenant people.<sup>17</sup>

### A. Theological Confusion at the Time of Transition

The Galatian situation was, in a sense, an unavoidable passage that the Christian gospel had to necessarily go through as it moved to the Gentiles beyond the boundary of Palestine. According to the report of Acts, Jesus' disciples thought the gospel was only for the Jews. Their concern was nothing but the restoration of Israel. The question they asked

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<sup>16</sup>Louis Martyn names Paul's opponents as "the Teachers" who were said to carry out a law-observant Gentile mission. Martyn attempts to connect Paul's opponents in Galatians with the mission of Christian Judaism that was theologically related to the Pseudo-Clementine literature, *The Ascents of James and The Preaching of Peter*. The teaching of these Teachers, constructed from the allusions from Galatians, can be summarized by six points: 1) The law is the absolute point of departure for their theology (5:3-4, 6:2); 2) The law is good news for the Gentiles; 3) God's reaching out for the Gentiles is marked by the fact that God bestows the Spirit to the communities of Gentiles "if their communal life is ordered by correct exegesis of Scripture and thus by true observance of his law (3:1-5); 4) Paul misled the Galatians in regard to full participation in the people of God; 5) In order for the Gentiles to participate in the people of God, they need to submit to circumcision, as Abraham did when he became the first proselyte; 6) "They necessarily view God's Christ in the light of God's Law, rather than the Law in the light of Christ, and this means that Christ is secondary to the Law" (Louis Martyn, "A Law-Observant Mission to Gentiles: The Background of Galatians," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 38 [1985]: 314-16).

<sup>17</sup>Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 48.

when Jesus was about to ascend into heaven was: “Is this the time when you will restore the Kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). It appears that they were still anticipating the restoration of the unified Kingdom of Israel that would be composed of full twelve tribes.<sup>18</sup> The first thing they did after Jesus’ ascension was to fill the number twelve that had been broken by Judas Iscariot’s suicide (Acts 1:15-26). They did not know at all that the gospel was also for the Gentiles. Only through the incident of Cornelius (Acts 10:1-11:8) did believing Jews in Jerusalem reluctantly admit that God’s plan includes the Gentiles. “When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, “Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life”” (Acts 11:18).

The existence of the Gentile believers opened a new phase in Christian history. For the Jews, becoming Christians did not change their status as part of the Jewish people. They did not change their God. The God of Israel was still their God even though they believed in Jesus as their Messiah (Christ). We do not see anywhere that they gave up being Jews when they became Christians. In a sense, they were just Christian Jews. Their circumcision, as the physical symbol of their covenant relationship with God, remained as it had been. They still lived according the Torah, which they thought was a privileged gift from God.

Now, they came to include Gentile believers, which was unexpected and surprising. They may have asked, what is happening? How can it be they are so easily turning to God? What does it mean for them to receive the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit we Jewish believers experienced? As Peter confessed in front of those who criticized him against his successful mission to the household of Cornelius, it was God’s act! “If then God gave them the same gift [the Holy Spirit] that he gave us when we believed in the

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<sup>18</sup>An eschatological expectation for the restoration of the twelve tribes, which had substantially disappeared in history after Babylonian captivity (586/7 BC), was a wide-spread hope in the first century Judaism (Sirach 35:11; Baruch 4:37; 5:5; 2 Macc 1:27f; Jubilee 1:15; 11QT 8:14-16; 1QM 2:2f). Such a hope was grounded on Ezekiel 37:15-23 and Isaiah 49:6 in the Old Testament. The fact that Jesus’ disciples were called “the Twelve” (oil dwdeka) also points to the same phenomenon. For further reference, read E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice & Belief 63 BCE-66 CE* (London and Philadelphia: SCM Press and Trinity Press International, 1992), 291.

Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God” (Acts 11:17)? A question still remains. What does all this mean to Israel, the chosen people of God? What is the relationship between the Jews and those Gentiles God accepted in the Spirit?

## **B. Are Believing Gentiles Part of Israel Now?**

Many of them must have concluded that the Gentile believers became part of Israel. They are joining Israel, the covenant people chosen by God, through Jesus Christ. Even Paul thought in a similar way. He used a metaphor of an olive tree to explain the Jew-Gentile relationship.

But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place to share the rich root of the olive tree, do not boast over the branches. If you do boast, remember that it is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you (Rom 11:17-18; NRSV).

Paul means in the metaphor that the Gentile Christians were grafted into the original olive tree to be a part of Israel.

Observed in the eyes of the Jewish Christians, the Gentiles, who had not known God before, were now participating in Israel, the chosen people of God. Then it was a necessary corollary that the Gentile believers should be circumcised and be law-observing people of God, for circumcision and law-observance are the very signs of being God’s people.<sup>19</sup> We read in the story of Acts that some believing Jews followed such reasoning. “Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers [Gentile Christians in Antioch], ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved’” (15:1; NRSV).

Eventually the church in Antioch sent their representatives to Jerusalem to discuss the issue. In Jerusalem, they met some Pharisaic Christians who argued for the same opinion. “But some believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and said, ‘It is necessary for them to be circumcised and ordered to keep the law of Moses’” (15:5). As

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<sup>19</sup>John Hyrcanus conquered Idumea (Edomites) and forced them to be circumcised in order to make them part of the Jewish nation. See Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1987, 1993), 386.

we clearly see, these people are Christian Jews. It means that they believed in Jesus crucified and raised from the dead as the saving Christ. They were demanding the Gentile believers, who had come to the Lord by the same way as theirs, to live as Jews, for they became part of the Jewish people in Jesus Christ. Salvation for them meant being a Jew in the Kingdom of God restored in Christ Jesus. This represented a theological line that stood against the theological position of Paul the apostle to the Gentile. This was an inevitable theological confusion at the time of transition, which Paul and early church leaders had to overcome.

### **C. Circumcision and Law Plus Christ?**

We read the same situation in Galatians. There were Christian missionaries who preached a different line of the gospel (1:7). They seemed to be the same ones who came from James and of whom Peter was afraid (2:12). Certainly they demanded Galatian Christians to have the rite of circumcision (2:12; 3:3; 5:2-3; 6:12) plus believe in Jesus Christ. Paul criticized them as “false believers secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might enslave us” (2:4). He also warned the Galatian Christians not to be tempted: “Are you so foolish? Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?” (3:3). Paul’s warning is quite strong. “Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you” (5:2). To be circumcised means to return to the old covenant. “Once again I testify to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obliged to obey the entire law” (5:3). These people of course required the Gentile believers to observe the Jewish law with the result that Paul had to lead a rigorous argument for “the righteousness by faith apart from the law” throughout the entire letter. Paul here told them of freedom. “For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (5:1).

We cannot go into a complicated exegesis due to our limitation. However, it should be mentioned that Paul is not fighting against so called “legalistic soteriology” here. Such legalistic view of salvation as Luther and his successors attacked by making use of Paul is not actually found among

the common Judaism of Paul's days.<sup>20</sup> After a careful investigation of Tannaitic literature, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and related apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, E. P. Sanders drew a conclusion that the "analysis of Rabbinic and other Palestinian Jewish literature did not reveal the kind of religion best characterized as legalistic work-righteousness."<sup>21</sup> The point of Paul's contemporary Judaism in regard to salvation is rather clear: works cannot achieve salvation; rather, God saves by grace.<sup>22</sup> In the issue of works and grace, Paul is rather in agreement with Judaism, while "Paul's thought can be sharply distinguished from anything to be found in Palestinian Judaism," in regard to "the total type of religion."<sup>23</sup> For the Jews, the Torah was not the means to salvation (getting in) but the means to live it out (staying in).

Paul, however, saw a danger of legalism if the Gentiles were required to keep the law plus believing in Christ. For the Jews, the law was given only after they were chosen people of God. The law was not the means to "getting in" for the Jews. However, the situation was different to the Gentiles who would have to get in first. If the Gentiles were required to keep the law as well as to believe in Jesus Christ to get in, that was certainly legalism. That is why Paul was so belligerently against those Jewish missionaries.

The point is that Paul in the Galatian situation did not disregard the significance of good works when he stood against the so-called Judaizers. Paul was strongly against the view that the Gentile Christians were required to be circumcised and to keep the law plus believing in Jesus Christ for salvation. What he insisted was that Christ alone was sufficient enough for them to be saved. Paul was not against the need for appropriate works.

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<sup>20</sup>Heikki Räisänen even writes: "Our survey shows, then, that *Paul is alone* in early Christianity in setting up a contrast between the Torah with its demands on one hand and God's grace or man's faith in Christ on the other" (Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 198).

<sup>21</sup>E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 550.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 543.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 548.

## D. Righteousness by Faith Does Not Rule Out Good Works

That Paul does not present the principle of faith against the necessity of good works is shown in the latter part of Galatians. Paul suggests a concept that does not exactly comply with the traditional understanding of “justification by faith alone” even in Galatians. In Gal 5:16, Paul orders the Galatian Christians to “walk.” The Greek word for ‘walk’ is *peripateō*, which corresponds to the concept of the Hebrew *halakh*. *Halakh* (*peripateō*) is “putting into practice in life” in general, from which a Jewish hermeneutical jargon *halakah* originated. Then Paul, following his ardent debate of pro-faith, now turns to “work.” He of course, in order to avoid inconsistency, does not forget to add a word “by the Spirit” (*pneumatī*) instead of “by the law.” In Paul’s thought, those who are “righteoused by faith” are the people who “live out by the Spirit.” Those who do not live out by the Spirit are to fulfill the lust of the flesh (5:16b).

What is the destiny of those people who do not live out—put into practice—and gratify the lust of the flesh? Paul’s answer is rather plain:

Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal 5:19-21; NRSV).

Paul warns them: “If your bad life style does not change to a good one, the kingdom of God will not be yours.” If this is what he had in mind as he argued for the “righteousness by faith” in the first part of the letter, his thesis should not be defined as “justification by faith *alone*,” as Luther put it. It should be noted that Paul nowhere in all his letters says it is by “faith alone.” He never uses the adverb “alone” (*monon*), as he discuss the matter. Then his “faith” should include appropriate “good works” effectuated by actual change in behaviors, as is shown in Galatians 5:19-21.

Those who are in faith have *really* changed. The change is not nominal but real, for “those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Gal 5:24). We cannot deceive God about the matter.

Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the

Spirit. So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up (Gal 6:7-9).

This is what the one who argues for the “righteousness by faith” declares. If you “live” or “act” according to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life. God is not mocked.

The intention of Paul’s debate over “righteousness by faith” was to deny the additional requirements of circumcision and law in addition to Jesus Christ as the way of salvation of the Gentiles. It did not mean to promote such kind of “faith” as that apart from good works. Paul’s faith is the “faith working through love” **pisti~ dij agaph~ epergoumenh**, Gal 5:6(b). Faith in Paul’s letter to the Galatians does not rule out necessary good works.

## V. The Implication of Pistis in the New Testament

Taking Paul’s faith as “the faith apart from good works in general” is a mistake made by reading the word “faith” only in a Greek rhetorical sense. The Greek word **pisti~** means “belief” in the sense of “assenting to” something that is said. The concept of **pisti~** played a significant role in Greco-Roman rhetoric. James L. Kinneavy’s introductory statement in his inquiry of the origins of Christian faith is pertinent enough to quote here.

The juxtaposition of “Greek rhetoric” and “Christian faith” may seem a trifle bizarre, maybe even irreverent—the two notions appear somewhat distant. Yet if we remember that rhetoric is the art of persuasion and that the Greek word for persuasion was *pistis* and that the Christian word for faith was also *pistis*, the embodiment of both meanings in the same word suggests that the two notions may not be too far apart.<sup>24</sup>

### A. PISTIS in Greco-Roman Rhetoric

In Greco-Roman rhetoric, the fundamental goal was to bring about **pisti~** in the mind of the audience, as “rhetoric was ‘primarily’ an art of

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<sup>24</sup>James L. Kinneavy, *Greek Rhetorical Origins of Christian Faith: An Inquiry* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 3.

persuasion.”<sup>25</sup> Both Plato and Aristotle endorsed the positive function of rhetoric in communicating philosophical truth, though they disliked the rhetoric of the sophists.<sup>26</sup> However, both philosophers deemed rhetoric to be inferior to philosophy in terms of epistemology. Rhetoric achieves only the probability (εἰκόν), not the certainty, of truth.<sup>27</sup> Its aim is to produce faith (πεισῶν . . . ποιεῖν) in the human soul.<sup>28</sup> Pisti~ is given a derogatory connotation by Plato in regard to epistemology, for it is the kind of knowledge grounded on opinions and probability<sup>29</sup> and is considered to be inferior to absolute truth or divine knowledge.

Greek philosophers’ negative view of pisti~ in association with *dōxa* (opinion) or εἰκόν (probability) is rejected by the sophists, for they did not believe the possibility that humans can acquire absolute knowledge. “Plato resisted the rhetoric of the sophists because it was largely useless, if not overtly detrimental, to the attainment of ultimate knowledge. But for the sophists there could be no such thing as ultimate knowledge. There was only the relative knowledge of the phenomenal world, which was

<sup>25</sup>George A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 4.

<sup>26</sup>Plato, *Phaedrus* 275e-277c. Aristotle writes, “Nevertheless, rhetoric is useful, because the true and the just are naturally superior to their opposites, so that, if decisions are improperly made, they must owe their defeat to their own advocates; which is reprehensible” (*Art of Rhetoric I* 12, trans. by John Henry Freese in Loeb Classical Library).

<sup>27</sup>Plato, *Phaedrus* 267a. Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric II* 24.11.

<sup>28</sup>Plato, *Phaedrus* 271a; *Gorgias* 452d-453a.

<sup>29</sup>Plato, *Gorgias* 452d, 454c, 459a ff. Bultmann well points out Plato’s view of knowledge from his *Republic*: “Resp., VI 511d-e, where *nohsi~* (‘insight’), *dianoia* (‘understanding’), *pisti~* (‘belief’) and *eikasía* (‘probability’) are listed in their graded relation to *alētheia*. In Resp., VII, 533e-534a the sequence is *episthmh*, *dianoia*, *pisti~*, *eikasía*, and the last two are summed up as *dōxa*, the first two as *nohsi~*; the relation of *nohsi~* to *dōxa* is that of *episthmh* to *pisti~*” (Gerhard Friedrich, ed. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol VI, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley [Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1968], s.v. “*pisteuō ktl.*,” fn. 19).



precisely what rhetoric was designed to handle.”<sup>30</sup> As the limit of human knowledge is admitted, *pisti~* does not need to carry a negative nuance in regard to epistemology. Isocrates was the most influential Greek writer who posited an honorific view of *pisti~* in this regard.

Isocrates’ view of philosophy is different from that of Plato. At one section of *Antidosis*, which is his defense in the form of a court trial, Isocrates sets out to present his idea of discipline by saying, “It remains to tell you about ‘wisdom’ and ‘philosophy’ (*peri; de; sofia~ kai; filosofia~*.)” He continues to say that his philosophy may appear to be different from what is understood in general. “It is appropriate for me, since I am being tried on such an issue, and since I hold that what some people call philosophy is not entitled to that name, to define and explain to you what philosophy, properly conceived, really is.” He has already disdained the philosophy proper as “a gymnastic of the mind and a preparation for philosophy.”<sup>31</sup> He recommends young people not “to be dried up by these barren subtleties, nor to be stranded on the speculations of the ancient sophists,” but to “banish utterly from their interests all vain speculations and all activities which have no bearing on our lives.”<sup>32</sup> What follows then is actually his explanation about the nature of that which we may label “rhetoric.”<sup>33</sup> Isocrates already designated rhetorical training as “philosophy” in *Against the Sophists*.<sup>34</sup> The ground of this idea is well expressed by his statement in *Nicoles*: “for the power to speak well is taken as the surest index of sound understanding, and discourse which is true and lawful and just is the outward image of a good and faithful soul.”<sup>35</sup> For Isocrates, rhetoric is placed at the center of his philosophy because his concept of knowledge is different from Plato’s. Wisdom is not to know the

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<sup>30</sup>Duane Litfin, *St. Paul’s Theology of Proclamation: 1 Corinthians 1-4 and Greco-Roman Rhetoric* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 40, referring to Gorgias, *Encomium to Helen* 82.B.11(11), in Hermann Diels, *Die Fragmente Der Vorsokratiker*, vol II, ed. by W. Kranz Weidmann (1974), 291.

<sup>31</sup>*Antidosis* 266.

<sup>32</sup>*Antidosis* 268, 269.

<sup>33</sup>*Antidosis* 270 ff.

<sup>34</sup>*Against the Sophists* 11, 14, 18.

<sup>35</sup>*Nicoles or the Cyprians* 7.

so-called absolute essence of being, which is not possible for human beings, but it is to reach the things to which a person can persuade others. Rhetoric aims at the occurrence of **pīsti~** in the mind of audience. It is the state of mind consenting to a certain truth claimed by the speaker.

## **B. A Synthesis of the Two Concepts in the New Testament**

In the Bible, however, **pīsti~** has another significant level of meaning. In the Old Testament, the concept of “mental-intellectual assent” is rarely found. The Hebrew word אֱמִינָה, the *Hiph'il* form of the verb אָמַן is mostly translated into **pīsteuw** in the Septuagint. The noun forms of the verb אָמַן are אֱמִתָּה and אֱמִנָה, whose connotations are faithfulness and truthfulness. For instance, the word אֱמִנָה in Habakkuk 2:4, whose corresponding Greek word in the Septuagint is of course **pīsti~**, should be read “faithfulness” in its context. If Paul took its original context into account, the word **pīsti~** in Romans 1:17 referred to the concept of “faithfulness” as well as of “belief.” Certainly the word **pīsti~** in Galatians 5:22—one of nine fruits of the Spirit—is usually translated “faithfulness” (cf. Rom 1:5; 16:26). The same Greek word is also used to refer to God’s faithfulness in Romans 3:3 and 1 Corinthians 1:9.

The word **pīsti~** within Greco-Roman world basically points to an “intellectual-emotional assent” to a given proposition in a rhetorical situation. However, as the Septuagint adopted the word **pīsti~** to translate the Hebrew word אֱמִנָה, the connotation of the Hebrew word was carried over to the New Testament use of **pīsti~**. We may say there was an unsettled tension in the use of the word **pīsti~** in the New Testament as it refers to “belief” in the sense of intellectual-emotional assent one time and to “faithfulness” in the sense of trust and obedience the other time.

Or it may be said that there was a synthesis of both connotations as the word **pīsti~** was adopted by early Christians in the New Testament. Missionary preaching, in which early church preachers attempted to persuade the listeners of the gospel to accept that Jesus Christ as their savior, surely constituted a rhetorical situation. The **pīsti~** expected in the situation was “belief” in a rhetorical sense. However, what was actually expected in the preaching of the gospel was not only an intellectual assent but also turning around to the way of God in obedience. Paul describes his

mission as “Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship *to bring about the obedience of faith* (upakohn pistew~) among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name” (Rom 1:5, cf. 16:26). The faith Paul intended to bring about was a sort of obedience that manifested itself in good works. If Paul used the word **pisti~** in such a synthetic sense, that Paul appealed to the change of life-style for the entrance of the Kingdom in Galatians 5:16-26 was not at all inconsistent with his argument of the righteousness by faith in Galatians 3-4.

### C. PISTIS As Sanctification in Romans

This is not different in Paul’s letter to the Romans. In Romans 3-4, Paul’s thesis on the righteousness by faith is more elaborated. Works for getting merits are clearly denied to uphold the principle of faith in 4:1-8. Here again his keen concern is the dispensability of circumcision. Abraham was righteous when he was not yet circumcised (4:10). The works of Christ are sufficient apart from law and circumcision. However, faith as described in Romans should be a faith that must lead to “sanctification.”

Paul makes it clear that a person in faith-grace should not remain in sin.

What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might **walk in newness of life** (Rom 6:1-4; NRSV).

New life in faith is not nominal but real. It is to walk in newness of life (ej kainoithi zwh~ peripathswmen). As in Galatians, righteousness by faith includes “putting it into practice” or living it out (*halakh*, *peripatew*). Does living in **pisti~** mean that you may keep sinning? Negation is super-strong. By no means (**mh; genoito**)! Never! Rather you must live out your faith. Paul here calls it ‘sanctification’. “For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification” (6:19b).

As for Romans 6:22, it is worthy of reading the Greek version with its literal translation.

nuni; de; ej euqerwqente~ ajpo; th~ amartiã~ doulwqente~ de; tw/qew/ eçete ton karpon umwn eij- abjasmon, to; de; tel o~ zwhn aijwnion. Now, having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you have your fruit into sanctification, whose end is eternal life.

In faith one secures eternal life. However the faith that leads to eternal life necessarily goes through sanctification. In Galatians Paul goes on listing good works of the Spirit as necessary outcomes of the righteousness by faith, which will in turn lead to the Kingdom of God (Gal 5:16-24). In Romans he instead mentions “sanctification,” in which one gets freed from sin and enslaved to God and which will lead to eternal life, as the outcome of righteousness by faith.

## VI. Conclusion

Then for Paul, the **pisti~** through which one is saved by God in His grace, should be the “faith working through love” (Gal 5:6) or the “faith that leads to sanctification” (Rom 6:22). Or we may say, the Greek rhetorical aspect of **pisti~** expresses itself in terms of regeneration, and the Hebrew aspect of **pisti~** manifests itself in terms of sanctification. **Pisti~** contains both the acceptance of gospel message and the sanctification of life in appropriate good works. Then what is the difference between Paul and James? They are not in disagreement at all. “You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. . . For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead” (James 2:24-26). Paul says “Amen” to James’ statement. Maybe Luther could be the problem.

Christians in Korea have been relying on a misguided doctrine of “justification by faith alone” in its unique cultural environment. They have been successful in drawing people to church with the result that they have had an explosive growth the last decades. However, they have not been successful in fulfilling the aspect of “faithfulness” as much. It is about time we dropped the word “alone” as we do not actually see it in the Scripture. Saving faith is the faith that necessarily leads to and contains “sanctification,” which is the aspect of faithfulness in the word **pisti~**. “Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb 12:14, NRSV).

## **Holiness in a Pluralistic Indonesian Society**

Johanis Siahaya

### **Introduction**

The title of this paper is so interesting to be investigated because it contains two important items in theological research: holiness and pluralism. Holiness for the holiness church movement is an interesting subject to be discussed, but to the non-holiness church movement, there is still a big question: is there a possibility of being holy in this world? On the other side there is pluralism. It has been an important thing, because we are living in a pluralistic world in regard to cultures, religions, customs, etc. This paper will discuss especially “Holiness in a Pluralistic Indonesian Society.” It is concerned with how the holiness doctrine can be possibly taught in the midst of the Indonesian pluralistic society which is plural culturally and religiously. Several things that will be discussed are pluralism in culture, religion and within Christianity, and the challenges faced in teaching the doctrine of holiness.

### **Pluralism in Culture**

Indonesian society is a pluralistic society (heterogen). Heterogeneity can be seen from the 500 various tribes contained in it. Each tribe has its own language. Of course, each tribe has its own culture or customs which are different from others. For example, I come from a tribe in Indonesia named Ambon of East Indonesia. The Ambonesse generally are straightforward in telling something. They do not hide it in their heart. It is usual for them, and people have no sensitivity to their words or opinion. But it is different with the Javanese where I live. The Javanese generally do not like telling something straightforwardly. To understand what is in their mind is quite difficult, because their sayings are so different from what they want. So, we do not know for certain what they want. It is different with Ambonesse—what they say is what is in their heart. There are many things

that cannot be explained here. If there are 500 tribes in Indonesia, possibly there are also 500 different cultures and there might be 500 different languages beside the Indonesian language.

Besides the various indigenous and heterogenous cultures, Indonesia has also experienced “imported” culture. Western culture, which came along with colonialism, has influenced the behavior and worldview of a part of Indonesian society. There are positive things that can be drawn from western culture, but there are also bad things brought by Europeans to Indonesia, like drunkenness, free sex, and extreme individualism. This has influenced a part of Indonesian society, especially the big cities and the Eastern part of Indonesia (Irian Jaya, Mollucas, North Celebes and Southeast Nusa) which was closely associated with the colonialists.

This Western imported culture can be increasingly seen day by day not only in the big cities, but also in suburban areas. It is also influenced rapidly by globalization, which is not anticipated by strong moral posture along with the long monetary crisis. Drugs, organized free sex, and unfaithful marriages have been an integral part of Indonesian society. So, the “indigenous” culture has been abandoned with this culture. In Java Island where Nazarene churches grow, we always encounter this imported culture more than Indonesian indigenous culture.

### **Pluralism in Religion**

In the context of nation, state and civil societal affairs, what is called religion has been maintained since the 1945 Constitution. The five official religions are regulated by the Religion Department of the Republic of Indonesia. Those religions are Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism and Buddhism. Beside that, Indonesia also has tribal religions maintained by the Culture Department. The tribal religions are not counted as religion, but rather as spiritual culture of the nation.<sup>1</sup>

In this sense, Indonesia is considered a religious nation. This concept is based on five important things, described by Victor I. Tanja as follows:<sup>2</sup> First, it believes in One God. Second, it is Universal. Third, it was revealed.

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<sup>1</sup>Victor I. Tanja, *Pluralitas dan Pembangunan di Indonesia* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1996), 24.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

Fourth, it has a prophet. Fifth, it has Holy Scripture. These five principles have been accommodated implicitly in the state foundation, Pancasila, in its first article: the divinity oneness. The divinity oneness, according to Pancasila, has accommodated every religion in it. In the divinity oneness, every religion is considered to have the same position. In other words, every religion worships the same God. This attitude implicitly promotes a compromise in the field of doctrines. But actually, only Christianity is the divine religion and is different from other religions which mostly include man's effort in its beliefs.

### **Pluralism in Christianity**

The pluralistic scene is seen not only in culture and inter-religions, but also can be seen in Christianity itself. Christian Society is separated into at least three different institutions with churches affiliated with them. Indonesia Churches Fellowship (Persekutuan Gereja-Gereja di Indonesia, PGI) is the oldest institution and has more members than other institutions. The second is Indonesia Evangelical Fellowship (Persekutuan Injili Indonesia, PII) which accommodates the churches calling themselves "evangelical." In it there is the Nazarene Christian Church. The third is Indonesia Pentecostal Council (Dewan Pentakosta di Indonesia). This institution is the official institution for charismatic and Pentecostal churches.

Beside this pluralistic scene in Christianity in Indonesia, we also know that Christianity is also plural in its doctrines. There are the Calvinists, which are the biggest group in Indonesia. Indonesian Christian history began with the coming of Europeans to Indonesia for the purpose of merchandising. The Dutch, who were adherents of Calvinism, came to Indonesia to bring not only merchandise mission, but also religious mission. They oppressed Indonesia for 350 years, so of course Calvinism has influenced Indonesian Churches greatly. Calvinism is found in the "oldest" churches and also in evangelical churches. Wesleyan-Arminians have become a minority group in Indonesia. The numbers of denominations that adhere to this teaching are only four denominations: Methodist, Nusantara Evangelical Christian Church, Wesleyan Church of Indonesia and Nazarene Christian Church. Admittedly, there are Pentecostal and Charismatic churches which have the same teaching, but practically especially in liturgy they differ from Wesleyan teaching. Among those four

denominations, in my opinion, only Nazarene churches strictly practice the teaching of Wesley-Arminianism. Even in its number of members and church buildings, the Nazarene denomination has more than others do. There are also other movements which are flourishing, like the Seventh-day Adventists, Mormons, Christian Science and other movements.

The plurality in Indonesia is so complex. This scene is followed by a tolerant attitude. This attitude is an important element in our national life. A tolerant attitude has been practiced within religions and between religions. Government has regulated the practice of this attitude in an Act. This condition has made it possible for a Christian to express his or her faith freely. On other side, religious tolerance also has become an obstacle to inhibit evangelism.

The specific tolerance is found also in Christianity itself. As explained before, there are many doctrinal understandings within Christianity, especially in Protestantism. Beside that, Calvinism has strong influence upon Christian life in Indonesia. There are several factors, which cause this phenomenon. First, Calvinistic churches have been in Indonesia since the sixteenth century and have occupied almost every island, city, and region. Second, many Calvinistic church members have high positions in the government, so they have great influence in society. Third, Calvinism has saturated the life of Christian society. Consequently, the churches on the outside of Calvinism, including Nazarene churches, find difficulties and obstacles to change the teaching which has been rooted for long time from generation to generation among Indonesian Christian society. So, the first thing to do is to tolerate their doctrine in order that we will not face rejection.

Besides Calvinism, Indonesia in recent years has been greatly influenced by the Charismatic movement. Substantially, the Charismatic movement is almost the same with Nazarene in the teaching of holiness and baptism of the Holy Spirit. The difference among them is what we call manifestations of the Spirit. Nazarene churches believe that men and women who are filled by the Holy Spirit will so be recognized by their daily life practices according to Galatians 5:22-23. On the other hand, the Charismatic movement tends to emphasize manifestations of the Spirit in the form of speaking in tongues.

So, the problem of pluralism is not found only in culture and inter-religions, but also in Christianity itself. The pluralistic scene had been a



unique mark of Indonesia. It can be seen from its motto: “Bhineka Tunggal Ika” which means, “We are different to one another, but we are one.”

## **The Challenges in Teaching Holiness Doctrine**

The Nazarene church came to Indonesia in 1975. In her quite mature age, the Nazarene church can be found on four big islands of Indonesia: Java, Sumatera, Irian Jaya, and Bali. These four big Islands represent twelve provinces and fifty churches. In her history, there were so many challenges and obstacles Nazarene churches faced in their effort to present the teaching of John Wesley, especially regarding to the doctrine of holiness.

The efforts to present and proclaim the doctrine of holiness in Indonesia were not so easy. The problem is that the attitude of tolerance is so strong among Indonesia society. We face challenges both from outside and inside. The outside challenges come from other religions, Indonesia culture, and western culture which had been imported to Indonesia. The inside challenges are related to strong Calvinistic convictions, the Charismatic movement which emphasizes an extreme manifestation of the Spirit, and an imbalance between theory and its practical aspect in the lives of members of the Nazarene church.

## **The Outside Challenges**

### **A. The Tolerance Attitude**

As explained before, the religions in Indonesia are regulated by the 1945 Constitution. Since the religions are regulated by the Constitution, all adherents of the religions must maintain tolerant attitudes toward others. This attitude of tolerance has been a great challenge for Nazarenes. The tolerance has been considered a means to control the mission activities of the religions.<sup>3</sup> Even according to Frans Magnis Suseno, an Indonesian Catholic philosopher, “all religion are similar and we have to appreciate and accept them as what they are with a tolerance attitude.”<sup>4</sup> That means the teaching of a religion can be found in other religions in the same sub-

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<sup>3</sup>Emmanuel G. Singgih, *Berteologi dalam Konteks* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2000), 68.

<sup>4</sup>Frans Magnis Suseno, *Filsafat Kebudayaan Politik* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1995), 83.

stances.<sup>5</sup> He wrote also, “their goals are not differ from others, but only their ways which differ.”<sup>6</sup>

Based on the above opinion, it is certain that to teach Wesley’s Teaching is too difficult. On the other hand, different holiness teaching is also found in every religion in Indonesia. For the Moslem, the holy life can be gotten by pilgrimage to Mecca, Fasting, and Jihad.<sup>7</sup> In Hinduism, we know what they called YOGA. For Hindus, Yoga means learn to do good works, for example, abstaining from worldly pleasures, honest, living holy life, etc.<sup>8</sup> In Buddhism, the doctrine of holiness does not have a special emphasis, but we know what they call as “ethic.” In the ethic, we can find exhortations that teach practical things about holiness. For example, the command not to do sexual sins.

So, the tolerant attitude has been a serious threat for the growth of Christianity. The problem will appear if we try to present what we believe. We will be accused as breakers of the attitude of tolerance.

## **B. The Imported Culture**

Since long ago Indonesia has had the highest ethical values in her society life. These highest moral values have been held on to until now by a part of its society, especially the older generation. But along with the change of ages, there has been a degradation and distortion in ethics in society. It is because Indonesia is entering a new age which is called the age of globalization and technology. On the one hand, it brings a joy for we can be well and rapidly informed about new trends. But on the other hand, this rapid rush of information is not anticipated with enough spiritual alertness, so things which are “taboo” for this society have become normal things. Free sex is practiced. Every where from metropolis to villages, people have become accustomed with this new lifestyle. Marital unfaithfulness now can be enjoyed as an entertainment. Young men and women are addicted to every kind of drug.

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 82.

<sup>7</sup>Mahmoud Mustafa Ayoub, *Mengurai Konflik Muslim Kristen dalam Perspektif Islam* (Jogjakarta: Fajar Pustaka Baru, 2001), 155.

<sup>8</sup>A.G. Honig, *Ilmu Agama* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1987), 134.

These behaviors apparently are not the inheritance of Indonesia. These behaviors are happening because there is an imported culture. These can be drawn easily because there is a borderless world of information. Beside that, TV and the Internet have become a threat to the moral life of Indonesian Society.

In the churches, pastors do not unceasingly preach the dangers which are coming to these present young people. In my ministry to 90% of the young people in Philadelphia Nazarene Church, I found in certain cases that the young people are facing difficulties trying to free themselves from the trap of this imported culture. Internet stations have made it possible for young men and women to access pornographic resources with just paying several thousand rupiah. Several of them are entrapped to using drugs. This phenomenon has a new trend in Indonesian society, especially among young men and woman. These are the challenges faced by the Nazarene church in her effort to teach and preach the doctrine of holiness.

### **The Inside Challenges**

What I mean by inside challenges are challenges which come from within the church itself. As we know, many churches in Indonesia hold to Calvinism and are the biggest party in Indonesia. Beside that, challenges come from the Charismatic movement which emphasizes outward manifestations of the Spirit, different from the Nazarene teaching.

#### **A. The Calvinists**

The Calvinists have been the biggest party in Indonesia churches. They believe in holiness, but the holiness they believe in is positional holiness. Their opinion about holiness is that when a man or woman receives Christ, he or she is sanctified, because Christ is holy. But this holiness is not holiness in character or practice for that man or woman.<sup>9</sup> According to them, as long as a believer lives, it is impossible for him or her to walk a holy and perfect life. A holy and perfect life can be attained only when a believer meets with his or her Creator.

#### **B. The Charismatics**

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<sup>9</sup>W. T. Purkiser, *Conflicting Concepts of Holiness* (Kansas City, Beacon Hill Press, 1972), 11.

The Charismatic movement in this decade has grown rapidly in Indonesia. Charismatics also hold and believe the holiness doctrine as Wesley taught. However, in their practice, any one who is filled by the Holy Spirit has to experience the gift of the Spirit so it can be seen by others. According to Jongeneel, sanctification for Charismatics has to be followed by the baptism of the Spirit, which is manifested and seen by others.<sup>10</sup>

These two challenges and obstacles are serious things that have to be thought by Wesleyan pastors and theologians, especially for the Nazarenes in Indonesia. In answering these challenges, I will propose several ideas and suggestions which hopefully can help the Wesleyans to minimize the distortion in our effort to teach the doctrine of holiness in the context of Indonesian culture.

To minimize the challenges, in my opinion, we have to go back and use the method which John Wesley used when he presented the holiness doctrine in his age. There are at least three ways he used. Those are preaching around, establishing small groups called "Holy Clubs," and maintaining a balance between the teaching of holiness and its practices. Among these three ways, I suggest for us to use the last two in considering that preaching around like Wesley is so difficult in Indonesia. But we can teach this doctrine in small groups and maintain the balance between teaching and practices.

### **Teaching the Doctrine of Holiness through Small Groups**

The Indonesian situation, with the majority of its citizens being Moslem, plus the uncondusive political climate, have made it impossible to use direct methods to proclaim the Christian faith. The pulpit sermon which tends to be a monologue, one-way communication where members just come and become faithful hearers, has been an ineffective method to influence Indonesians who in average have had religious knowledge background before becoming a Nazarene. So, in my opinion, the effective way is to use Wesley's method of establishing small groups.

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<sup>10</sup>J.A.B. Jongeneel, *Kharismata, Gerakan Kharismatik dan Gereja dalam Gerakan Kharismatik: Apakah Itu?* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1980), 11.

Besides acting as instructor in Nazarene Theological College, I also act as assistant pastor of the Philadelphia Nazarene Church of Jogjakarta. In my experience, the sermons that have been delivered especially about the doctrine of holiness were too difficult to be understood by the congregation. This happened because many of the members come from Calvinistic and Moslem backgrounds where they have had previous knowledge about holiness. So, the effective way has been to use teaching in small groups. These small groups can be cell groups, youth groups, or womens' fellowship. Through these small groups, their understanding about this doctrine can be gradually formed. Even most of them become militant Christians in the church, especially regarding this doctrine.

Actually in the past, we were facing difficulties in finding teaching material for these cell groups and Bible Study groups. The cause is that there is no teaching resource material available from the Nazarene church. If we found the resources, Calvinistic and Charismatic churches wrote most of them. But in this year, we have started to translate several books, like Ted Hughes' book, *First Step in the Christian Life and Going Deeper*. This book is so helpful for us to solve the problem of teaching Wesleyan doctrine, especially the doctrine of holiness. Even in this semester, all students of Nazarene Theological College are obligated to be involved in a small group on campus. The purpose of this small group is that all students can grasp the doctrine of Wesley practically, and it is expected that after their graduation, they will teach this doctrine in their ministry.

### **The Balance Between the Theory and Life Practices**

The other factor in presenting the doctrine is by teaching it on campus and in the churches. In Indonesia, we have Nazarene Theological College, which holds strictly to Wesleyan-Arminian doctrine. It gives the opportunity to teach the doctrine of holiness. In the churches, the sermons delivered were always related to the doctrine of holiness. The problem begins to arise when finding its application. Honestly, the problem is how this doctrine can not only be taught in classes and the pulpit, but also how it can be applied in each person's life.

I remember the course of Wesley's Theology where in establishing his theology John Wesley held to four important things: the Bible, Tradition, Reason and Experience. In my opinion, if we talk about

“experience,” we are talking about “how to apply a principle.” It means that it is not just theories that are studied, but it has to be followed by practices in every day life. It is true that if we talk about “holiness” as theory using terminology like, “perfect love, purity and mature,” then we must not only discuss about it, but we must seek to apply it. Greathouse said: “Love for God and love for others are indissolubly connected.”<sup>11</sup>

Actually, the easy way to influence Indonesians is not by sayings or concepts, but with visible life practices. The pluralistic Indonesian society long ago had its “politely system” and “customs” which highly appreciated moral and ethical values. If we talk about “the doctrine of holiness” practically, then unavoidably we have to talk about ethics and morality. Thomas Cook in his book, *The Holiness of the New Testament*, used the term “filled by the Spirit” for “holiness.”<sup>12</sup> In my opinion, the term, “filled by the Spirit” practically means having the fruit of the Spirit written about in Galatians 5:22-23. It means that if we talk about the doctrine of holiness practically, then we also practically should have the fruit of the Spirit. In contrast, if we say that we live holy lives, this means that we have put to death and avoid all kinds of works of the flesh which are written about in Galatians 5:19-20.

In other words, if we do our doctrine of holiness practically, then we can easily penetrate Indonesian culture. For example, the Indonesian custom accepted by every religion in Indonesia and is close to the doctrine of holiness is “the ethics of dating.” In the past, dating was the time when males and females got acquainted with one another. In this period, a young man can visit his girl friend in certain hours. It is purposed that there should be nothing that could disgrace their families, like free sex which will cause his girl to get pregnant. But in this day, this custom has begun to disappear, especially in the big cities. This practice is practiced not only by non-Christians, but also Christian youths who are entrapped by this custom forbidden by the Bible.

This is the opportunity for Wesleyans to proclaim and teach the doctrine of holiness. Why is it so? Because every religion in Indonesia and

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<sup>11</sup>William M. Greathouse, *Love Made Perfect: Foundation for the Holy Life* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1997), 108.

<sup>12</sup>Thomas Cook, *The Holiness of the New Testament* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1989), 42.

all culture traditions do not support perverted attitudes like free sex, unfaithful marriage acts, prostitution, etc. But because of tolerant attitudes and moral decadence, many people tend to abandon these practices, and it is happening everywhere. The way should be to practice the holy life taught by the Bible, “but be holy in all of your life just as He is Holy who has called you, because it written: be holy because I am holy” (1 Peter 1:15-16).

### **Conclusion**

It has been my responsibility and all of Nazarenes in Indonesia to teach the doctrine of holiness from the Wesleyan perspective to this nation. The attitude of tolerance and fanaticism of religions in Indonesia toward its beliefs have been a kind of challenge for us. Beside that, the majority of churches in Indonesia accept the teachings of Calvinism, which is another kind of challenge. However, the effective ways to proclaim and teach this doctrine are:

1. Teaching it in small groups
2. Applying the doctrine of holiness by practicing it in every day life which is centered on Christ and according to Wesley teaching.

By using small groups, we can support the members to grow in the doctrine. But this also can be an effective means to overcome the situation of tolerance in the culture and religions if there will be someone who believes in Jesus and he or she is being disciplined.

Moreover, the life practices which are according to Wesleyan teaching, in this case the doctrine of holiness, not only can be a means to attract people to Christ, but also can be an example in order to discern the Christians who depend on God from the traditional or the nominal Christians.

## 6

# **Being Holy is Being Christlike: To What Extent is This a Definable and Useful Model in an Australian Context?**

David B. McEwan

### **Introduction**

#### **Australia as a Postmodern and a PostChristian Society**

There seems to be a general agreement that we are living in a time of transition between two competing worldviews: modernity and post-modernity. The exact nature of each of these worldviews and the extent/permanence of the “paradigm shift” is much debated in current scholarship. It is not intended here to examine postmodernism as a philosophical framework or to enter into the debate as to the extent of its influence in academia. The concern in this paper is to focus on its impact as a cultural phenomenon in the lives of ordinary Australians. In this context, the cultural shift is also aligned with the reality of a post-Christian society. There is no intention to investigate either phenomenon exhaustively but simply to make some general comments in order to provide a setting for a discussion on the challenge of articulating the doctrine of holiness in Australia today.

Some of the key elements in postmodernism as a cultural phenomenon are: a thoroughgoing scepticism about objective truth, a rejection of rationalism, a hermeneutic of suspicion, the proliferation of choices and options in every realm of life as a positive state, a decline of rampant individualism and a resurgence of interest in community.<sup>1</sup> “Truth” is viewed as a construction of the individual mind and thus subjectivism is

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<sup>1</sup>Craig A. Loscalzo, *Apologetic Preaching: Proclaiming Christ to a Postmodern World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 13-20.



dominant, with its valuing of eclecticism and utilitarianism. The autonomous self (“my experience”) has now become the determiner of truth and reality; as a result, there cannot be any ultimate concerns, universal ethics or morality. Life is then reduced to caring for our own well-being, with the stress on managing our life and the environment for our benefit and pleasure. The answers to our problems are then found in various forms of therapy.<sup>2</sup> The real difficulty for any society holding such ideas is not so much that *all* truth is relativised, but the intimate juxtaposition of the many truth claims that then makes community identity and cohesion problematic.<sup>3</sup>

Hugh Mackay, one of Australia’s foremost social researchers and analysts, has examined the rapid and pervasive nature of social, cultural, technological and economic change in Australian society. In his opinion, “Australia is becoming a truly postmodern society—a place where we are learning to incorporate uncertainty into our view of the world. The absolute is giving way to the relative; objectivity to subjectivity; function to form.”<sup>4</sup> Diversity and pluralism are now accepted social and personal realities.<sup>5</sup> For most Australians, choice has become a supreme value, with each person seeking to construct a worldview that coincides with their personal values, beliefs and aspirations. “Postmodernism insists that there is an infinity of alternatives, and encourages us to explore them.”<sup>6</sup> There is a high degree of insecurity and uncertainty that accompanies these changes in every area of life—marriage, family, work, religion, leisure, media, and politics. “The present culture shift is a shift towards uncertainty, a shift towards diversity, a shift towards complexity.”<sup>7</sup> The danger in our acceptance of this diversity and our embrace of pluralism is the potential loss of a necessary sense of

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<sup>2</sup>Timothy R. Phillips and Dennis L. Okholm, eds., *Christian Apologetics in the Postmodern World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 12-15. See also Loscalzo, 84-5.

<sup>3</sup>Loscalzo, 89-90.

<sup>4</sup>Hugh Mackay, *Turning Point: Australians Choosing Their Future* (Sydney: Macmillan, 1999), xix-xx.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., x-xviii.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., xx.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., xxiv.

identity: where we have come from, where we are going, having a place to call our own. The gloomiest prospect is to see the future of our society in terms of ever-increasing fragmentation and alienation—that we become simply a collection of “individuals” with the loss of any meaningful sense of community. Those who are more hopeful believe there will be an emerging sense of “reconnection” with the recovery of genuine community.<sup>8</sup>

In the midst of all this change, Mackay sees no signs of a revival of Christian faith and practice. The growing interest in “spirituality” is not reflected in the growth of the Christian church. He comments that Christianity has “never been an integral, intrinsic force in Australian political, cultural or social life in the way it has been for instance, in America or Western Europe.”<sup>9</sup> It has always been essentially a private matter and for most Australians a relatively unimportant one. Nevertheless, most Australians are “theists” and value religious belief, no matter how ill-defined it happens to be, and they appreciate religious input in any discussions about vision, purpose and the moral dimension of life.<sup>10</sup>

Current Australian society is characterised by anxiety, stress, insecurity and a loss of identity.<sup>11</sup> Gender roles have been redefined, with an accompanying adversarial approach to relationships. This has impacted both marriage and family resulting in an increasing fragmentation of family life. The negative effects of the “personal growth” movement of the 70’s and 80’s that encouraged egocentricity and an obsession with personal gratification to the exclusion of traditional concepts of social cohesion, resulted in many people searching for a “group” to which they can belong. These decades have seen both rising unemployment and changing patterns of employment, leading many to question the value of work. Spectacular corporate collapses in recent years, with all the associated personal and social disruption, have exacerbated the problem. The increased use of information technology has been confused with genuine communication,

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., xxvii-xxxv.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 219-20.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 221-26.

<sup>11</sup>Hugh Mackay, *Reinventing Australia: The Mind and Mood of Australia in the 90s* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1993), 7.

and there is an increasing depersonalisation in all social structures as we interact more with such things as voice-mail and e-mail. Due to a rapid redistribution of wealth, with the gap between the rich and the poor increasing, the long-held dream of an egalitarian society is under threat. The all-pervasive impact of multiculturalism, with its resulting angst over cultural identity, has led to a valuing of diversity over unity. Many Australians are increasingly sceptical and cynical over the whole political process; politics is now almost synonymous with economics, with a corresponding retreat from a concern for human values and social justice.<sup>12</sup> The declining emphasis on personal relationships and increased social fragmentation destroys our sense of social cohesion and puts even more pressure on our ability to hold and pass on shared ethics, ideals, values and virtues. Mackay believes that there is an increasing desire to re-establish meaningful personal relationships and a sense of community in Australian society.

### **Christlikeness: A Personal, Individual, Private Experience?**

For John Wesley, holiness could be summed up as “Christlikeness,” and this has continued to be one of the standard ways of describing the holy life. The unstated assumption in much of Western Christianity during the last two hundred years is that this is a universal, timeless model easily comprehended by people in every age and culture. We forget that we read the biblical descriptions of the life of Jesus through our cultural lens and, generally, Western nations (and Australia more than most) are characterised by a rugged individualism. Modern individualism reinforces narcissism, self-indulgence, instant gratification, self-promotion and greed. In an earlier age, emotions were held in check by values such as commitment, duty, reason, and honour. In today’s society, feelings and emotions are very important, with individualistic self-fulfilment through self-expression as the goal of personal life; self-discipline and self-control are now largely seen as forms of repression. Relationships are a means to self-fulfilment, and to be discarded if our emotional needs are not met.

Australian Nazarenes are not exempt from these cultural realities, and many view God as one who exists to meet our needs as we define them. In line with our convictions, our understanding of entire sanctification and

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 22-23, 270-72.

holy living is expressed in terms of “Christlikeness.” From our reading of the Bible, we see Christ as an “individual” who possessed “holy” qualities that are essentially personal, private, interior and spiritual. Experientially, the Spirit then “bears witness” to the presence of such qualities in the individual, enabling them to testify to the experience of entire sanctification, understood as the personal possession of these holy qualities. Holiness is purely a private, personal, inward experience. Needless to say, such a “reading” of Scripture and the accompanying conclusions regarding the nature of holy living only exacerbates the problems already present in Australian society. It leaves the church with no effective witness that would address the inner turmoil that many are currently facing, with their longing for meaningful relationships. A church that is simply a gathering of “holy individuals” cannot be effective in mission to a society desperate for genuine community.

Furthermore, the Christlike life is often described in terms of certain observable behaviours (for example, abstaining from drinking alcohol as a beverage) to which moral values have been attached. The moral/ethical quality that is most valued in a Christian’s life is obedience to the commands of God. Given our focus on individualism, our personal keeping of the rules can easily become more important than nurturing relationships and may even replace them. Holy living is then a solitary existence centred upon an inward experience of God’s grace that is nurtured by private and personal devotional exercises. Holiness can then become a very unattractive (and self-righteous) legalism, which is hardly a positive base for building community. The result has often been that individuals have been careful about keeping the rules governing outward behaviour while showing no real concern for relationship breakdown in the church—since that is not “my problem” and it does not affect “me.” In all of this there is a tendency to forget that we have a great capacity for self-deception, let alone confusing our own feelings for the “witness of the Spirit.” If Christlikeness is to be judged purely from “my personal subjective perception,” then “I” may well be badly in error.

It is this over-emphasis on the individual in Australian society and its implications for Christian living that uncovers a fatal flaw in our current conception of holiness as Christlikeness. The problem is not Christlikeness *per se*, but our cultural reading of Scripture and the resulting theological reflection that focuses on the person of Jesus Christ as an isolated,

autonomous individual. The challenge in articulating a doctrine of holiness for Australia today lies in moving beyond such a limited conception by embracing an earlier understanding that holiness is essentially a relational reality. Here we confront a major problem in that large sections of Australian society—including the church—have no real idea of what a healthy, functioning community looks like. We do have a strong heritage in the Wesleyan-Holiness movement from which we can draw, as well as the traditions of the Christian church as a whole. While we do not have complete access to the interior life of Christ, we do have access to his message, his actions and his relationships. From these we can attempt to construct a model that is not simply based on subjective experience. The life of Jesus Christ demonstrates what it means to live in relationship with God and with other people, and that this relationship with other persons was an essential condition of the relationship with God.

It is vital that we recognise the importance of the fact that the church as a community has a long tradition in which it has kept alive a powerful “memory” that allows it to continue to confess the origins and nature of the self, the world and the community as creations of God. It has also kept alive a powerful vision through its confession of hope in God and the future he has planned and purposed for the self, the world and the community. This means that the church does not need to succumb to the despair and defeat of the surrounding society; it can proclaim a present filled with potential and genuine hope because we are not in ultimate control—God is.<sup>13</sup> Our society is, of course, highly skeptical about this confession and would debunk the church’s confidence and, it must be admitted, it often has had good cause to do so. This is where the role of personal and community witness to the person of Jesus Christ, the gospel and its transforming potential is so important.<sup>14</sup> Since a postmodern society rejects out of hand the premise of any argument based on rationalism, doctrinal formulations on their own are not of much use. It is as we have genuine Christian community, with its shared experiences and relation-

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<sup>13</sup>Walter Brueggemann, *Texts Under Negotiation: The Bible and Postmodern Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 29-48.

<sup>14</sup>Loscalzo, 69-75.

ships, that pagan Australians will be compelled to consider the claims of holy living.

### Christlikeness: A Relationship-based Holiness

Stanley Grenz reminds us that

The Enlightenment brought in its wake an individualist impulse that elevates the human person as the logical *prius* of all forms of social life, and views the contract between individuals as the basis of all social interaction. Individualism promotes such values as personal freedom, self-improvement, privacy, achievement, independence, detachment, and self-interest. It sees society, in turn, as the product of autonomous selves who enter into voluntary relationship with each other.

Voluntarist contractualism finds its ecclesiological counterpart in the view of the church as a voluntary association of individual believers. Rather than constituting its members, the church is constituted by believers, who are deemed to be in a sense complete “spiritual selves” prior to, and apart from, membership in the church.<sup>15</sup>

In recent years this viewpoint has been increasingly questioned and there has been a call for the re-establishing of a relational understanding, while maintaining the valid and helpful insights of individualism. At the heart of this theological enterprise is a fresh examination of what it means for human beings to have been created in the “image of God.”<sup>16</sup> The God who has revealed himself to us and whom we worship is a Triune God, and thus “the divine image is not primarily individual, but is shared or rela-

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<sup>15</sup>Stanley J. Grenz, *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 314.

<sup>16</sup>From a Wesleyan perspective, see for example Samuel M. Powell and Michael E. Lodahl, eds., *Embodied Holiness: Toward a Corporate Theology of Spiritual Growth* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999); Michael E. Lodahl, “*Una Natura Divina, Tres Nescio Quid: What Sorts of Personae are Divine Personae?*”, *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 36:1 (Spring 2001): 218-30. Also see n.49, p. 241 in Dean G. Blevins, “The Trinity and the Means of Grace: A Sacramental Inter-relationship,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 36:1 (Spring 2001): 231-55.

tional.”<sup>17</sup> In many recent Trinitarian studies, the concept of *perichoresis* has re-emerged; the concept, as understood by Colin Gunton, signifies that

the persons [of the Godhead] do not simply enter into relations with one another, but are constituted by one another in the relations. Father, Son and Spirit are eternally what they are by virtue of what they are from and to one another. Being and relation can be distinguished in thought, but in no way separated ontologically; they are part of the one ontological dynamic.<sup>18</sup>

God reveals himself to us as a “being-in-communion,” and to be created in this “image” means that humans must also be participants in some form of communion, not only with God but also with each other. Gunton has pointed out that the image therefore closely binds us with other human beings as well as with God. The Genesis account would seem to clearly indicate that we are a social kind; “the merely *individual* state. . . is a denial of human fullness.”<sup>19</sup> Gunton applies the concept of *perichoresis* to humanity as well as to the Trinity. It is not merely that we “enter” into a relationship with others, but rather “persons mutually constitute each other, make each other what they are.”<sup>20</sup> Individuals are still unique persons, but their uniqueness is by virtue of their relationship to others.<sup>21</sup> A relationship necessarily involves the presence of another who has a distinctive identity, which in turn requires a distinctive character and history.<sup>22</sup> This keeps both

<sup>17</sup>Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 213.

<sup>18</sup>Colin E. Gunton, *The One, The Three and The Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity. The Bampton Lectures 1992* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 214. See also Roderick T. Leupp, *Knowing the Name of God: A Trinitarian Tapestry of Grace, Faith and Community* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 159-62.

<sup>19</sup>Gunton, *The One*, 216. He also underscores that it is a myth that we can fulfil ourselves as individuals, see 226. See also Brian E. Beck, “Connexion and Koinonia: Wesley’s Legacy and the Ecumenical Ideal,” in *Rethinking Wesley’s Theology for Contemporary Methodism*, ed. Randy Maddox (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 129-41; Leupp, *Knowing the Name*, 92-96.

<sup>20</sup>Gunton, *The One*, 169.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 172-73.

<sup>22</sup>Henry H. Knight III, *The Presence of God in the Christian Life: John Wesley and the Means of Grace* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 1992), 9-11; see also Leupp, *Knowing the Name*, 97-98.

the importance of the individual and the community, so that you cannot have one without the other, nor can you set one over against the other.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, the Church as God's community of the redeemed should have priority over our more natural individualistic concerns, for we need to remember that individual experience occurs within the community and its mutual relationships.<sup>24</sup>

The biblical revelation of God consistently shows us a God whose essential nature is holy love.<sup>25</sup> From this we can deduce that the key marks of the personal are then love and freedom; a "free relation-in-otherness."<sup>26</sup> The essence of freedom is found in the balance between self-realisation and service to others; the balance of self-love and self-gift.<sup>27</sup>

God's own character can only be mirrored by humans who love after the manner of the perfect love lying at the heart of the triune God.

Only as we live in fellowship can we show forth what God is like. And as we reflect God's character—love—we also live in accordance with our own true nature and find our true identity.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>23</sup>See J. Stephen Rhodes, "The Church as the Community of Open Friendship," *The Asbury Theological Journal* 55:1 (Spring 2000): 41-49.

<sup>24</sup>Michael E. Lodahl, *The Story of God: Wesleyan Theology and Biblical Narrative* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994), 68-69, 166-67.

<sup>25</sup>See the arguments advanced by H. Ray Dunning, *Grace, Faith, and Holiness: A Wesleyan Systematic Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1988), 183-207.

<sup>26</sup>Gunton, *The One*, 227. Dunning has convincingly argued that being created in God's image means that the human being was originally endowed with freedom for God, for the other and freedom from the Earth and self-domination; see *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*, 277-83. See also Paul S. Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2000), 16-33; Charles Sherlock, *God on the Inside: Trinitarian Spirituality* (Canberra: Acorn Press, 1991), 204-205; Anthony C. Thiselton, *Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self: On Meaning, Manipulation and Promise* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 155ff.

<sup>27</sup>Leupp, *Knowing the Name*, 92-96.

<sup>28</sup>Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 213.



We are human only as we draw life from the Trinity, for Jesus Christ is the truly representative human—not Adam.<sup>29</sup> It is Christ who reveals to us who we are and what it means to be human; holiness is then both Christocentric and Trinitarian.<sup>30</sup> Love is not a possession apart from God, but is intrinsically relational. It is by grace that we are invited and enabled to participate in the ongoing personal relationships of the triune God, thus opening up our lives to the transformative power of God’s love that impacts every area of personal and community life. Henry Knight cautions us against reading John Wesley’s order of salvation in an individualistic manner, abstracting it from the liturgical, communal and devotional contexts of the community; Wesley emphasised the place of relationship with both God and neighbour.<sup>31</sup> In the Preface to the *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, published by Wesley in 1739, we have the following statement:

“Holy solitaries” is a phrase no more consistent with the gospel than holy adulterers. The gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness. “Faith working by love” is the length and breadth and depth and height of Christian perfection. “This commandment have we from Christ, that he who loves God, love his brother also”; and that we manifest our love “by doing good unto all men; especially to them that are of the household of faith.” And in truth, whosoever loveth his brethren, not in word only, but as Christ loved him, cannot but be “zealous of good works.” He feels in his soul a burning, restless desire of spending and being spent for them. “My Father,” will he say, “worketh hitherto, and I work.” And at all

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<sup>29</sup>Leupp, *Knowing the Name*, 97-98.

<sup>30</sup>Tom A. Noble, “The Cappadocians, Augustine and Trinitarian Holiness,” Public lecture, Nazarene Theological College, Brisbane, Qld., August 2000. Author’s printed notes.

<sup>31</sup>Knight, *The Presence of God*, 2.

possible opportunities he is, like his Master, “going about doing good.”<sup>32</sup>

The context was his opposition to the notion that one can be a “solitary Christian,” but the point he made applies equally to the strong individualism of much current Australian Christianity. In his sermon, “Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount. Discourse the Fourth” he strongly refuted the notion that holiness is purely an “inward experience,” nor can it be realised in solitude: “When I say this is essentially a social religion, I mean not only that it cannot subsist so well, but that it cannot subsist at all without society, without living and conversing with other men.”<sup>33</sup> He agreed up to a point with those who claimed that Christianity is purely inward, a matter of the heart, a union of the soul with God, a “pure and holy heart.” He said this was the “root” of our relationship with Christ, but if truly present, it must also put forth “branches” (outward evidence), and they are of the same nature as the root. Wesley agreed that outward evidence without the inner heart change is nothing, but it was not a case of either/or but both/and; the commands of the Lord cannot be carried out except in society.<sup>34</sup> Biblical passages like Lev 19 and Matt 5-7 (especially 5:43-48) underscore both the essential relational character of Christianity and the centrality of holy love.

Donald Alexander has recently addressed the recurrent problem of interpreting holiness in terms of the inner dimension of human experience. He is in substantial agreement with the authors cited earlier on the importance of understanding humans to be “persons-in-communion,” both

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<sup>32</sup>John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed. 14 vols., edited by Thomas Jackson (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872; reprint ed., Kansas City, MO.: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1979). Preface to the *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 14: 232.

<sup>33</sup>John Wesley, *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, 35 volumes projected, editor in Chief, Frank Baker (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984ff). Volumes 7, 11, 25, and 26 originally appeared as the *Oxford Edition of The Works of John Wesley*, edited by Frank Baker and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975-83), Vol. 1: *Sermons I*, ed. Albert C. Outler (1984), 533-34.

<sup>34</sup>Wesley, *Sermons I*, 534-42. See also “The Repentance of Believers,” 335-53, especially n. 65, p. 343; *Sermons III*, “On Visiting the Sick,” 384-97.

with God and with neighbour.<sup>35</sup> He has raised an additional problem to be considered before we can move on to the role of community in shaping holy living: is there an additional condition beyond the “fact” of the Creator-creature relationship in order for humans to be holy? Conservative evangelicals have often read Genesis to imply that human holiness is also grounded in personal obedience to God’s command, given first in Gen. 2:16-17. Alexander calls this a “Moral-Obedient View” of holiness and his extended analysis of it leads him to reject it as the most helpful model for the present day. He believes that what he terms the “Functional View” has greater potential to address the concerns raised today.<sup>36</sup> Here the relationship with God is grounded in the act of creation itself and not in any subsequent demand. Humans are created “good” and endowed with the capacity of personal being (“in God”s image”) so that they “function” (think and act) in a manner harmonious with their nature as created by God and thereby reflecting the character of God in whose image they are created. This removes the heart of the ongoing relationship from a “moral/obedient” understanding to one of “faith/trust.” The command not to eat of the fruit created the basis for trust and provided an opportunity for humanity to continue to live in that trust. Obedience was then the means by which the faith/trust relationship with God now found concrete expression—it flowed from the prior relationship established by grace but did not create it. Since humanity chose not to trust, the concrete act of disobedience followed and allowed the entrance of sin and an experiential knowledge of good and evil. The “image of God” is not then some quality or characteristic that we possess by analogy with God, but our capacity to encounter and respond to others in a personal way that is not merely instinctive or habitual. To respond as we were created to respond is then to display the character of God. The “image” is then found in the relationship and can only be realised in fellowship; that is why the Ten Command-

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<sup>35</sup>Donald L. Alexander, *The Pursuit of Godliness: Sanctification in Christological Perspective* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1999), 15-17.

<sup>36</sup>Alexander, *Pursuit*, 35-40. For Wesleyans, Alexander’s analysis has the added benefit of offering us an alternative understanding that would free us from remaining locked in a fruitless debate with the Reformed theologians over exclusively legal categories for sin and salvation.

ments and Jesus' summary of the Law (to love God and neighbour) are relational in form.<sup>37</sup>

To be created is to have a direction, a dynamic, which derives from the createdness of all things by the triune God. That dynamic can be subverted, reversed, even, so that that which is directed to its own particular perfectedness instead participates in dissolution and death.<sup>38</sup>

To break the relationship with God does not result in a loss of “being”; rather humans get involved in patterns of relationship which make for a loss of ontic integrity, a loss of centredness.<sup>39</sup> Salvation (including entire sanctification) is then aligned with becoming truly human, living in the framework of human relationships, ordered and expressed in the purpose of God's new community—the church.

### **Christlikeness: A Community-shaped Holiness**

Stanley Grenz reminds us that personal identity is socially produced and so the church community plays a crucial role in the process of Christian character formation. The church is called to be a proclaiming (apostolic), reconciling (catholic), sanctifying (holy) and unifying (one) community centred in Christ, who alone bears the full *imago dei*.<sup>40</sup> To be a Christian is to be a member of a “Christ-focused community” and the encounter with Christ is “an identity-producing event,” both individually and corporately.

The church gains its true identity through participation in the fountainhead of community, namely, the life of the triune God . . . the communal fellowship Christians share is nothing less than a shared participation—a participation together—in the perichoretic community of trinitarian persons.<sup>41</sup>

Because of the experiential dimension, we must take seriously the specific historical-cultural context of the local community that the Spirit addresses

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 41-47.

<sup>38</sup>Gunton, *The One*, 230.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 230.

<sup>40</sup>Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 323.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 323.

and seeks to transform.<sup>42</sup> The ministry of the Spirit that enables our relationships with God and neighbour also “maintains and even strengthens particularity”; not seeking homogenisation but a “relation which does not subvert but establishes the other in its true reality.”<sup>43</sup> In support of this, Michael Lodahl has argued that if the *personae* in the Trinity are not exactly alike ontologically, then human *personae* living by faith in the Triune God may grow in God’s image to live more richly and ecstatically with(in) our differences—thus loosening up our obsession with conformity in the name of (tri)unity.<sup>44</sup> For example, the church community identified in 1 Cor 12 clearly demonstrates richness and variety, not homogeneity. “God the Spirit is the source of autonomy, not homogeneity, because by his action human beings are constituted in their uniqueness and particular networks of relationality.”<sup>45</sup>

At this point it is helpful to be reminded of an earlier quotation from Grenz where he noted that “individualism” viewed society as “the product of autonomous selves who enter into voluntary relationship with each other.” Carried over into the Christian community, this results in the church being seen as a “voluntary association of individual believers” and “[r]ather than constituting its members, the church is constituted by believers, who are deemed to be in a sense complete “spiritual selves” prior to, and apart from, membership in the church.”<sup>46</sup> This has clear implications for the whole process of spiritual transformation when coupled with the common understanding that “Christlikeness” is a private, inward spiritual experience. The church then easily becomes a closed community turned in on itself (holiness seen almost exclusively as *separation from* the world); “fellowship” then becomes the enjoyment of a group of like-minded people who may unintentionally exclude others who are different. Such an understanding finds it difficult to respect and embrace differences that may

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<sup>42</sup>See for example, Stanley J. Grenz, “Culture and Spirit: The Role of Cultural Context in Theological Reflection,” *The Asbury Theological Journal* 55:2 (Fall 2000): 37-51.

<sup>43</sup>Gunton, *The One*, 182.

<sup>44</sup>Lodahl, “*Una Natura Divina, Tres Nescio Quid*,” 218-30.

<sup>45</sup>Gunton, *The One*, 182-84.

<sup>46</sup>Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 314.

bring tensions to the “fellowship,” forgetting that a healthy community is not marked by the absence of conflict but how it handles conflict.<sup>47</sup>

The human community becomes concrete in the church, the medium and realisation of communion with God and then with others. The Church of Jesus Christ is then a fellowship of communities that individually and corporately form his Body.<sup>48</sup> The postmodern condition undercuts any notion of a “universal reality called community” by which to judge every other community—all must flow from a conversation between particular communities.<sup>49</sup> It is the “commonality” of our experience that is the identifying feature of participation in a specific church community, for a different experience would mark us as a member of another community.<sup>50</sup> The Wesleyan-Holiness community is shaped by its theological reflection and praxis guided by Scripture, reason, tradition and experience (both personal and corporate). This will have both a local and specific element as well as a common pattern or style that identifies us all as Nazarene churches.

To take this seriously implies that we can no longer promote a holiness (“Christlikeness”) that is primarily understood as a private, inward experience. In the past much of our ministry has been directed towards “individuals,” and this focus was exacerbated by the accompanying Protestant emphasis on the importance of personal access to God through private study of the Bible and prayer. Christian experience was removed from a community setting (liturgy, shared confession and living witnesses) to a privatised, interiorised, isolated personal experience. One of the gains of postmodernism is a new openness to the place of the community and the vital importance of interpersonal relationships. Our pulpit ministry has often been more in the mode of an academic discourse, with the language geared for a people who were familiar with the biblical story and theological language. The goal was often to impart universal truths and principles and the assumption was that the correct “information” would result in the desired transformation. The focus of the sermon was the individual who

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<sup>47</sup>Rhodes, “The Church as Community,” 44-47.

<sup>48</sup>Gunton, *The One*, 216-18.

<sup>49</sup>Grenz, *Renewing the Center*, 323.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 202. See also Gunton, *The One*, 171.

needed to make a (rational) decision about their faith commitment. Walter Brueggemann argues that people today do not change primarily as a result of new “information” but as a result of encountering a new way of life that they are able to experience for themselves, in the process unlearning and disengaging from a model that is no longer credible or adequate.<sup>51</sup> The role of the “community” in modeling holiness and not simply “speaking” about it cannot be emphasised too much. A community ethos is based on the identity of the people of God—because of *who* we are, this is *how* we live. It is the *whole* life of the Christian community that is critical to effective communication of the doctrine of holiness in the current Australian setting; it requires both the life and the “speech” to be congruent before persuasive witness is possible.

If, as we have argued, Christlikeness is to be understood as a relational reality and not merely an individual one, then the church must have in place means that the Spirit can use to form and shape the community as well as the individual. This leads to a consideration of Wesley’s emphasis on the importance of the “means of grace.” A full study of the “means” and how they can function to shape holy lives is beyond the scope of this present paper. We can say that they form an interrelated context within which the Christian life is lived and through which relationships with God and neighbour are enabled and developed. In Henry Knight’s comprehensive examination of the “means” and their importance for forming and shaping holy lives, we find the following classification and examples:

- **General Means of Grace:** universal obedience, keeping all the commandments, watching, denying ourselves, taking up our cross daily, exercise of the presence of God
- **Instituted (Particular) Means of Grace** (appointed by God, universal in history and culture): prayer in all its forms and settings, searching the Scriptures in all its forms and settings, Eucharist, Fasting or abstinence, Christian conference

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<sup>51</sup>Brueggemann, *Texts Under Negotiation*, 24-25.

- **Prudential Means of Grace** (vary from age to age, culture to culture, person to person, adapted to time and circumstance): particular rules or acts of holy living, class and band meetings, prayer meetings, covenant services, watch night services, love feasts, visiting the sick, doing good, doing no harm, reading edifying literature.<sup>52</sup>

The list encompasses a wide range of activities that are to be pursued and must be pursued in both a personal and a community setting. The development of the Methodist societies, classes and bands as patterns of fellowship and discipleship were related to their historical and cultural contexts, but something like them is always necessary to nourish the individual Christian life through deepening relationships, fellowship, and mutual accountability.<sup>53</sup> The tendency was present even in his day for many to reduce holy living to an inward experience supported exclusively by acts of personal piety. Wesley wanted to prohibit pious activities from becoming a means of avoiding love when they should be the means through which God enables and evokes love. Wesley believed that love for God and neighbour are not in competition, and he was insistent that the “neighbour” must not be limited to fellow Christians but encompass the whole of society. By its very nature, love actively transforms all relationships and so you cannot have “inward love” without a corresponding change in relationship with both God and neighbour.<sup>54</sup> Love for God and others is a core affection or temper that governs the Christian life. As such, it is both a capacity (enabled to love) and a disposition (inclined to love others). It is by personal interaction with God and neighbour as a result of utilising all the means of grace, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, that both the capacity and the disposition are enabled to increase.<sup>55</sup> This enables the

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<sup>52</sup>Knight, *Presence of God*, 5.

<sup>53</sup>Knight, *Presence of God*, 95ff. See also Brian E. Beck, “Connexion and Koinonia: Wesley’s Legacy and the Ecumenical Ideal,” in *Rethinking Wesley’s Theology for Contemporary Methodism*, ed. Randy Maddox (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 129-41.

<sup>54</sup>Knight, *Presence of God*, 4.

<sup>55</sup>For some of the implications of this see Randy L. Maddox, “Reconnecting the Means to the End: A Wesleyan Prescription for the Holiness Movement,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 33:2 (Fall, 1998): 29-66.



Spirit to form, shape and maintain our relationships with God and neighbour (and our “self”) in a way that is truly “Christlike.” That is why Wesley was so insistent that holiness (“Christlikeness”) is either a social reality or it is non-existent.<sup>56</sup>

### **Conclusion**

A functional model of Christlikeness, with its key emphasis on relationships, returns us to the centrality of the doctrine of the Trinity in Christian theological reflection. Genuine relationship is understood through reflecting on the way that the persons of the Trinity relate to each other and to the whole of Creation. Jesus Christ is the concrete demonstration of how this works out in a specific human life in a specific culture and time. We are then invited to be “in Christ” as a new creation and thus able to participate in the life and relationships of the Triune God. We, in turn, model this graciously restored “functionality” in our culture and time through our participation in the life of the church and ministry to the world. Holiness is then relationship-based and community-shaped; it is a holistic experience that takes seriously our time and culture-specific reality. The qualities of a holy life are then evaluated by the judgement of the Spirit-led community, whether this is at local church, district, region or the general church level. This maintains the role of the physical community as a place of wisdom and discernment as we work towards a consensus on the “marks” of holiness. This would also restore the central Wesleyan value of “conference” as an essential means to help us live authentically holy lives.

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<sup>56</sup>See Knight, *Presence of God*, 18-21. Remember that for Wesley, “law” is not legalism, but the law written on the heart; to have the love of God and neighbour as a governing affection—see *Presence of God*, 60.

**Communicating Holiness to the Filipinos:  
Challenges and Needs  
The Path to A Filipino Theology of Holiness**  
Jason V. Hallig

**I. Introduction**

In 1982, eighty-five evangelicals from 17 countries gathered together here in Seoul, Korea. Their task was to develop an Asian theology that seeks to address concerns that are relevant to Asian Christians. They all agreed that the goal of Asian theology is the faithful proclamation of the Word of God in Asia that gives importance to Asian contexts.<sup>1</sup> Today we are gathered together with the same purpose of articulating and proclaiming the Wesleyan message of holiness in the Asia-Pacific region. As Wesleyans, the message of holiness is central to our proclamation of God's full salvation. We believe that the full Gospel involves the message of holiness—the very reason why Jesus suffered and died outside the city gate of Jerusalem (Heb. 13:12).

This task of articulating and proclaiming holiness in Asia and the Pacific contexts has long been overdue. Wesleyan theology of holiness, for several decades, has been dominated by the Western thought, leading to our inefficiency and ineffectiveness in communicating it contextually at the local level. For example, in the Philippines most Filipino Nazarenes do not fully understand the doctrine of holiness and are not able to explain it to others. This is so because holiness theology continues to wear its western jacket. Hence the majority of the Filipino Nazarenes remain in what I call a *theological fog*—believing but never understanding.

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<sup>1</sup>Bong Rin Ro and Ruth Eshenaur, eds., *The Bible and Theology In Asian Contexts: An Evangelical Perspective on Asian Theology* (Bangalore: Asia Theological Association, 1984), 4.

Doubtless, we Filipinos need to hear the message of holiness. I personally believe that we, as Wesleyans, offer a better, if not the best, message. Our message is the answer to the Filipino search for true and meaningful spirituality—the true hope of our motherland. But it has to be communicated contextually.

And we who call ourselves Wesleyans and advocates of the doctrine of holiness must take the challenge upon ourselves and seek to communicate holiness to our own people—in my case the Filipino people—in their own context.

The path to contextual communication of holiness is not easy. The road is rough and the journey is tough. However, it is a road we have to pass if we want our message be heard and understood. Now is a good time to begin our journey. Today I would like to delineate for you the challenges and needs in communicating holiness contextually to the Filipinos—the path to a Filipino theology of holiness.

## **II. Challenges In Communicating Holiness to the Filipinos**

A theology that fails to consider the significance of the context faces the greater potential of being misunderstood and misapplied. Hence, in our communication, we must engage in the process of understanding the context and face the challenges cultures pose to us. Wilson Chow rightly says, “The context places a demand on us that we cannot ignore.”<sup>2</sup> In the Philippines, theological reflection must address several challenges.

### **A. Cultural Values**

Though Filipinos have been influenced by modernism, many have remained traditional.<sup>3</sup> Traditional values continue to affect and shape the

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<sup>2</sup>Wilson B. Chow, “Biblical Foundations for Evangelical Theology in the Third World,” in *The Bible and Theology in Asian Contexts: An Evangelical Perspective on Asian Theology*, ed. Bong Rin Ro and Ruth Eshenaur (Bangalore: Asia Theological Association, 1984), 81.

<sup>3</sup>According to F. Landa Jocano, there are two models of Filipino values: Exogenous (foreign model) and Indigenous (traditional). The exogenous model represents the legal and formal. The best example of this is the bureaucracy in the Philippine government inherited from the western culture (Europe and America). The indigenous model represents that traditional and non-formal, which guides the

Filipino understanding of himself and his *sitz im leben*. Outwardly, a Filipino may be considered a part of modern society. But his *loob* (inner self) is still governed by the values he possesses from his traditional orientations that determine his thoughts, emotions, and behavior.

There are two major traditional orientations that surface among the Filipinos: the family system and the *hiya* concept. Like other Asian countries Filipinos are family-oriented. Interpersonal and social relations revolve around *kadugo* (blood ties), *kasambahay* (marriage), *kamag-anak* (kinship) and *compadrenos* (ritual family)—terms which define the Filipino family. Each member of the family is expected to behave in relation to the rest of the family. Roles, statuses, duties, privileges and obligations are clearly defined to protect the family.<sup>4</sup> Love and loyalty are first and foremost given to the family. Hence, Filipinos have the natural tendency to be exclusive at the expense of wider social relations. Nacpil, a Filipino theologian, believes that due to narrow family and kinship loyalties, Filipinos have shown lack of civic consciousness and concern for the national interest.<sup>5</sup>

The Filipinos are also shame-oriented, that is, their major concern is social approval, acceptance by a group, and belonging to a group. Their behavior is generally dependent on what others will think, say, or do.<sup>6</sup> This is shown in the concept of *hiya*, which could mean a sense of shame, embarrassment, inferiority, or timidity. *Hiya* strongly controls the behavior of the Filipino. Let me give you three major areas of Filipino behavior affected by *hiya*: first, it affects his self-esteem (*amor propio*) and his public relations. His *pagsunod* (obedience), *pag-galang* (respect) and *pakikisama*

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Filipino subconscious behavior. Jocano believes that the indigenous model is embedded in the deeper strata of our individual and collective subconscious. F. Landa Jocano, "Issues and Challenges in Filipino Value Formation," in *Filipino Value System*, vol. 1 (Quezon City, Philippines: Punlad Research House, 1992), 1-22.

<sup>4</sup>Some believe that the Filipino system has served to strengthen the notorious practice of nepotism and favoritism in the social spheres; others believe that it strengthens the Filipino traditional politics.

<sup>5</sup>Emerito P. Nacpil, "A Gospel for the New Filipino," in *Asian Voices in Christian Theology*, edited by Gerald H. Anderson (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1976), 127.

<sup>6</sup>Isabel S. Panopio and Realidad Santico-Rolda, *Cultural Anthropology from a Philippine Perspective* (Quezon City, Phil.: Katha Publications, Co, n.d.), 70.

(public relation) may all be attributed to *hiya*. For example, Filipinos have difficulty saying “no” to a request or invitation because of *hiya*. It also manifests in the Filipino use of polite language such as Sir or Boss. Likewise, out of *pakikisama*, Filipinos resort to indirect approaches, euphemism and ambiguous expressions to avoid conflict.

Second, *hiya* also affects the Filipino ability to excel in life. The average Filipino usually feels inhibited to speak out or to act for fear he may fail or lose “face.” The belief in fate supports the unwillingness to disturb the status quo as implied in the *hiya* concept. *Hiya* in turn supports the feeling that there is nothing we can do about our “assigned status” in life.<sup>7</sup> Third, *hiya* affects the Filipino morality. His ability to confront and rebuke wrong doings is limited by *hiya*. Corruption, red tape (bribe) and nepotism are also traceable to *hiya*.

In our effort to communicate holiness, we must deal with these value orientations. How do we liberate Filipinos from an exclusive structure of social relations and false sense of shame? These orientations are potential dangers in our communication of holiness to the Filipinos if not properly addressed. The family orientation, on the one hand, limits the Filipino understanding of love and commitment. On the other hand, *hiya*, though it may help the Filipino achieve his potential, opens a path to dishonesty, hypocrisy, and euphemism. Such practices do not agree with the principles of holiness.

## B. Socio-Economic and Political Issues

The socio-economic and political situation of the Filipinos is another challenge. If the message of holiness has to be relevant to culture, it cannot ignore major cultural issues such as socio-economic and political issues. This is not to say that we must allow these cultural issues to define our message of holiness. Theology, though having to be culturally relevant, must remain biblical.

Poverty is a major economic issue in the Philippines. Why talk about poverty? Gabino Mendoza believes that poverty deals with the Philippines’

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<sup>7</sup>Rodrigo D. Tano, “Toward an Evangelical Asia Theology,” in *The Bible and Theology in Asian Contexts: An Evangelical Perspective on Asian Theology*, ed. Bong Rin Ro and Ruth Eshenaur (Bangalore: Asia Theological Association, 1984), 111.

most crucial problem.<sup>8</sup> Filipinos have had to deal with this issue. In fact, most of the socio-political struggles that we have as a nation today are caused directly or indirectly by this problem. The government has always considered poverty a priority and has vowed to lessen, if not eliminate, it in the country. But despite the government's massive programs, poverty remains a major national problem.

Poverty is widespread in the Philippines. In 1985, researchers showed that 50% to 74% of all Filipino families lived in poverty. This means that there were about 4 to 6 million Filipino families in relative or absolute poverty.<sup>9</sup> Statistics had risen since then and continue to rise. Analysts say that if nothing is done about it, many Filipinos will die of starvation, illnesses or diseases related to poverty in the near future.

Poverty results in moral degradation, educational ignorance, material deprivation, social injustices and spiritual bankruptcy. All of these are evident in the lives of many Filipinos. How then can our message of holiness answer the challenge of poverty in the Philippines? This is an issue that we must deal with as we seek to communicate holiness to suffering Filipinos whose mental orientation is towards survival rather than the existential meaning of their souls. It has been often asked, "What is holiness to a hungry Filipino?"

Along with the Filipino problem of poverty is the problem of politics. Politics is intertwined with Filipino life. It is almost everywhere: in homes, schools, the church, business, and the government. Though the Philippines is a democratic country, the political situation is unique.<sup>10</sup> Several problems confront Philippine politics. First, politics has been largely dominated by the elite of our society who use their money, military position, and manpower to gain a position in the government. These

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<sup>8</sup>In Ruth S. Callanta, *Poverty: The Philippine Scenario* (Manila, Philippines: Bookmark Inc., 1988), ix.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 8-9.

<sup>10</sup>Philippine politics has undergone several political experiences such as tribalism, conquest, colonization, unification, centralization, revolution, decentralization, war, liberation, independence and nationalization. They have been Sinonized (Chinese), Hispanized (Spanish), Americanized (American), and more recently Filipinized (Philippines). Leadership has at one time or another been traditional, charismatic, and legal-rational.

politicians are generally driven by selfish desire for power and prestige. Their philosophy of leadership is tainted with greed and corruption.

Second, the electoral process in the Philippine is marred by several problems. Candidates resort to vote buying, dirty campaigns, illegal donations, cheating (*Dagdag-Bawas*) and many other methods to ensure victory. People generally show lack of political maturity. Hence, Philippine politics can produce leaders that are either tyrannical or corrupt, who abuse their power and use their office to promote their own good and not the welfare of the nation.

Third, despite the government's massive campaign against it, corruption continues to be the major problem of almost all government agencies. Red tape (bribe), fixers (illegal assistants), and falsification of public documents are just some of the problems in the government.

What role do the Wesleyan tradition and its message of holiness play in the political life of the Filipino? How do we develop a theology of holiness that addresses the political problems of the country? These are some of the questions we must deal with in our articulation of our message—a challenge that we cannot ignore but must take seriously.

### **C. Religious Beliefs and Practices**

Filipinos, like many other people, are very religious. Filipino religiosity is seen in the country's diverse religious beliefs and practices. Fernando G. Elesterio writes, "And speaking of the Filipino, it may be said that part of his humanity is made up of his religious beliefs and practices derived from Islam, Roman Catholicism, American Protestantism, or from more ancient roots—that is, from elements which are considered as pre-Islamic or pre-Christian in the context of Philippine cultural history."<sup>11</sup> Hence, one seeking to understand Filipinos or to communicate with them needs an understanding of their religious beliefs and practices. A failure to understand Filipino religiosity is a failure to understand their being.

The Philippines is a predominantly Roman Catholic country. The majority of Filipinos profess to be members of the Roman Catholic Church. Roman Catholicism in the Philippines is unique. It is a mixture of Christian and Animistic beliefs. Animism in the Philippines is pre-

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<sup>11</sup>Fernando G. Elesterio, *Three Essays on Philippine Religious Culture* (Manila, Philippines: De La Salle University Press, 1989), 3.

magellanic (Pre-Roman Catholicism). Our ancestors believed in the supernatural and spirit beings (*anitos*). They perceived them as ultimately responsible for the good things that mankind enjoys. These supernatural and spirit beings were the source or creators of things in the world. Events in the world were also ultimately traced to them, including human sufferings and death, the rain and the drought, the thunder and the lightning, and many observable phenomena which need not only a proximate but also an ultimate explanation.<sup>12</sup> Fiestas originated from the practice of appeasing the spirits to restore peace and prosperity in the land. These animistic beliefs were adopted by the Roman Catholics and replaced by Christian beliefs. For example, belief in the *anitos* (spirits) was replaced by veneration of saints and angels; belief in God took over from *Bathala* (the native supreme deity); the *babaylans* (native priests) were replaced by Catholic priests, etc. Fernando Elesterio writes, "This replacement, however, was not total. For while outwardly the Filipinos appeared very orthodox in belief and practice, they were secretly still believers in many ways of their traditional pre-Christian practices."<sup>13</sup> This mixture is labeled as "folk Catholicism."<sup>14</sup> Folk Catholicism embraces both beliefs, though such is not the official stance of the Roman Catholic Church. However, the church tolerates animistic acts on grounds that they do not contradict the impor-

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>14</sup>A number of books have been written on Folk Catholicism. Some attack the practice, while others do not. Father Vitaliano R. Gorospe writes, "Consequently, even today, especially in the rural areas, we find merely the external trappings of Catholic belief and practice superimposed on the original pattern of Christian superstitions and rituals" (*Christian Renewal of Filipino Values* [Manila: Ateneo de Manila University, 1966], 37). Father Jaime Bulatao, in his article, contends that Filipinos possess two inconsistent religious systems. He describes "split-level Christianity" as the "co existence within the same person of two or more thought-and-behavior systems which are inconsistent with each other." ("Split-Level Christianity," in *Philippine Sociological Review*, XIII:2 [April]: 2; Cf. Leonardo Mercado, *Filipino Religious Psychology* [Tacloban City: Divine Word University Publications, 1977]).



tant teachings of the church. Rodney Henry calls this practice “conspiracy of silence.”<sup>15</sup>

Both official and unofficial Roman Catholic doctrines pervade the beliefs and practices of Filipinos. The teachings and doctrines of the church evidently influence Filipino understanding of spirituality. The Filipino sense of morality (holiness) is based on the Roman Catholic beliefs and practices that are embedded in the culture.

Despite the Roman Catholic predominance in the country, other religious sects find their place in the Philippine soil.<sup>16</sup> Except for the Protestants, these religious sects are considered to be indigenous. The rise of these indigenous sects may be attributed to Filipino religious ingenuity—the ability to create, organize and propagate religious propaganda.

A leading indigenous sect is the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* (Church of Christ). Its founder and leader was Felix Manalo, who was born on May 10, 1866, in a barrio called Calzada in the Municipality of Taguig, Metro Manila.<sup>17</sup> The *Iglesia Ni Cristo* (INC) is unique. Its church building structure, teachings, worship and witnessing are all uniform. This uniformity, they say, symbolizes their unity as a church. INC believes that it is the true church called to propagate the true gospel of Christ. Furthermore, it believes that a person can be saved not only by believing in Christ, but also by joining their church. It asserts that outside the INC church there is no salvation.

Another indigenous sect worth studying is the *Iglesia Watawat ng Labi* (The Church of the Banner of the Race). This sect is known as an ultra-nationalist indigenous sect. The sect honors Dr. Jose Rizal, the Philippines’ national hero, as their god. Besides the Bible, it has its own literature (*El Filibusterismo* and *Noli Me Tangere*) written by Rizal. The founders of the Church of the Banner of the Race, while searching for gold, allegedly heard

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<sup>15</sup>Rodney L. Henry, *Filipino Spirit World: A Challenge to the Church* (Manila, Philippines: OMF Literature Inc., 1986), 12.

<sup>16</sup>I have chosen not to include the religion of Islam, though it is a major religion in the country, because of its unique orientations and geographical limitations (its influence is only in the South). Islam warrants a separate theological reflection in the Philippines.

<sup>17</sup>Elesterio, *Three Essays*, 20.

a voice (*Banal na Tinig*) telling them not to search for the treasure that rots and rusts but for one that would lead them to eternal life.

A common characteristic of these indigenous sects is their nationalistic orientation. They take pride in their being a Filipino church, whose beginnings are indigenous and founders are Filipinos. Furthermore, they take an active role in our government and in some social issues that affect the nations. Along with the Roman Catholic Church, these sects have become major players in the changes in our government.

Holiness articulation and communication must take into consideration these diverse religious experiences of the Filipinos. How should we address folk-Christianity or split-level-Christianity? How should we express holiness contextually so as to avoid localizing the message? How is the Wesleyan morality different from the already high morality of the Filipinos as a result of their varied religious experiences? What role should the holiness message play in national social issues and social change?

#### **D. The Filipino World-View**

Despite the growing influence of rationalism in the Philippines, Filipinos are still non-rational in their view of the world. They still view the world as one over which they have little or no control. Unlike rationalism, success or failure is largely dependent upon supernatural beings or spirits. This is evident in the Filipino concept of *babala na* (a form of fatalism). Panopio believes that this fatalistic outlook rests on the strong dependence on the “spirits” as these will take care of everything for everybody. It is the Filipinos’ inability to control circumstances that makes them resort to divine resignation.

Moreover, Filipinos view life in the world in terms of what they call *gulong ng palad* (the wheel of fortune), which rolls on inevitably with its ups and downs but leads to nowhere. They have learned to accept life as it is without question—enduring the difficulties of life and celebrating its goodness (through extravagant *fiesta*). Filipinos have little hope for new things. Life is marked by repetition of events over which one has no power to change or control. It is up to *Bathala* (Supreme deity) to determine the course of one’s personal life and of history. For example, what happened in 1986, when President Marcos was thrown out of power, was believed to be a divine act. Vitaliano R. Gorospe writes, “The power of the Filipino

people cannot be explained without recourse to God's power and providential love and care of them in their history."<sup>18</sup>

These divine resignation and cyclic view of life must be addressed in our theological reflection. How should holiness provide the balance between divine will and human responsibility? Is holiness compatible with *babala na* or do they contradict each other? Will holiness provide the needed spirit of freedom for Filipinos to set themselves free from fatalism and escapism on life's reality, and to assume greater responsibility for his life and his world?

### **III. Needs In Communicating Holiness To the Filipinos**

Having surveyed some of the pressing issues which serve as challenges to the communication of holiness in the Philippines, we are now ready to discuss the needs in communicating holiness to Filipinos. As Wesleyans, we believe in communicating holiness contextually. This is undertaken through the process of theological reflection through which the text enters into a dialogue with the context.

In our effort to communicate holiness in the context of the Filipino culture, we must not allow any distortion of our message. Though it is legitimate to take into consideration cultural issues, we must guard our theological endeavor against the abuses of the Scripture and uncritical use of the culture.

#### **A. The Need for Valid Contextualization**

Articulating and communicating holiness to Filipinos calls for valid contextualization.<sup>19</sup> Contextualization, according to Filipino theologian Rodrigo Tano, is the process by which truth is embodied and translated in

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<sup>18</sup>Douglas J. Elwood, *Toward a Theology of People Power: Reflection on the Philippine February Phenomenon* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1988), 17.

<sup>19</sup>Contextualization has taken many forms in Asia. In his article "Contextualization: Asia Theology," Bong Rin Ro categorizes Asian theology in four ways: (1) syncretism, (2) accommodation, (3) situational theology, (4) biblically oriented theology relevant to Asian needs. See, *The Bible and Theology in Asian Contexts: An Evangelical Perspective on Asian Theology*, ed. Bong Rin Ro and Ruth Eshenaur (Bangalore: Asia Theological Association, 1984), 69.

a concrete historical situation.<sup>20</sup> This process involves a dialogue between the text (biblical truths) and the context (Filipino culture). The intent of this dialogue is the clear understanding of the biblical truth so that people may positively respond in faith, without vagueness to the Gospel of Christ.

Contextualization must take precedence in our effort to communicate the Wesleyan message of holiness. Donald L. Stults writes, “It is impossible to write theology without reference to a specific culture because language is tied to culture.”<sup>21</sup> He adds, “To communicate theologically is to express *biblical* truth in terms understandable to a particular group of people whose culture determines the mode of expressions” (italic is mine).<sup>22</sup> The context is indispensable to theology and its communication.

This theological discipline has to be done, however, with caution. Contextualization, if not properly guarded and guided, may lead to syncretism—a theological fallacy that distorts the biblical truth. There are two kinds of syncretism: 1) cultural and 2) theological.<sup>23</sup> Bruce Nicholls says, “Cultural syncretism results from the uncritical use of symbols and practices of the receptor culture.”<sup>24</sup> This is true to Roman Catholicism in the Philippines where cultural practices, mostly pagan, are “christianized” in the name of contextualization and at the expense of the truth. For example, Joe De Mesa, a Catholic theologian, writes, “God’s will is construed very often in terms of *suwerte* (luck) and *kapalaran* (fate).”<sup>25</sup> He adds, “Saints are seen as spirits which have particular powers and priests are regarded like the native *babaylans* (pagan priests).”<sup>26</sup> Such practices allow the culture to assign meaning into the text.

<sup>20</sup>Tano, “Toward An Evangelical Asian Theology,” 94.

<sup>21</sup>Donald Leroy Stults, *Developing an Asian Evangelical Theology* (Mandaluyong, Philippines: OMF Literature Inc., 1989), 135.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>23</sup>Bruce Nicholls, “A Living Theology for Asian Churches: Some Reflections on the Contextualization-Syncretism Debate,” in *The Bible and Theology in Asian Contexts: An Evangelical Perspective on Asian Theology*, ed. Bong Rin Ro and Ruth Eshenaur (Bangalore: Asia Theological Association, 1984), 126.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup>Joe De Mesa, “Becoming A Filipino Christian,” in *Currents in Philippine Theology* (Quezon City, Phils.: Institute of Religion and Culture, Phils., 1992), 8.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*

Theological syncretism, on the other hand, occurs when biblical truths are diluted to cultural beliefs. For example, *The Iglesia Watawat Ng Labi* (The Church of the Banner of the Race) interpreted the divine trinity as referring to *Jehovah*, *Jesus*, and *Jose* (a Filipino name).<sup>27</sup> This is a clear distortion of the Christian concept of trinity. In his article, Nicholls discusses the nature and danger of theological syncretism clearly when he writes:

Theological syncretism seeks to reconcile or unite concepts and beliefs that go to the very heart of culture, namely, world-views and ideologies, moral values and practices. It begins by denying the finality of revelation in Jesus Christ and the Scriptures as historically trustworthy and infallible and as propositionally verbalized interpreted truth. It assumes that the Bible is so culturally conditioned that we cannot know with assurance what is the Word of God. In other words, it is assumed that the sovereignty of God's self-revelation does not extend to his control over the shaping of Biblical cultures nor the overshadowing of the Biblical writers, who themselves belonged to particular cultures, so that what they wrote was not concurrent with the will of God.<sup>28</sup>

In our effort to communicate holiness contextually, we must avoid syncretism at all cost. Contextualization is not "christianizing" cultural beliefs and practices that are pagan in nature. In order to do this, we must pay attention to four areas in our attempt to contextualize holiness.

First, we must uphold God's revelation and His holiness. This guards us against cultural pagan beliefs and practices embedded in the religious experiences of the Filipinos. God's revelation and His holiness are two of the most explicit theological truths founded in the Bible. The Bible bears witness to God's revelation of himself: Creator (Yahweh), Savior (Jesus), and Comforter (Holy Spirit). It also speaks of God's holiness: God is holy in nature, in character and in action. God's revelation and His holiness set the limit of contextualization and provide the foundation for our articulation and communication.

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<sup>27</sup>Translated from the original Tagalog version, this belief sounds this way:

Jehovah, Jesus, Jose  
 They are One only,  
 The reason why they vary:  
 To conceal their identity.

<sup>28</sup>Nicholls, "A Living Theology," 127.

Second, we must assert Christ's superiority and the universality of his lordship. Contextual holiness theology in the Philippines must affirm the fact that Christ now stands as the Lord of all (Phil. 2:9-11). Our affirmation of the universal lordship of Christ clears the culture of all pagan beliefs and practices and puts culture under the dominion of Christ. Cultural values must be reexamined and redefined in the light of Christ's value revealed in his life and teachings. For example, the Filipino family orientation must be redefined. Jesus demanded that love for the family must not supersede love for God (Luke 9:57-62, 14:26). Love for God serves as the basis for our love for others. This kind of love is not exclusive but inclusive. Love treats everybody as neighbor: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:25-37, Mark 12:31). When this happens, Filipinos will be freed from limited social relations and will learn to take personal responsibility for others. In Christ, love for others becomes operational and transformational. Likewise, the concept of *hija* must also be reexamined in the light of Christ's lordship and teachings. On the one hand, the concept of *hija* could enrich and inform Christ's teaching on sin and repentance. *Hija* is a powerful image of sin as guilt or shame, which can lead to repentance—an action which God awaits from all his erring children. On the other hand, *hija* must be transformed into power. Jesus promised the believers that they will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on them (Acts 1:8). Paul also said, "For God did not give us the spirit of timidity (*hija*) but of power, of love and of self-discipline" (2 Tim. 1:7). With Christ's forgiveness and the Holy Spirit indwelling presence, there is no need for *hija*.

Third, we must affirm the divine-human interaction.<sup>29</sup> Affirmation of the divine-human interaction provides the balance between the sovereignty of God and man's free will. Filipinos must realize their freedom in life and the dynamism of faith, which are lacking in their cultural values. Filipino holiness contextualization, therefore, must emphasize human responsibility to correct the Filipino distorted view of God as one who wills and causes everything to happen as reflected in the Filipino values *babala na* (come what may), *itinalaga ng maykapal* (endowed by God), *gulong ng palad* (wheel of fortune). A biblical concept that must be emphasized in support of the divine-human interaction is the image of God in man (Gen. 1:26).

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<sup>29</sup>A borrowed term from Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1972).

The image of God provides the basis for man's freedom and his moral responsibility over creation and life.

Lastly, we must use a holistic approach to contextualization. Ethnotheology is limited because it compartmentalizes cultural issues and addresses them independently from a narrow biblical point of view and is often economically and politically motivated. We must not compartmentalize issues such as theology of poverty, theology of power, theology of spirits, etc. We need a theology that promotes wholeness. A holistic theology must address the total person and seek to minister to the total needs of the person. It is this kind of theology that needs to be demonstrated in the articulation of our theology in the Philippines. There is no room for isolating the individual from his community and his spiritual needs from the physical needs. To do so is to truncate theology.

Liberation theology in the Philippines is a form of truncated theology which addresses the social and physical needs but neglects personal and spiritual needs. It seeks to resolve alienation from our neighbor but neglects alienation from God. Such theology fails to address the total person. Evangelicals, on the other hand, have the tendency to truncate theology by focusing on the personal and spiritual needs. To avoid this, holiness theology must emphasize both love and devotion for God, and love and devotion for men.

## **B. The Need for Socio-Economic and Political Relevance of Holiness Doctrine**

The goal of contextual theology must not only be clarity of message but also relevancy to the receptor culture.<sup>30</sup> Relevancy is attained only through addressing questions and issues that are apparent and important to culture. For a theology to be truly contextual and relevant, it must become part of the culture, defining and addressing cultural issues in the light of the biblical truths. Emerito P. Nacpil, a Filipino theologian, rightly states, "A

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<sup>30</sup>Stults' judgment on the motive of Asian theologians in writing their own theology falls short of understanding the cry for relevancy. It is not for recognition that we do theology in Asia, as Stults seems to look at the Asian theological endeavor, but for relevancy in culture. Western theology, for so long, has not been able to address Asian issues simply because it is written from a different perspective with different issues. And it is for this reason that theologians in Asia cry for Asian theology—a theology that is true to text and context.

responsible theology is attained mainly when the Christian faith is interpreted in conscious relationship to the fundamental problems of human life as they appear in specific forms and in particular environments.”<sup>31</sup> The Wesleyan message of holiness faces the challenge of incarnation theology. Holiness must find its place in the culture’s life and existence for it to become relevant. The best example for this is God himself, who in his desire to redeem humanity from sin and its consequences chose to communicate to the people of Israel in their struggles. His revelation of himself to the people of Israel was in the context of Israel’s search for freedom and nationhood (Exodus 3:7-10).

John Wesley himself championed theological relevancy. His theology of holiness was not driven by a desire for intellectual supremacy or scholarly work. Rather, John Wesley sought to be relevant to his culture. Wynkoop rightly observes that,

The lure of Wesley is not primarily his theology; that was traditional enough. He was not an innovator. The contribution of Wesley is in his ability to put theology into flesh and blood. The goal was theology incarnated in mere man.<sup>32</sup>

If we must be truly Wesleyans, we must seek to be relevant to culture as Wesley was. A truly Wesleyan holiness theology is a contextual holiness theology.

A Filipino theology of holiness, therefore, must be relevant to the Filipino struggles and life issues. It must provide the balance between personal holiness and communal holiness. This balance is what is lacking in the Filipino religiosity—having personal piety but lacking social integrity. The gospel of holiness must not only be interpreted as personal freedom from sin and death, but also freedom from religious, social, and political oppressions (Luke 4:18-19). Nacpil discusses the meaning of salvation not only in the context of man as an individual but also in his national context. He believes that salvation goes beyond personal freedom from sin and death. He says that in the communal life, it signifies deliverance from structures of cruelty and injustice and the building up of a society of *shalom*.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup>Nacpil, “A Gospel for the New Filipino,” 117.

<sup>32</sup>Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love*, 78.

<sup>33</sup>Nacpil, “A Gospel for the New Filipino,” 129.



Theological cry for relevancy has led Filipino theology into a different arena in the Philippines. Both the Roman Catholic and Protestant liberal theologians have embraced in principle and practice liberation theology. The Philippine struggle for freedom, justice and equality led to this uncritical hold on liberation theology—a theology that has lost its spirituality.<sup>34</sup> Its agenda has become too culturally oriented and politically motivated. Though theology must continue to address cultural issues, its meaning must remain biblical. The cry for freedom, justice and equality must all be defined and addressed from the biblical context and perspective. Contextual theology must not allow a shift of meaning.

Cultural relevancy is a serious challenge for us Wesleyans. Our message of holiness is relevant in itself. It is our story that must be told around the world—a story of love and life. John Wesley writes, “So impossible it is to keep our religion from being seen unless we cast it away; so vain is the thought of hiding the light, unless by putting it out.”<sup>35</sup> We dare not keep it secret and irrelevant. To avoid this, we must take the following considerations as necessary steps to cultural relevancy: first, we must continue to address issues and questions apparent to culture. It is the only way to meet the challenge of culture. This means that our message of holiness must be “deculturized.” We should not desire to articulate our theology from the perspective of Western culture and theology. In addressing cultural issues, we must interpret the Word of God in the light of our own contexts. For example, in addressing the socio-economic and political issues, we must develop a theology of holiness that deals with poverty and power—themes that are less important to the affluent Western world. An imposition of western theology is a danger to cultural relevancy.

Second, we must acknowledge the authority of the Bible over culture. Holiness theology must be built on the authority of the Scripture. David Ackerman, my co-professor at APNTS, states in his address, “We stand in

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<sup>34</sup>For a detailed discussion on theological critique on liberation theology, see Bruce J. Nicholls, “Hermeneutics, Theology, and Culture with Special reference to Hindu Culture,” in *The Bible and Theology in Asian Contexts: An Evangelical Perspective on Asian Theology*, ed. Bong Rin Ro and Ruth Eshenaur (Bangalore: Asia Theological Association, 1984), 253.

<sup>35</sup>Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater, eds., *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 200.

the tradition of Martin Luther who acknowledged the authority of the Bible and applied his supposition, *sola scriptura* (scripture alone), to counter the abuses of the Roman Catholic Church of his day.<sup>36</sup> The Scripture alone is our canon of faith. The Bible must set the agenda of our theology that must be appropriated by the people in their own context(s). The Bible is God's living word to people of all cultures. Hence, theology is relevant. An unscriptural theology is irrelevant to culture and the Bible.

Third, we must affirm John Wesley's concept of social holiness. Wesley knew no holiness but social holiness. He said,

Directly opposite to this (mysticism) is the Gospel of Christ. Solitary religion is not to be found there. "Holy Solitaries" is a phrase no more consistent with the Gospel than holy adulterers. The Gospel of Christ knows no religion, but social; no holiness, but social holiness. Faith working by love is the length and breadth and depth and height of Christian perfection.<sup>37</sup>

Social holiness should lead to social concern for the poor and powerless in ways that uplifts their status and gives them dignity as persons created in the image of God. John Wesley was careful not to interpret holiness as simply personal piety. The evidence for holiness, to Wesley, was the recognizable social fruits of love.

Lastly, we must assert the soteriological goal of the Scripture. It cannot be denied that the Bible is not a political nor an economic book but a book on God's redemptive plan. Focusing on political and economic issues without emphasis on salvation might make us relevant to culture but irrelevant to the Scripture and so deny our theology. Holiness is soteriological by nature. The Bible commands us to pursue holiness without which no one will see the Lord (Heb. 12:14).

### **C. The Need for Biblical Theology of Holiness**

Filipino theology of holiness must be founded on the Bible. I strongly believe that all theology, whether contextual or ethno-theological, must be biblical. Biblical theology is the foundation of contextual theology.

<sup>36</sup>David A. Ackerman, "Proclaiming Biblical Holiness for the 21st Century: The Task of Wesleyan Biblical Studies" (Photocopy), 6. An induction address given at Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary on January 11, 2000.

<sup>37</sup>G. Osborn, ed., *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley, vol. 1* (London: Wesleyan Methodist Conference Office, 1868), xxii.

George E. Ladd defines biblical theology as the discipline which sets forth the message of the books of the Bible in their historical setting.<sup>38</sup> Unlike liberal theologians, we in the Wesleyan tradition highly regard the historical context of the Scripture.

We have with us the Holy Scripture as the sole witness to God's historical revelation in words and in acts that culminated in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. We believe that the Scripture is God's word for all people for all generations, regardless of culture. Its meaning has not changed. The task of theology is to first understand the text in its own context. Filipino theology of holiness must be rooted in the Scripture. Only when we ground our theology in the Bible can we eliminate the danger of placing the context above the text and so avoid theological and cultural syncretism.

In seeking to understand the meaning of the Scripture for us today, we must recognize the importance of setting it within its own context. Only by considering the context of the text can sound biblical theology be possible and commendable. We reject all interpretations that set aside the historical context. We believe that God's word is embedded in the historical culture, which God used as a vehicle of His self-revelation. Therefore, seeking to understand the Scripture apart from its historical context is an activity in futility.

As such, holiness hermeneutics must be guided by sound exegetical study of the Scripture. Filipino holiness hermeneutics must take the historical-grammatical approach to the Scripture as our objective tool along with the Filipino cultural preunderstandings. Holiness hermeneutics involves a dialogue between the text and the interpreter as representative of the context. This dialogue involves speaking and listening as well as reflection and identification. However, I agree with other theologians in saying that the historical-grammatical approach alone will not bring us to fuller understanding of the biblical truth.<sup>39</sup> A fuller understanding of the biblical truth necessitates faith—based on our knowledge and experience of the Living Word. Wesley believed that theology must be written in the

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<sup>38</sup>George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993 rev. edition), 20.

<sup>39</sup>Ro and Eshenaur, *The Bible and Theology*, 6.

context of personal faith in God, that is the true faith of “a believer.”<sup>40</sup> Similarly, William W. Klein and others say, “Only the one who believes and trusts in God can truly understand what God has spoken in his Word.”<sup>41</sup> In other words, an interpreter must be a believer to fully grasp the meaning of the text. The Bible declares, “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him” (Hebrew 11:6).

Furthermore, the interpreter must interact with the church and the culture. Interaction with the church and the culture helps deepen holiness hermeneutics. On the one hand, the church witnesses and confirms interpretation. The church judges it from the perspective of her history and mission. John Wesley had high regard for Christian tradition. His hermeneutics is inseparable to his tradition. Holiness apart from tradition is inconceivable and impossible. On the other hand, the culture receives and analyzes holiness interpretation. It is the culture that declares the interpretation of holiness cultural validity on the basis of its relevancy.

#### **D. The Need for Christian Love**

Finally, let me discuss the need for Christian love in our articulation and communication of the Wesleyan message of holiness. Our entire theological endeavor must be driven by a motivation of love. There can be no greater motive than love. It defines not only our theology of holiness, but also our communication of it. The apostle Paul, a great theologian and a contextualizer of the Gospel, speaks of the necessity of love in all that we do (I Cor. 13). A theology without love is nothing.

We do theology today and seek to communicate it to the people not because we want to be recognized among the best of theologians in the world, but because we want to share the love of God in us with the highest motive of that divine love. The people whom we seek to address in our articulation and communication are persons and love is a uniquely personal thing. Wynkoop writes, “Love demands the concept of the dynamic in personhood. It is its inner drive, its outreach, its atmosphere, its social

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<sup>40</sup>Donald A. D. Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Light and Life Communication, 1990), 98.

<sup>41</sup>William W. Klein, et al., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1993), 82.

cohesion. It is fellowship, relationship, and sociality.”<sup>42</sup> The apostle John also tells us that love is the reason God sent His son into the world (John 3:16). God knows what a person is and what he needs.

The goal of theology is service. The Filipino theology of holiness must seek to serve the church and the country. If it does otherwise, it is not worth doing and communicating. Filipinos need a theology that will liberate them from all forces that hinder and limit them from enjoying God and his blessings, and so attain the fullness of life. We dare not do theology that will further add to the ongoing and seemingly never ending sufferings of the Filipinos. As the Filipinos often say it, enough is enough. Only a theology with the highest motive of love can help the Filipinos achieve the divine purpose and plan for themselves. Like the Lord Jesus Christ, we must not seek to be served but to serve the people. Love seeks not its own good, but the good of others. As Wynkoop says, “It destroys indifference, isolationism, the pride that cuts off fellowship, partiality, aloofness, and exclusiveness.”<sup>43</sup>

Love is the dynamic of Wesleyanism. It is the spirit of our theology. It must also be the motive of our contextualization and the force of our communication.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The task of articulating and communicating holiness to the Filipinos is not easy. This delineation of challenges and needs is just but a beginning. The challenge is for the Filipino church to realize its theological task of articulating holiness to her people. This task must be the concern of everyone in the church—the people, the pastors, the educators, and the leaders. It is a divine call, a holy task where the future of the church and its doctrine of holiness are dependent.

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<sup>42</sup>Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love*, 28.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 29.

## **Culture and the Beauty of Holiness**

### **Reflections from the South Pacific**

Neville Bartle

Declare his glory among the nations,  
     his marvelous deeds among all peoples.  
 For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise;  
     he is to be feared above all gods.  
 Ascribe to the LORD, O families of nations,  
     ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.  
 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;  
     bring an offering and come into his courts.  
 Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness;  
     tremble before him, all the earth.  
 (Psalms 96:3-4, 7-9)

These words of the Psalmist are very relevant to this conference because they combine the themes of worship, mission to other nations, and the splendor and beauty of holiness. I want us to think about the phrase “beauty of holiness” rather than “message of holiness.” The phrase “message of holiness” implies that something is given and merely needs to be translated with the least possible change. “Beauty” brings a sense of wonder, awe, appreciation, and even worship, but it is harder to define, for the concept of beauty is influenced to some extent by one’s culture. How does the holiness of God reveal itself in human cultures? Just as white light is split into many colors when passed through a prism, so the white love of God is revealed in many different colors when transmitted through various cultures.

I would especially like to thank Brent Hulett and the others who had the vision to call this conference around the theme of “The Challenge of

Culture: Articulating and Proclaiming the Wesleyan Holiness Message in the Asia Pacific Region.” Too often the church has largely ignored the close relationship between theology and culture. Theology has been seen to be absolutely true rather than being a human and, therefore, cultural understanding of the truth. Too often missionaries and theological educators saw their task as finding ways to transmit their theology into new cultures with as little change as possible (Hiebert 1987:105). If we fail to relate theology to the cultural concerns of our listeners, then much of what we say will be perceived as irrelevant. If theology does not meet the heart-felt needs of people, it is perceived as powerless and/or irrelevant. If theology does not relate to the local culture, it is perceived as foreign, and on the basis of its perceived foreignness, Christianity is often rejected. One African scholar writes, “The observed lack of commitment of the average African Christian to Christ is due to a lack of ‘fit’ between Christian theology and African life” (Imasogie 1983:12). The same could be said of many other areas of the world. Charles Kraft writes, “Even the best of Western theological thinking has been found by non-Westerners to be answering questions they are simply not asking, while completely ignoring questions which they are deeply concerned about” (1983: 8-9). In addressing the subject of culture and the concept of holiness, we need to think of those features in the culture that help us in presenting the message of holiness, as well as those factors that can cause misunderstanding. One thing is certain: if we proclaim the “message of holiness” without carefully and prayerfully addressing cultural issues, distortion and confusion is guaranteed and holiness loses its beauty.

### **The Concept of Holy in the South Pacific**

The concept of holy is deeply ingrained in the cultures of the South Pacific. The Hebrew word *qadhash*, which refers to things, people, and places being set apart for sacred use, is paralleled by the Polynesian words *taboo*, *tabu*, *tapu*, *tambu*.

In the Old Testament people such as priests and Levites were holy for they were set apart for service in the temple. The temple, altar, and all the things used in worship in the temple were holy for they were set apart

for sacred use. The Sabbath was set apart from other ordinary days and thus was a holy day. And above all the name of God was holy. Strange though it may seem, there were prostitutes who served in heathen temples who were also classified as *qadhash*, for they had been set apart for temple service. The word had a formal ritualistic meaning rather than an ethical/moral meaning.

In the South Pacific, similar concepts have applied. Places, people (priests) and things that were dedicated to the spirits and tribal gods were “taboo.” There were certain restrictions of what they could eat, where they could go, where they could sleep, and with whom they could associate. To break these taboos would incur the wrath of the spirits. On the other hand, right relationships were maintained by observing the taboos. There were sacred names and rituals that only certain people could perform. For all other people, they were “taboo.” Forbidden was the flip side of holy.

The Polynesian *tabu* and the Hebrew *qadhash* both mean “set apart for sacred use.” This is in contrast to that which was common and accessible to all people and for common everyday use.

Scripture shows the concept of holy undergoing an ongoing development, as the concept moved from a formal ritualistic expression, to one that has a moral and ethical meaning. As the moral and ethical quality of God’s character was emphasized, so the moral and ethical dimension of human holiness became more and more pronounced.

The concept of *taboo* gives us a starting point in helping people understand the holy life, but there is a danger if we stay with that level of meaning. It very easily degenerates into legalism. Holiness becomes a list of “taboos”—forbidden things. Holiness people do not smoke, drink alcoholic beverages, chew betel nut, or go to nightclubs. Some groups in PNG add that holiness people always wear shirts with long sleeves and shave off their beards. Some see the Seventh Day Adventist followers as being even more holy in that they do not eat pork, eels, possums and various other animals or fish. This quickly leads to holiness being perceived as a list of do’s and don’ts. It becomes a human achievement, and like the Pharisees in Jesus’ day, people become proud of their holiness. Such holiness is a false holiness, has no beauty, and was rejected by Jesus.

### Holiness as Allegiance



Holiness can be expressed as giving total allegiance to God. This is expressed in the first commandment and also in the words of Deut 6:5. Jesus emphasized this point when he said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment” (Matt 22:37-38). Primary allegiance is the issue at stake. In the Western world the issue is often putting God before self or financial security, material possessions, status and position in society. The same applies to other cultures as they succumb to the pressures of Westernization. In tribal cultures the issue is, “Who comes first—God or clan?” People have been brought up in a society that says “A good person supports his clan members at all times. Support of clan members takes priority over all other obligations, at all times and under all circumstances.” This has a positive side to it. Clan members care for each other—be they young or old, sick or healthy, rich or poor. It is actually much superior to the Western self-centered approach to life. What happens, however, when one must choose between allegiance to God and allegiance to the clan? This is the big issue that must be addressed in tribal societies. How does one stay a loyal supportive member of the clan and meet one’s clan’s responsibilities and at the same time have Jesus as supreme Lord of one’s life? Because of the intense individualism of Western society, holiness has often been thought of as internal, personal, and to a large extent, private. The concept of separation from the world has also encouraged isolated personal holiness. In tribal societies, as in the Old Testament, the social implications of living a holy life cannot be ignored. Instead of thinking about the implications of being a “child of God,” we need to think more about the social implications of being the “people of God” in a more collective sense. Perhaps tribal people may help us Westerners to recapture an aspect of holiness that we have too often neglected. If Jesus is not Lord of all, then the essential foundation of holiness is missing.

### **Holiness and the Spirit World**

A people’s theology of the spirit world is another very important issue that affects the practical outworking of holiness in people’s lives. The most basic understanding of holiness is that of being a people separated unto God. The first of the 10 Commandments expresses this: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before/besides me” (Exodus 20:3).

This was the big theological issue of the Old Testament. Elijah challenged the people, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is god, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). The issue at stake was who would provide for fertility of crops, flocks, and the well being of their families. Today people still wrestle with questions of fertility of family, flocks and gardens, success in business, and healing in time of sickness. Often Western theology has spoken of a savior from sin and eternal salvation, and has left these other issues to agriculture, economics and medicine, but in many areas of the world these are seen as being essentially spiritual issues.

Closely related to the concept of health and fertility is the fear of dark forces, spirits, witches, sorcery, spells and curses. Does the Gospel have good news for these people? Often our Western ignorance of the spirit world and our reluctance to talk about it has given the impression that the Bible too is silent and God is powerless to deal with this area. We have not emphasized Christ's triumph over principalities and powers and so people feel the need to hold onto elements from their traditional religion to deal with these dark and fearful forces.

One missionary writes, "Our religious tradition, our humanistic education and scientific mind set have blinded us to the reality of the spirit world that Paul describes in Ephesians" (Butler: 1993:386).

An African scholar says, "Many African Christians have perceived the 'God' of Christianity to be a 'stranger God,' the God of the white man who is unfamiliar with the local spiritual problems. To these Africans, Christianity was of no practical use in times of existential crisis" (Imasogie 1983:69). People from other cultures also share these same feelings.

Finally, "Any theology that does not portray Jesus Christ as an all powerful savior who here and now can free people from all fear, especially the fear of witchcraft and superstition is inadequate" (Healey and Sybertz 1996:22).

Western theology has sometimes led people to see Christ as an inadequate savior who may be able to provide eternal salvation but who knows little about the problems of day-to-day living. Consequently, they feel compelled to hold onto rituals, amulets, ancestral tablets and other things for protection against unseen evil forces. We preach a message of total commitment to Jesus Christ; but if Jesus is perceived as being an

inadequate savior, they will not let go of their present rituals and objects of worship. Our message falls on deaf ears because there are worldview issues that have not been addressed.

Another worldview issue is that of ancestors. It is right and proper to honor and respect our ancestors. Indeed, we can thank God for them but not rely upon them as our guardians, protectors and providers. “Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living” (Romans 14:9). What are the implications of this statement in regard to the ancestors? The doctrine of holiness cannot be divorced from issues such as these. We may preach holiness as a second work of grace, but if we have not dealt with these basic issues of allegiance, the fine details of our theological definitions are largely irrelevant to our listeners.

### **A Cross-Cultural Definition of Holy**

How do we define holy? How should a holy person live? Do the accepted Western standards of holy living apply equally in other cultures?

Missionary X is known as a good holiness preacher. He is a hard working person who likes to get things accomplished and does not want to waste time. He has little time for idle chatter as he wants to get on with God’s work. He considers wasting time to be a sin. To spend time talking, when a person should be working, is the same as stealing. His national colleagues see things differently, for in their culture relationships are extremely important. Relationships must always come before work. They see the missionary as impatient and rude. Because he puts work before relationships, they see him as uncaring, unloving, therefore far from holy.

Missionary C grew up in a culture that emphasizes thrift, being very careful with money, and saving for the future. She becomes a missionary in a Pacific Island that emphasizes generosity. People will spend their entire savings to put on a big feast for a wedding or a funeral. For them, this is the right and proper thing to do, and the correct way to show love and concern for family and friends. The missionary sees this as a sinful waste of money. The nationals, however, see the missionary as being stingy and selfish. A pure heart is a gift from God, but holiness of life will be reflected in different ways in different communities.

Is there a cross-cultural definition of holy, or a holy life style, that applies to all people in all cultures? What does a holy life look like in day-to-day life? Will this vary a little, or much, from culture to culture? A starting point would be to ask ourselves, "How was an 'ideal' person viewed in the traditional beliefs of this culture?" In the traditional myths and legends of each culture there are stories that demonstrate the qualities of an ideal person. Holiness should at least enable a person to live up to the standards of the traditional beliefs and even exceed them. Paul insisted that church leaders should be "above reproach" and have a "good reputation with outsiders" (1 Timothy 2:7). Sometimes a foreign definition or standard of holiness has led to the "holiness people" being considered as weird rather than "above reproach." If we are to be above reproach, our standards should be higher than those of the society in which we live.

Perhaps this was what Jesus was meaning when he said, "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 5:20). Could we paraphrase this to read, "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Confucius scholars/ Buddhist monks/ Hindu priests/ Muslim imams/tribal chiefs/priests you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven"? If we were to take time to reflect on questions like this, it may cause us to see some cultural values in Scripture that had been overlooked and to understand holiness in a new and richer way. Spirit-filled holiness people should not only meet the ideals set forth in traditional beliefs, but also actually exceed them. If we do not, then where is the beauty of holiness, and where is the power of the Holy Spirit? Our message of holiness will have no beauty, no power, and no appeal.

For example, I understand that meekness is a very important virtue in Thailand. Western evangelists often come across as being aggressive, which is not a positive virtue. The dynamic presentation of the Western evangelist, which makes him effective in America, may be the very quality that prevents Asians from seeing the meekness and beauty of Jesus. Perhaps meekness is an aspect of holiness that has been greatly overlooked by Westerners, and we need an Asian perspective to give us a richer appreciation of the beauty of meekness as an important dimension of a holy life.

## **Proclaiming the Message**

We have looked at some of the cultural issues that affect people's understanding of holiness. We now go on to look at issues related to proclaiming the message of holiness.

In understanding how to proclaim holiness to tribal peoples of the South Pacific, it is very instructive to reflect on how God communicated the message to tribal people—the Israelites—in the Old Testament. Where do we find theology in the Old Testament? There is nothing in the Old Testament that compares with the Pauline epistles. Old Testament theology is not found in precise definitions and carefully worded theological arguments. Instead, it is found in the narratives of God's dealings with his people. It is imbedded in the songs, the processions, feasts, sacrifices, in the architecture of the tabernacle, and in the design of the high priests robes. The phrase, "Holiness to the Lord," comes from the gold plate that decorated the high priest's turban! Theology is not rooted in philosophical arguments but is woven into the narratives and in visual symbols and moving ceremonies.

To communicate the message of holiness to people in tribal communities, we need to look at narrative theology and at ways of expressing God's truth in stories, legends, parables, through drama and by using pictures.

If we contextualize our subject matter but do not contextualize our methods of communication, we do only part of the job. We must become more creative in our theologizing and get away from the false idea that stories and pictures are for children only.

One story I have found very helpful in communicating the holiness of God and his desire to make us holy, is the story of Isaiah's vision in the temple. This dramatic narrative is powerful. It contains a heavenly vision, the holy temple, an awesome mysterious angelic choir, altar fires, buildings shaking, and God's audible voice, and a broken man's heart wrenching admission of his desperate spiritual need. Tribal people love this rich vivid symbolism and drama. This story conveys powerfully the fact that God is holy and humans are sinful, but God is willing and able to cleanse us and make us holy.

The stories of the disciples before and after Pentecost demonstrate the dramatic changes the Holy Spirit made in the lives of the disciples. The

story of Stephen illustrates many of the qualities of the Spirit-filled life. Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones shows the energizing, life-giving power of the Holy Spirit. Symbols of oil, water, and fire communicate vividly to people who think in symbols and word pictures.

I found that forcing myself to express the doctrine of holiness through visual symbols made me rethink my theology and sent me to my knees as I tried to move from theological formulas to visual symbols. This next chart lesson contrasts the difference between three types of people: the non-Christian, the Christian who although born again is experiencing an ongoing conflict between the Holy Spirit and the sinful nature, and finally the Spirit-filled Christian. The human self is not removed from the life of the Spirit-filled believer. Self still exists, but not as a self-seeking entity opposed to God, for "self" is now kneeling, humble, obedient and yielded to the lordship of the Holy Spirit. There is a harmonious relationship between my spirit and the Spirit of God. This is the heart of the sanctified life.

Again and again I have been amazed and humbled as I have seen how God has used such simple things as visual symbols drawn on a sheet of paper with a felt tip marker to make his Word come alive and impress it upon the hearts and minds of people.

Lord, help us to be more creative and more effective as we proclaim the beauty of holiness. May many people surrender themselves to the lordship of Jesus Christ, and may the infilling Holy Spirit enable the wonderful love of God to shine through their lives and their culture so as to reveal the multi-colored beauty of true holiness. Lord Jesus, help us to express the beauty of Jesus and the beauty of holiness in a multitude of cultures and languages. For your glory we ask this. Amen.

## Appendix 1A

**ISAIAH'S VISION**

1. Isaiah was a young prophet who lived 800 years before Christ was born. He worked in Jerusalem and preached God's Word to the king and the leaders in Jerusalem.
2. King Uzziah had died. He had been king of Judea for many years and the country had prospered under his rule. Now he had died, and Isaiah was deeply concerned and wondered who the next king would be. He wondered what changes this would bring to his country. Isaiah went to the temple to pray.
3. Isaiah 6:1-5. While Isaiah was praying, God showed him a vision. He saw God high and exalted and seated upon the throne of the universe. He was surrounded with brilliant angels, who were calling out to each other, "Holy, Holy, Holy! The Lord Almighty is holy! His glory fills the world" (Isaiah 6:3). God was so holy and powerful that the seraphims (angels) covered their faces because they could not look on the face of God. The temple shook and was filled with smoke. Isaiah realized in a new way the greatness, majesty and holiness of God.
4. Isaiah saw the majesty and holiness of God and felt totally unworthy in the presence of God. Even though he was a prophet who spoke for God, he felt his mouth was unclean. He saw that the whole of society also had unclean lips. Isaiah felt doomed, because of his sinful mouth and also because he had seen God with his own eyes. Years before God had said to Moses, "I will not let you see my face, because no one can see me and stay alive" (Exodus 33:20).
5. Isaiah said, "I live among a people whose words are sinful" (Isaiah 6:5). Some people are easily led into wrong habits of obscene or vulgar language as they listen to people using bad language. Christians must stand strong, remembering that we are new people in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). We must follow Jesus example, and the words that we speak should glorify God, and be acceptable to him.

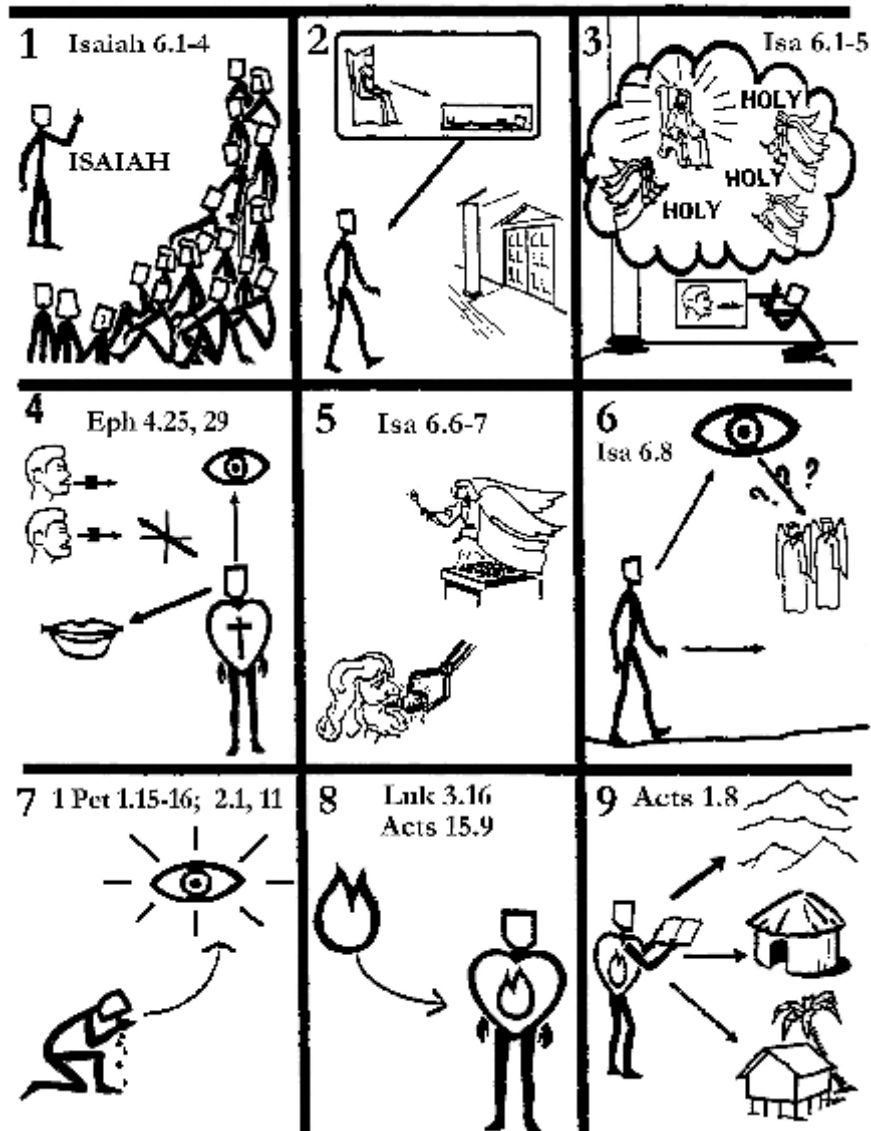
Isaiah the young prophet had been preaching God's Word, but he now realized that his life was sinful and not pleasing to God. He felt so ashamed and cried out to God (Isaiah 6:5). A seraphim (angel) came

- flying towards Isaiah with a burning coal in tongs. He touched Isaiah's lips with the coal, then said, ". . . your guilt is gone and your sins are forgiven" (Isaiah 6:7).
6. Then Isaiah heard the Lord say, "Who shall I send? Who will be our messenger?" Isaiah had now been forgiven and cleansed, and so he gladly responded, "I will go! Send me!" (Isaiah 6:8).
  7. God calls us to live holy lives in all that we do and say. The Bible says we must be holy, because God is holy (1 Peter 1:15-16). Isaiah did not steal, or get drunk, or live an immoral life etc. He was a good man following God, and preaching his Word. However, when he realized the holiness of God, he knew that his life was not free from sin, and so he sincerely repented. What about our lives? Have we thought deeply about the holiness of the Almighty God? Are we living lives that are pleasing to God? Or do we have some sins in our life, such as lying, gossiping, jealousy, or envy and anger in our hearts towards someone else? If any of these things exist we must come to God and sincerely repent, and ask for God's forgiveness and cleansing.
  8. The seraphim touched Isaiah's lips with the hot coal, and he was forgiven and cleansed. God also wants to cleanse our lives from sin by the blood of Christ and fill us with his Holy Spirit (Acts 2:3-4). John the Baptist said in Luke 3:16, ". . . He [Jesus] will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." God gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask him (Luke 11:13). The Holy Spirit cleans our hearts and makes them pure (Acts 15:8-9).
  9. When the fire of God cleansed Isaiah, he was immediately ready to go and work for God. In Acts 1:8 Jesus said, "But when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power and you will be my witnesses." When God cleanses and fills us with his Holy Spirit, he wants us to work for him in whatever way he calls. This may be witnessing, preaching, discipling others or loving and caring for others. We can serve God in many ways. God does not want us to be lazy, selfish and waste our lives. Are we ready, like Isaiah, to answer God's call, and serve him in whatever way he chooses (Romans 12:1-2)?



Appendix 1B

# 1. ISAIAH'S VISION



## Appendix 2A

**THE SINFUL NATURE—THE HIDDEN ENEMY**

1. This person is not a Christian. He is self-centered: he lives to please himself, and satisfy his sinful desires. God loves him and wants to transform his life and make him truly a child of God. The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to convict him of his sins. The Holy Spirit works in his life until he repents and desires to be rid of his sins (2 Timothy 3:16 and John 16:7-8).
2. The Holy Spirit has been working in this person's life. He wants to be free from sin and the habits that are ruining his life and his family. He confesses his sins to God. "If we confess our sins to God, he will keep his promise . . . He will forgive us our sins and purify us from all our wrongdoing" (1 John 1:9). We cannot change our own life in our own strength. Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment for our sins so that we may be forgiven. Salvation is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8). It is because Jesus died on the cross that we can be forgiven (Ephesians 1:6-7). We must believe that Jesus died to take away our sin and to make us clean on the inside. "The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin" (1 John 1:7). When people confess their sins to God, he forgives their sins and cleanses their hearts. They become like new people with a new way of living. They do not want to do the things they used to do. Now they want to please God in all that they do. The Holy Spirit lives within them, teaches them, and strengthens them in their Christian life (Romans 8:16 and 2 Corinthians 5:17).
3. Here we see a Christian who has a struggle in his Christian life. The Holy Spirit is present in his life and wants to lead him in following God's way. But the old self-centered way of thinking is there as well. We call this the sinful nature. The sinful nature wants to be in control of his life and so there is great conflict going on. The Holy Spirit and sinful nature (or self-centeredness) are fighting against each other. "For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want" (Galatians 5:17).
4. 1 Corinthians 3:1-3. We want to live a holy life and do what is pleasing to God. However, the sinful nature keeps pulling us away from what the Holy Spirit wants and we end up doing things we do not like. (1

Some people get angry quickly, shouting at people and quarreling. (2) Some people are jealous of others and desire to get the things or positions that other people have. (3) Some have no real joy in giving their money or time to God or serving him. (4) Other people have a problem with pride and want other people to notice them or praise them. (5) Some people do not say anything bad about other people, but they are envious in their hearts or maybe bitter towards other people. If these things exist in our lives we cannot grow and become strong Christians.

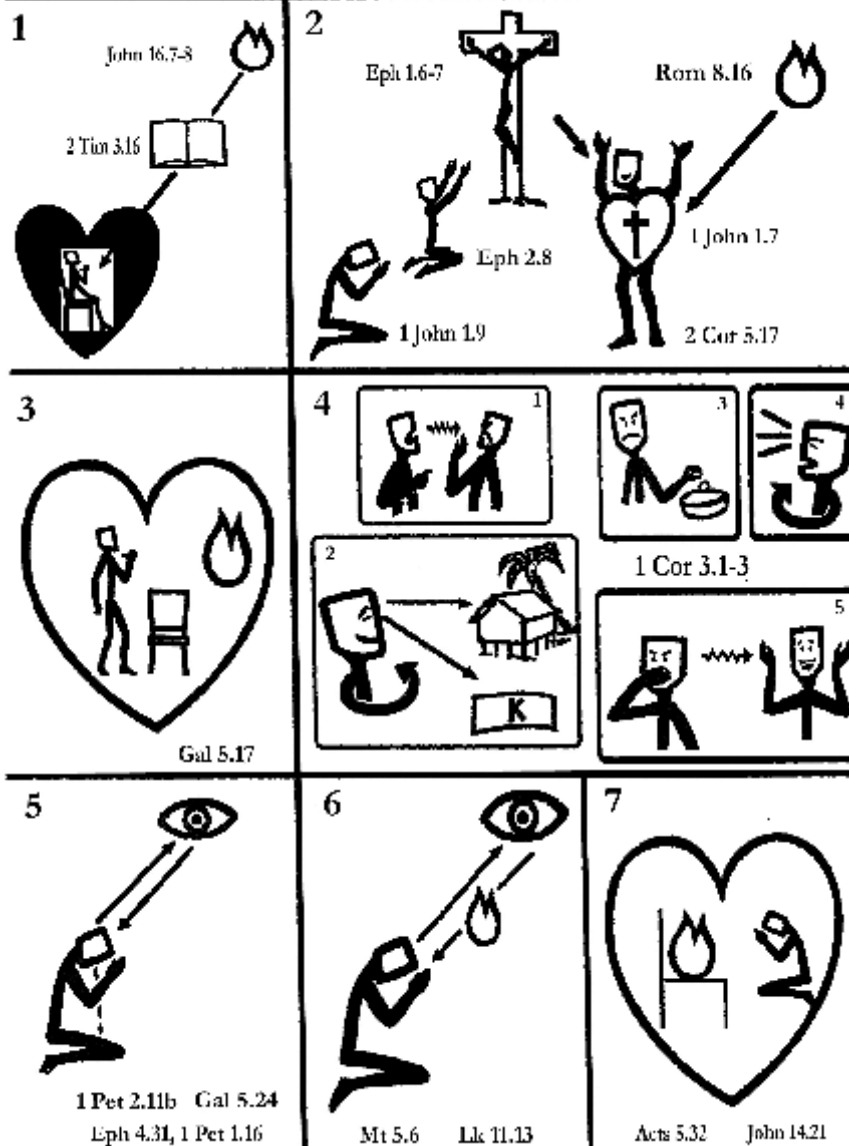
5. How do we get rid of the sinful nature? “Do not give into bodily passions, which are always at war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11b). “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:24). “Get rid of all bitterness passion and anger. No more shouting or insults, no more hateful feelings of any sort” (Ephesians 4:31). “Be holy in all you do, just as God who has called you is holy” (1 Peter 1:16). We need to be completely rid of the sinful nature.

The man in this picture is very ashamed of the sins in his life, such as jealousy, anger, and being afraid to stand up for Jesus. He has neglected Bible study and prayer and has an unforgiving spirit. We must confess all of our sins, and be really sorry for the way we have lived. We must ask God to clean our hearts and fill us with his Holy Spirit. We must believe God can do this and we must be obedient to his words in the Bible.

6. Matthew 5:6. We must desire with all of our heart to be filled with the Holy Spirit. God wants to fill us, but he is waiting for us to ask. Luke 11:13 says, “How much more, then, will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”
7. Acts 5:32 says the Holy Spirit “is God’s gift to those who obey him.” In this picture the Holy Spirit is on the throne in this persons life. The person is kneeling, humble and obedient, ready to do whatever God wants him or her to do. We must allow the Holy Spirit to control our lives and we must obey God’s Word. We can no longer be self-centered and think only of pleasing ourselves. Christ and his desires for us must have first place (John 14:21). When we are completely yielded to Christ in every area of our lives, the Holy Spirit fills us. The sinful nature and all its desires have no place in us. What about your life? Who controls your life and actions; the sinful nature or the Holy Spirit?

## Appendix 2B

## THE SINFUL NATURE - THE HIDDEN ENEMY



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## **Part Two**

# **Proclamation**



## Sing It, Shout It, Preach It, Live It

Roderick T. Leupp

Not too many months before the Leupp family left the Philippines, I visited the Intramuros district of Manila. It was raining lightly as I walked toward the gate of Intramuros to leave, to find my way back home on the G-Liner bus. Just inside the gate I stood on the fringe of about 150 people, watching. A young woman with a bullhorn was speaking in an agitated and passionate way. People listened. They listened because virtually everyone there had a legitimate complaint against the Shoemart department store chain, for these Filipinos were striking for higher wages.

This was a relatively new thing for me, seeing Filipinos who were protesting. I had long since come to define Filipinos as peace-loving, flexible, reasonably tolerant people. As I traveled by bus and car across the Metro Manila area I recall seeing hostility between Filipinos only once, which is no small accomplishment in a city of ten or more million people packed tightly together. Protesting or agitated Filipinos were almost outside my frame of reference for what Filipinos were capable of doing. The peaceful revolution known as EDSA happened before I reached the country, and the actions chasing Joseph Estrada from office happened soon after we left.

Our time together today invites us to move from the articulation of the doctrine of holiness to its proclamation. The Filipinos who protested against Shoemart inside the Intramuros gate had made this move from articulation to proclamation, from thinking to action, from reflection to praxis.

Articulation assumes time to formulate, theologize, and think. Articulating holiness invites the Holy Spirit to be the chief formulator and speaker. If we believe Romans chapter eight, the most articulate statement of holiness may be in strictly human terms inarticulate, which is to say, Spirit-articulated. Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do



not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. Karl Barth once suggested that the purest form any Christian theology can take is the sermon and the prayer. If that is true, then we could modify Paul's statement slightly to say, "For we do not know how to theologize as we ought."

It is an old story, often repeated, that for the past several hundred years there has been a fundamental split in Christian theology between the so-called academic, intellectual, or critical theology, on the one hand, and doxological, devotional, and spiritual theology on the other hand. The recent revival of trinitarian theology has gone some distance toward healing this centuries-long rift in the heart of theology.

But, really, this is much more of a Western problem than it is an Eastern problem. Eastern Orthodox theology has never really divided the theological task into the academic and the devotional. For the Orthodox, as I understand them, prayer is thinking and thinking is prayer. Life is prayer and prayer is life.

Randy Maddox and other relatively young Wesleyan theologians have tried to make the case that John Wesley's mature theology is compatible with parts of Eastern Orthodox thinking, more compatible than with some of the themes sounded by the classical Reformation traditions affiliated with Luther and Calvin.

The Asian and Pacific articulation of the doctrine of holiness may therefore want to consider Orthodox theology more deeply. At the very least this may keep Asian Christians from making the same mistake the West has made, in dividing Christian theology from Christian spiritual formation.

Let me suggest a few ways that some of the themes from Eastern Orthodox theology may benefit the cause of Christian holiness across this region. For one, Orthodox theology does not focus on our guilt before God quite as much as Reformation theology. It focuses instead on sin as sickness, as the sickness unto death. The chief enemies of the soul are sin, death, and the devil. If it is true that the Philippines is not a guilt culture but instead a shame culture, the heavy emphasis Western theology places

on our guilt before God may be intimidating and alienating to Filipinos and other Asians. Too much stress on guilt may only lead to fatalism.

Second, the incarnation of Jesus Christ is crucial. There is almost a sense in Orthodox theology that Jesus Christ saves the world from sin simply by being born into the world and sharing the common human lot. There is relatively greater stress on the resurrection than on the crucifixion that precedes it.

In the current Nazarene hymnal there are five or even six times as many hymns devoted to the blood of Jesus Christ and His cross than to the theme of His being raised from the dead by God His Father. Most of us can probably name lots of famous hymns about the blood and the cross, but it will be difficult for us to name even one famous hymn whose primary theme is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That ought to change.

In William Cowper's 1771 hymn one can almost feel the blood being poured over our sins. Yet there is nothing of similar power to express the final resolution of Calvary, namely the resurrection:

*There is a fountain filled with blood  
 Drawn from Immanuel's veins  
 And sinners, plunged beneath that flood  
 Lose all their guilty stains*

In my experience, at least, Filipinos need more emphasis on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Filipinos have themselves made this point. Too much stress on the agony of the crucified Christ may only tend to reinforce a worldview where suffering and agony are the only possible reality. The image of Christ the Victor, where the cross is not forgotten, but is also not the final word, needs to take root in the heart of the average Filipino. The image of the suffering and even the entombed Christ is already powerfully present. Whether or not the resurrection of Jesus Christ needs to be stressed more throughout the Asia-Pacific region is something we may want to discuss together.

If articulation should lead to proclamation, how does this happen? Articulation that is thoughtful and redemptive will lead to a fruitful proclamation. This has happened many times in my own life, perhaps most evidently in my choice of education as a life. I became a teacher largely through the examples I saw around me in my family. Both of my parents, especially my mother, were teachers, and two of my three sisters have been

or are teachers. Think of all the years the Nielson family has contributed to the Church of the Nazarene around the world. Articulation of the goals, ideas, skills, and talents of the Christian ministry has passed rather directly into proclamation of the gospel.

The doctrine of holiness may also be understood as articulation becoming proclamation. If one studies any period of the history of Christianity, from the very beginnings up until now, the theology of Christian holiness is always there, if stronger in some periods than in others. It may not always be there in the words, phrases, and examples most dear to Nazarene hearts, but it is nonetheless there. There is a rich and deep history of articulation in monks, martyrs, reformers, bishops, theologians, and members of the laity. There is an equally deep history of proclamation by these same people.

Articulation *becomes* proclamation . . . and yet proclamation leads to a better and more truthful articulation, which in turn can produce a more effective and truthful and powerful proclamation. By definition, both of these tasks can never be completed.

Any successful political candidate or party understands this. Politics is the art of persuasion, sometimes gentle persuasion, sometime persuasion backed up by armies. Politics is also getting the message out. The message, the ideology, the party platform is what the politician seeks to get out, which can be called articulation. But the message and the ideology are only dead letters if the politician cannot put the message across skillfully, forcefully, and persuasively.

Articulation and proclamation need one another in much the same way that form and function, or even law and gospel, need one another. The line between articulation and proclamation should be such that one cannot really tell where one begins and the other ends.

Although I would not describe myself as a theologian of liberation, I think we can learn something from what might be called the praxis model of contextualizing theology. As Stephen Bevans describes this model in his book, *Models of Contextual Theology*, the praxis model depends on the relationship between committed action and reflection. While this model may be most associated with committed action, before that can happen there must be a background of critical reflection. This critical reflection consists of analysis of action and situation and the rereading of the Bible

and the tradition of interpreting the Bible. This critical reflection in its turn leads to committed and intelligent action, or praxis, which may lead to further critical reflection.

In the Wesleyan tradition as a whole, the chief means of turning articulation into proclamation is of course love. John Wesley is sometimes given credit for completing the Protestant Reformation through his insistence on the importance of love. Martin Luther had criticized the late medieval Catholic system as producing alienated instead of confident and trusting souls. Whatever we can know about God cannot be contrary to God's written revelation in the Bible, Luther believed. The incarnate revelation in Jesus Christ is more compelling still. The believer's faith in the merits of Jesus Christ is all-sufficient for salvation. The grace of God makes possible our faith. *Sola Scriptura, sola Christus, sola fides, sola gratia*—this is the Reformation theology.

John Wesley accepted all of this, more or less, but emphasized the witness of the Holy Spirit to a degree that Luther had not, the fruit of the Spirit, and the centrality of love. Wesley believed love to be the heaven of heavens so far as Christian faith and witness were concerned. When the believer is in heaven, there might be no need for either faith or hope, because both of these Christian virtues are fully formed and realized in heaven. But not so for love. Love continues to grow, sweeten, and be refined in heaven.

Whereas Martin Luther was inclined to call the Epistle of James a book of straw for its seeming contradiction of Paul's theology of justification by grace through faith alone, Wesley strove to harmonize James and Paul. It is not faith alone that is the Christian life, for this could be too easily cut off from the expectations of the gospel. It is not even love alone, because love unguided by faith may drift into sentiment, emotion, or even sensuality. It is, of course, faith working through love, as Paul wrote to the Galatians.

There is a real sense in which nothing I say after this will amount to more than a feeble commentary on this fragment of Scripture from Galatians chapter five. Proclamation is essentially a combination of pastoral theology, evangelism, and Christian ethics, and on the basic terms that Wesleyan theology sets forth, faith working through love is just about the best thing we can possibly say.

The central Christian symbol is the cross of Jesus Christ, which as we said earlier must always point ahead to the resurrection. The central meaning of the cross is not the crude literalism of blood and gore, but love. Because of this, I believe that love must be crucial in both our articulation and our proclamation of Christian holiness.

Love is an essential part of the everyday landscapes of our lives. We cannot imagine life without love. Love grows and flourishes, or else it dies. Stagnant love is the same as dying love. Love is obviously a universal value that is to be found around the world in every culture. One hermeneutical key to unlocking cultural patterns is to discern how love works in a culture. The image of the family matriarch in the Philippines is an image of love. The image of the salaryman in Korea and Japan may also be an image of love, or perhaps the lack of love.

While this hermeneutical key is very important, it is love as displayed in the Bible and in the life of Jesus Christ that is most crucial. Cultural love may on occasion nearly rise to the level of biblical love. But for the most part it will fall far short of the biblical reality.

To follow after the love of God, as C. S. Lewis has expressed it, four loves must be an imitation of God incarnate: our model is the Jesus, not only of Calvary, but of the workshop, the roads, the crowds, the clamorous demands and surly oppositions, the lack of all peace and privacy, the interruptions. For this, so strangely unlike anything we can attribute to the Divine life in itself, is apparently not only like, but is, the Divine life operating under human conditions.

The dramatic contrast Lewis mentions is between the divine life in itself and the divine life under the conditions of humanity. To speak about the divine life in itself can all too soon become a very large theological abstraction that soon drifts away from the concerns of practical theology. Although we cannot with confidence say very much about the divine life in and of itself, we can say that the works of God that we can observe in creation and redemption are an extremely faithful representation of the inner life of God. The Son of God said that we will know human beings by their fruits, and this is all the more true of the Triune God. We can get a truthful, if incomplete, glimpse into the heart of the Triune God through his works. His chief work is of course the work of reconciliation between an angry humanity and a welcoming God who is eager to forgive and to make holy.

I am not sure what each one of us would say today if asked what our true inner life consists in. I am not convinced that I can figure out all that is within me. But I think, following C. S. Lewis and before him the Apostle Paul, each of us needs to empty himself or herself out of everything that would impede the proclamation of Christian holiness. The entire life of Jesus Christ was an extended *kenosis*. Lewis captures this reality in writing of the Jesus of the workshop, the roads, the crowds, the clamorous demands and surly oppositions, the lack of all peace and privacy, the interruptions.

Lewis's phrases remind me of living in the Philippines. Once, in the wood-carving village of Paete, I came across a man who was carving a life-sized crucifix. He was practicing his livelihood, although I am sure he was not growing rich, but was this crucifix any sort of window into his heart? His theology? His smoking a cigarette, in front of a poster advertising Hope cigarettes, was incongruous, but not totally contradictory.

Life at the seminary was often rich and full, if on occasion frustrating. I have spent about fifteen months on a small university campus in the United States, and one ingredient that is definitely missing, if almost impossible to define, is community. I often felt like Stephanie and I were part of much bigger purposes than our own while we both worked at Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary, but have not often had this feeling in my current employment.

During my eight years of teaching at the seminary I suppose I must have instructed close to one hundred fifty students. Of course I believe that they taught me much more than I taught them. What are some of the enduring realities I learned from my students? For one thing, endurance in the face of adversity. For another thing, making the most of limited physical and financial resources. For a third thing, maintaining a joyful spirit when studies, lack of money, and family illness threatened to overwhelm all else. For a fourth thing, how to be accepting of the stranger in the midst, and along with that, how to be tolerant and accepting of points of view that are not native to your part of the world, and therefore not necessarily part of your indigenous perspective.

The reverse of my situation in the Philippines would probably not be tolerated in the USA. What I mean is simply this: take an Asian professor of theology, place him in an American seminary, and have him teach theology that is largely not Western in scope and origin. Have him teach

theology that flows out of his own life experiences as an Asian. Those American students would tolerate only so much of this approach, and then would likely rebel and want one of their own kind. But not so for Asians, although as the work of theological contextualization continues, we must expect increasingly fewer Western imports, both books and professors.

I sometimes fretted that my students were watching my life too closely as a Christian example, because on too many occasions I was not allowing the grace of the Lord to work fully and freely in my life. Sometimes, maybe especially on a weekend, I really did not want to see or interact with any students. I wanted some good old-fashioned American privacy, which sometimes seemed to be in very short supply.

But these thoughts did not linger long. I had been accepted and even loved by the students at the seminary, had been treated better than I deserved to be. The sense of being interrupted and exposed left as I considered what my true missionary calling was, which was to educate students in the sort of theology that would enable God's kingdom to grow in purity and presence across this vast region.

Waiting for a bus in Kaytikling, I sometimes thought of this hymn lyric:

*Where cross the crowded ways of life  
Where sound the cries of race and clan  
Above the noise of selfish strife  
We hear Thy voice, O Son of Man!*

*From tender childhood's helplessness  
From woman's grief, man's burdened toil  
From famished souls, from sorrow's stress  
Thy heart has never known recoil.*

*The cup of water giv'n for Thee  
Still holds the freshness of Thy grace  
Yet long these multitudes to see  
The sweet compassion of Thy face.*

*O Master, from the mountainside  
Make haste to heal these hearts of pain*

*Among these restless throngs abide  
O tread the city's streets again.*

*Till sons of men shall learn Thy love  
And follow where Thy feet have trod  
Till, glorious from Thy heav'n above  
Shall come the city of our God!*

These words of nearly one hundred years ago can still speak today. They diagnose the human situation in the first two verses, call us to Christian action in the third verse, wait with expectation in the fourth verse, and look ahead to the City of God in the final verse.

Part of the proclamation of Christian holiness is to anticipate the City of God. Our efforts at spreading the gospel of holiness should work toward creating anticipations, intimations, foreshadowings, and pointers to the City of God.

A technique that worked for John Wesley, and which I believe will work across the Asia-Pacific region, is to employ with sensitivity the class system Wesley used among the early Methodists in Great Britain. Some detractors of early Methodism have seen it as falling prey to a works-righteousness approach to the Christian life. For these critics, the Methodist class system would be in a sense the incarnation of works-righteousness, because it obligated people to meet together, to be held accountable for their sins of the past week, to give money to the poor, to perform acts of charity.

Richard Heitzenrater, who is perhaps the world's leading authority on Oxford Methodism, doubts this analysis. He says that from the late 1720s, or precisely when Oxford Methodism arose, Wesley believed that true happiness came from an inward holiness. Heitzenrater sees Wesley and these early Methodists not as being bound to works-righteousness, but rather as practicing an inward religion, the fruit of which had to be divinely instilled virtues. Heitzenrater sees the Oxford Methodist ethic as one of virtue, not one of obligation. In different contexts, to various audiences, in diverse circumstances, John Wesley's view was remarkably stable and similar. It was to please God, and to improve in holiness, in the love of God and thy neighbor.



Meeting in a Wesley band is one of the best ways I know to practice what Wesley suggested, to improve in holiness and grow in the love of God and neighbor alike. As Wesley envisioned the network of Methodist classes, there was an appropriate place for everyone, regardless of his or her place along the road of Christian perfection. The particular forms, structures, and techniques Wesley used are not holy in themselves—they can easily be adapted to be appropriate for your time and your place. Remember what George Whitefield once said that Wesley's ability to organize the early Methodists was what set Wesley apart from Whitefield. Whitefield lamented that his followers were only a rope of sand, whereas Wesley's followers had powerful continuity on their side.

The Christian ethic of Saint Augustine has sometimes been summarized as teaching us to love God, and do as you please. For of course if one truly does love God, then this consuming love of God will surely shape decisively all that one does or thinks of doing.

I think this basic sentiment will work for the doctrine of holiness, with minor adjustments. Love God, articulate holiness truly, and then proclaim as you please. I really believe that. The core beliefs of the doctrine of holiness—God's grace made preveniently available to us, our continual receiving of the merits of Jesus Christ for our sins, the cleansing and hovering reality of the Holy Spirit in every aspect of our lives—are not to be negotiated. They can surely be contextualized and adapted, which is obviously part of articulation, yet I do not think they can be improved upon.

Proclamation must be faithful to articulation. Proclamation that is not faithful to articulation will ultimately fail. One thing that Floyd Cunningham once said has stayed with me. He said that since the Church of the Nazarene aims to be a truly international church, in some ways it is like the Roman Catholic Church. I believe he was talking mainly about the form the Church of the Nazarene takes, and the centrality of how it is governed, considering its Board of General Superintendents. While the Roman communion has not been consciously imitated by the Church of the Nazarene, there are yet some similar patterns shared by both churches.

I would like to suggest that the catholicity of the Roman communion is equally important, as Dr. Cunningham no doubt implied. The Roman church stretches around the world, as increasingly does the Church of the Nazarene. The Roman communion tends toward the conservative in its

theology, at least in its official theology. Although in many important ways Nazarene theology is at odds with Roman Catholic perspectives, the same conservative spirit is found in the Nazarene theology of heart holiness. The doctrine of entire sanctification proposes nothing at all that is remotely contrary to Scripture, although draws out from Scripture some themes that most everyone else has either ignored, or else interpreted differently. The secondness of entire sanctification is a good example of this, or the Nazarene belief in two definite, if related, works of grace. What some have called the optimism of grace instead of the pessimism of nature is probably an even better example.

To me, at least, catholicity implies a reverence for tradition, and yet an openness to try new things that are in the spirit of what has gone before. By new things I mean both new techniques and methodologies, as well as new ideas, although to my way of thinking we must exercise caution in not straying from the three or four basic non-negotiable truths of the doctrine of entire sanctification.

The Wesleyan understanding of Christian perfection is a beautiful and blessed truth. The Holy Spirit is infinitely resourceful in helping us as we endeavor to be faithful to what the title of my address proclaims: **SING IT, SHOUT IT, PREACH IT, LIVE IT!! Holiness Unto the Lord, Now and Forever!**

## Passing the Faith Along

Judges 2:6-10

David A. Ackerman

### I. A Disaster Waiting to Happen

The problem of inbred sin plagued the wandering Israelites who were fleeing from the grips of Egyptian slavery. Sin poked its rebellious head out while the people were waiting at the base of Mount Sinai for the return of Moses. Moses had not returned, and the people were getting impatient. Who was this God that Moses was talking to? The people cried out to Aaron, “Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don’t know what has happened to him” (Exod 32:1). They wanted a visible god they could see. In reality, they wanted a god they could fashion themselves and control. They wanted the benefits that God provides without giving God the authority and worship he deserves. This rebelliousness deserved total destruction, but God responded, “I am the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation” (Exod 34:6-7).

The sinful condition of the people of Israel showed itself again in a significant way when the people were camped at Kadesh Barnea, near the southern boarder of the promised land of Canaan. According to Numbers 12-13, Moses had sent out twelve spies into Canaan to explore the land. When these spies returned from their expedition, they spoke of a land flowing with milk and honey, a place of great abundance and riches. Ten of the spies, however, looked at this promised land with terror, for there were powerful, fortified cities inhabited with big and fierce people. Two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, said that they could and should take possession

of the land. Who did the people follow? Fear and doubt caused the people to say, “We should choose a new leader and go back to Egypt” (Num 14:4).

No trust, no worship, no fear of God. These sinful people were a disaster waiting to happen. And disaster did happen, over and over again.

*A number of problems led to disaster. First, they were faced with a . . .*

## A. Decision

The people had made an important decision as they camped at Shechem some forty years later. The Israelites had conquered most of the land with the help of the Lord. Their leader, Joshua, was nearing the end of his life. Before he died, he wanted to make sure that the people were committed to the Lord. In his farewell speech, Joshua told the people, “Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. But if serving the Lords seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” The people responded back, “Far be it from us to forsake the Lord to serve other gods!” On that day, Joshua and the people renewed their covenant with God.

They had a problem, however, that plagued the people of Old Testament times. Their **number one problem** was the tenacity of sin. They could not keep the terms of the covenant that they had made with God because they had a fallen nature. The law of God caused the sinful nature to show its ugly head. The Apostle Paul put it this way, “For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death” (Rom 7:11). In a way, we can’t really blame the Israelites for their disobedience, for we are just like them.

*Second, the people of Israel faced . . .*

## B. Disobedience

When we come to the book of Judges, only a short time after the covenant renewal at Shechem, we find the problem of sin illustrated with the disobedience of the people. God had commanded the people to

cleanse the land of impurity and unholiness. This meant that the Israelites must wipe out the unholy nations that lived in the land. They, as holy people, must live in a land purified of immorality and idolatry.

They faced a **second problem**: the problem of disobedience. According to Judges 2:2-3, the Israelites made covenants with the people they were to destroy. They failed to break down the altars of idolatry of these unholy people. God asks them, "Why have you done this? Now therefore I tell you that I will not drive them out before you; they will be thorns in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you" (Judges 2:2-3).

They did not follow God with total obedience. They essentially had not consecrated their all to God. They had failed at what God had called them to be: a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod 19:5).

*Third, the people of Israel faced . . .*

### **C. Death**

Their **third problem** was that their leader, Joshua, had died (Judges 2:7). Joshua was their inspirational leader. He was a visionary leader. Most importantly, he was a spiritual leader dedicated to worshiping the Lord God and keeping his commandments. The people of Israel also faced the death of the Exodus generation. Those who had been through the discipline and miracles of the desert wanderings began to die.

*Fourth, these deaths led up to . . .*

### **D. Disaster**

Judges 2:10-13 says, "After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel. They forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. They provoked the Lord to anger because they forsook him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths."

Did you hear their **fourth problem**? Their problem was a crisis of leadership. A whole new generation did not know the Lord. Trouble was brewing over the horizon as the peoples the Israelites failed to conquer would soon plague them with almost constant warfare. The book of Judges talks about a vicious cycle. The people would fall into sin and idolatry. The enemies would conquer them. They would cry out to God for mercy. God

would respond by sending mighty men called judges to lead the people to freedom. Then there would be a time of peace in the land—until they would fall again into sin. Their disobedience led to disaster. Paul knew about the problem of sin. He writes in Romans 7:23, “I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.”

*Sin leads to Disaster. This disaster was a result of, second, . . .*

## II. The Crisis of Faith

What went wrong with the Israelites? Why did they find themselves under cyclical bondage to their immoral neighbors? One is that *they failed to keep the . . .*

### A. Creed

The people of Israel failed to pass their faith on to the next generation. Their problem was a family problem. It was a generational problem. It was a leadership problem. The people failed to do precisely what God had outlined in Deuteronomy 6:6-9: “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.” If the Exodus generation would have done that, their children may have found peace in the land. They failed to pass along the faith.

*Another thing they failed to do was make a good . . .*

### B. Choice

Each generation of leaders must make personal choices of faith. A generation grew up without knowing God. Somewhere along the line, some parents made a terrible choice about what they taught their children. Some leaders failed to pass along to their followers the essential elements of the faith. The choices we make as leaders and parents have influence for many years ahead.

*Their failure to keep the creed and make a good choice led to a . . .*

### C. Crisis

Theirs was a . . .

Crisis of faith

Crisis of commitment

Crisis of leadership.

Sin is crouching at the door of those who leave the door ajar.

Israel failed to develop leaders from the new generation. They were unwilling to pay the price that developing leaders takes.

### III. The Price to Be Paid

Developing leaders always has a price. *One requirement in developing leaders for the next generation is . . .*

#### A. Personhood

What do our students, our children, our followers come seeking from us? They look to us as examples of . . .

**1. Intimate and genuine relationship with Jesus Christ.** It is easy in the academy to let spirituality take second seat to intellectuality. We must let our scholarship enhance our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

**2. Holy Living without fault or blame.** We must practice the holiness that we preach.

**3. Wisdom beyond knowledge.** Our students can go to the books for knowledge, but they come to us for wisdom. Wisdom costs; it costs us ourselves as we lay ourselves on the altar of commitment and become living sacrifices who know the mind of Christ (Rom 12:1-2).

**4. Integrity.** Can we be transparent with the people we lead?

**5. Vision for the world.** A leader with vision is like a gasoline station next to a welding yard. It only takes a spark to get the fire going!

Who you are as a leader will determine to a great extent who your followers will be in the future.

## B. Proclamation

Paul exhorted Timothy in 1 Tim 4:13, “Until I come, give attention to the public reading of the Scripture, to exhortation, and to teaching.” Proclamation is a vital ingredient in passing the faith along. We will be mistaken, however, if we think that proclamation is simply speaking forth a prepared message.

Teaching and preaching would be great fun if all we had to do was tell our listeners what we have prepared; if all we had to do was transfer our notes to our students’ notebooks; if all we had to do was fill the time slot from 11:30 a.m. until noon on Sunday mornings with some nice, fancy rhetoric.

*Passing the faith along involves . . .*

**1. Commitment.** The new generation of Israelites did not have the commitment that Joshua’s generation had. And because of that, they failed in their calling to be a holy people.

**2. Passion.** Passion comes from realizing what God has done to you and for you. It comes from having the mind of Christ which loves the world unconditionally. The Israelites had no passion for God.

**3. Knowledge.** The object of our knowledge is God and God’s ways in the world. We call this theology. The Israelites failed at theology. They turned to meaningless and empty idols that had no power to save.

**4. Skill.** Skill is learned and can be taught to others. The new generation did not have the skills of godly leadership. God had to raise up special people called judges to lead these people to victory. They failed to follow the system of leadership that God had set up in the Torah.

*Finally, passing the faith along takes . . .*

## C. Proficiency

We must make sure the next generation of leaders is firmly grounded in the Word of God. God may lead only a few of us here to become major theologians of the church. But all of us can become effective theologians in our context and within our responsibility.

As leaders, we need to be effective communicators of doctrine to those we lead. To do this, we must know the doctrine ourselves. We must



study the scriptures, history, culture, human nature, etc., until we become the efficient and authoritative mouthpieces of the Almighty God.

### Conclusion

The measurement of our success as leaders in the church will be measured by the legacy we leave behind, whether our students and parishioners become effective leaders in the years ahead. John Maxwell has said that the true measure of leadership is influence. Are we effective influencers of a new generation of theologians? William A. Ward has said, “The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.”

A group of tourists were visiting a beautiful village. They walked by an old man sitting beside a fence. One tourist asked, “Were any great men born in this village?” The old man replied, “No, only babies.” There are no instant heroes in this world or in the kingdom of God. There are no instant theologians and leaders in the church either. Growth takes time.

Jaroslave Pelikan wrote,

My life shall touch a dozen lives before this day is done;  
Leave countless marks for good or ill, ere sets the evening sun.  
This is the wish I always wish, the prayer I always pray:  
Lord, may my life help other lives it touches by the way.<sup>1</sup>

Let's pass the faith along!

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<sup>1</sup>Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 65.

## **The Wonders of the Fullness of the Spirit**

Act 2:1-4

Sung-Won Kim

When the day of Pentecost came, the earliest Christians were all together in one place. Suddenly they heard a sound like the blowing of a violent wind coming from heaven and filling the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

As the Spirit enabled them, astonishing things happened. As the Spirit enabled them, wonders of heaven were disclosed.

The brand new Christian church began with the fullness of the Spirit. The very first church ever in human history was inaugurated with the Holy Spirit like the blowing of a violent wind. The first church did not begin with any institutional endeavors. It did not begin with any logo-centric intellectual exercise. The first church did not begin with any doctrinal campaign. I am not negating all these important factors for church development. But I am declaring the priority for the extension of the church.

The brand new Christian church began with the fullness of the Spirit. It began with the blowing of a violent wind of the Spirit. The first church began with the tongues of fire of the Spirit. It began with the Spirit that filled the whole house. Indeed, the very first Christian church began with the fullness of the Spirit.

The fullness of the Spirit was the enabling Spirit. The power of acceleration to spread the church so quickly to the Asia minor and Mediterranean world was the enabling Spirit. As the Spirit enabled them, wonders of heaven were disclosed to them. As the Spirit enabled them, astonishing things happened to them. What they did were outrageously

winning activities. What they did were furiously prevailing accomplishments as they were enabled by the Holy Spirit.

### **I. Now we can say that the first wonder of the fullness of the Spirit is the enabling Spirit.**

When the Spirit came down like a violent wind from Heaven, then they were enabled to do astonishing things. They were utterly amazed. They asked, “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?” People declared the wonders of God in their own tongues. They were amazed and perplexed. Then they asked one another, what does this mean?

Peter was the person who knew the nature of the fullness of the Spirit. Peter knew that the fullness of the Spirit was the enabling Spirit. Peter knew that the fullness of the Spirit was the empowering Spirit. Peter could not be silent at this extraordinary event. Peter stood up and raised his voice, and addressed the crowd. He boldly declared the wonders of the Spirit to the people.

God will pour out His Spirit on all people. Sons and daughters with the fullness of the Spirit will prophesy. Young men with the empowering Spirit will see visions. Old men with the enabling Spirit will dream dreams.

Here are no discriminations on men and women, old people and young people, and Jew and Gentile. There are no prejudices on sons or daughters, east or west, and masters or servants. Indeed, God pours out the Spirit even upon the women, old men, and even servants. The young servants will receive fullness of the Spirit and see the visions. Even old men and female servants will be enabled to dream dreams and will prophesy by the fullness of the Spirit.

There were so many fully spiritually charged Christians, fully empowered believers, fully envisioned people. There were so many dreaming Christians and prophesying believers through the work of the Holy Spirit. These enabled Christians were the fundamental seed members for spreading the Gospel so rapidly to all over the Asia minor and Mediterranean world. Some of them, who were enabled by the Spirit, even dared to give their lives for spreading the Gospel to the world. Spiritually charged people were so strong and enthusiastic to perform those extraordinary evangelism.

Korean mega-churches and super churches, which have tens of thousands of members, practice exactly the same principle with what the brand new Christian church did. Whenever I meet the pastors of the huge churches, almost all of them say exactly the same principle. When the church has the fullness of the Spirit, believers are enthusiastic for winning the people. It is a definitely proven fact that the spiritual church is a live church and a winning church. The prime biblical church was the spiritual church, which was a powerful church. Indeed, a spiritual church is a rapidly growing church. A spiritual church, which has the enabling Spirit, will quickly accelerate to multiply believers.

## **II. The second wonder of the fullness of the Spirit is the prevailing Spirit.**

1) Before the brand new Christian church was established, Jesus was filled with the Spirit. It was even before Jesus began his ministry that he had the fullness of the Spirit. The Spirit which filled Jesus was a furiously prevailing Spirit. At the baptism of Jesus (Mark 1:9-10), “as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.” And a voice came from heaven: “You are my son, whom I love, with you I am well pleased.” The Spirit was descending on him like a dove. Jesus was filled by the Spirit.

According to the Gospel of Luke, “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan” (Luke 4:1). St. Luke describes Jesus as full of the Holy Spirit. This fullness of the Spirit in Jesus was the prevailing Spirit. “He was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil.” Jesus ate nothing for forty days while praying in the desert. At the end of the days, he was so hungry. The devil tempted Jesus at the very vulnerable moment, “if you are son of God, tell this stone to become bread.” He was extremely hungry; the stones might look like bread for him. But Jesus outrageously said, “Man does not live on bread alone.” Man does not live on materialistic wealth alone.

The Spirit with which Jesus was filled was the prevailing Spirit. It was the prevailing Spirit to triumph over the temptation. It was the temptation of having materialistic wealth. It was the temptation of having financial prosperity. It is very hard for ordinary people to resist this in this materialistic society. Jesus outrageously said, “It is written, ‘Man does not live on bread alone.’” Man does not live on materialistic wealth alone.

Jesus did not abuse his “super-power” to achieve his personal satisfaction. But Jesus furiously prevailed against the temptation. Jesus, with the fullness of the Holy Spirit, triumphed over the materialistic temptation.

2) The devil led Jesus on a high place. He said, “I will give you all their authority and splendor, if you worship me.” It was a temptation of sitting on a high place of authority. It was a temptation of taking a powerful position. Jesus, with the fullness of the Holy Spirit, positively prevailed against the temptation of having a power-based authority. Jesus, with the fullness of the Holy Spirit, prevailed against the temptation of having an artificial splendor of dominating power.

We appreciate finer things in this world. We appreciate good things in this society. But we do know that money is nothing but a product of an exchange system. Power is nothing but an element of a control system in society. Money and power are merely sociological entities. They are not the fundamental entities. The fundamental entities for life are the Word and the Spirit. The Word and the Spirit are prior to any supplemental elements for life.

The symbol of the super power was struck by the evil spirit. The symbol of renowned prosperity was struck by the evil spirit. Now we know that the symbol of a super power is destructible. The symbol of renowned prosperity can be easily destroyed. I hope this does not irritate any patriotic Americans. A super power is not a real power but a finite human power. It is a vulnerable power. It is a limited power. Indeed, it is a finite power.

So many people rely upon this finite temporal power. So many people have arrogant dignity believing in this power. Those who believe in this power think that they are on the high place of authority and splendor. But now the symbol of the renowned prosperity turned into ashes. Oh, it is a so highly expensive lesson. But it is true that money and power are not the everlasting realities.

We believe that there is the real super power. We believe that there is the almighty power. We trust that there is the everlasting power. We are fully aware that no evil spirit can defeat the almighty power. We are fully aware that there is no devil that can destroy the everlasting power upon which we can absolutely trust.

Jesus outrageously prevailed against the earthly temptations with the help of almighty God through the power and the fullness of the Spirit. Oh, what a wonder the fullness of the Spirit is.

3) There was a temptation of being at the highest point of the temple. It was a temptation of climbing up to the highest place of religious authority. It was a temptation of taking a religiously exclusive position. Again, Jesus, with the fullness of the Holy Spirit, prevailed against the temptation of having a religious authority. Jesus, with the fullness of the Holy Spirit, triumphed over the temptation of having a religious power. The fullness of the Spirit is the ultimately prevailing Spirit. The second wonder of the fullness of the Spirit is the prevailing Spirit.

### **III. The third wonder of the fullness of the Spirit is the purifying Spirit**

The Spirit comes down upon us for astonishing things to happen. It enables us to do utterly amazing things. The Spirit fills us to prevail over the jeopardizing temptations and it triumphs over the hampering challenges of the world. The Spirit emanates into us to purify the bitterness of the egocentric sinful nature. The fullness of the Spirit is the cleansing Spirit. The fullness of the Spirit is the purifying Spirit. The fullness of the Spirit cleans the selfish desires and egocentric attachments. The fullness of the Spirit purifies our intention in consciousness to have right relationship with God and others.

“What every individual heart must have is the baptism of Jesus with the Holy Spirit.” The individual heart must be purified by the baptism with the Holy Spirit. We believe that the Pentecost was the time of entire sanctification of the 120 disciples.

The fullness of the Spirit creates a cleansing event in the believer’s consciousness. The fullness of the Spirit causes a purifying event in the Christian’s heart. It is not a discarding process, like becoming a sage in Confucianism. It is not a detaching process, like having a negated self in Buddhism. It is not a discarding process by the endeavor of self cultivation. It is not a detachment process by harshly negating self.

But it is a cleansing event by the Holy Spirit. It is a purifying event in our consciousness. Indeed, the fullness of the Spirit is an event of

cleansing of the selfish desires and having right relationship with God and others.

The Divine Grace is coming to us first with the initial aim of salvation of human beings. The Divine Grace consistently persuades us to encounter the Spirit. The Divine Grace persistently lures us to experience the sanctifying grace.

Now, it is our turn to turn to the Grace. It is our intentionality to come to the Spiritual Grace. We come to the Spirit with sheer intentionality. We come to the Spirit with solitary attitude, not with mixed mindedness, not with double mindedness, but with a simple and solitary mind. We come to the Spirit with sacred condition, not with the secular-associated spirit but with a set apart condition from worldliness. We come to the Spirit with a desperate and positive mind.

Then, there will be awe and wonder of encountering the Spirit. There will be the splendor of the fullness of the Spirit in our consciousness.

The fullness of the Spirit entails the purity of heart in the believer's consciousness. Indeed, a life of holiness emerges at the bottom and profound level of our consciousness. The fullness of the Spirit is an experience of the wonders of heaven. The fullness of the Spirit is highly operative for a life of holiness.

When the church is full of excitement with the envisioning Spirit, when the church is full of joyfulness with the enabling Spirit, when the church is full of positiveness with the prevailing Spirit, when the church is full of holiness with the purifying Spirit, our church will definitely grow. Our church will be prosperous beyond our imagination.

If the church is full of members who are filled with the enabling, the envisioning, and the empowering Spirit, then the church must rapidly grow. If the church is full of members who are filled with the dreaming, prevailing, and purifying Spirit, then the church must incredibly grow. We believe the prime biblical church was the spiritual church. When the spiritual wonders of heaven flourish in the church, our church will be a highly motivating, highly successful, and highly wining Christian church.

## Holiness Within and Without: A Narrative Sermon

I Thess. 1:1-10; 2:13

Brent D. Hulett

There was something special about the city of Thessalonica, the Apostle Paul believed. Because of its location on the main International Highway called the Egnatian Road, people were required to go through that town to travel from the East to the West. It possessed a famous harbor which became a strategic converging point of culture and commerce. It was a perfect place for Paul to plant the new Church of Jesus Christ. And he did just that.

The church began to grow and produce fruit. This cosmopolitan church began to reach out to areas that many other churches were unable to do. They caught on to what the Church was to do. It was one of those churches that young pastors would love to be assigned to as their first church.

### External Christians

It seemed on the outside that the church was doing everything that a growing body of believers was supposed to do. The first chapter of I Thessalonians describes all that they were doing right:

1. They applied their Christian faith in their daily lives to produce spiritual fruit (1 Th 1:3).
2. They were chosen by God (1 Th 1:4).
3. They imitated the lifestyle of the apostles and became model Christians (1 Th 1:6-7).
4. They shared the gospel with others in their city and in other countries (1 Th 1:8).
5. They turned from their sins and served God (1 Th 1:9).



6. They lived by the Word of God (1 Th 2:13).
7. They were persecuted because they loved Christ (1 Th 2:14).

For all obvious purposes the Church at Thessalonica was a great church. But in I Thessalonians 3:10 the rosy smell of their spiritual father's letter came to a quick end—as would an unexpected punch in the stomach. Paul writes: *“Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.”*

I can imagine the readers looking up from the parchment letter and wondering what Paul was getting to: “Why is he giving us so much positive attention?” “What is Paul getting to?” “What’s so bad with the good things we are doing?” “If we are doing so well as a church, what’s the problem?”

I wonder if they were beginning to allow their good works to become a proud ecclesiastical robe that protected them from dealing with the very nature of who they were and how they treated each other at a very personal level?

I wonder if there was a sense of completeness or accomplishment coming from this uptown, cosmopolitan church that created a false sense of spiritual life?

## Internal and External Holiness

Paul didn't beat around the bush—he was brutally up front with his people. At first glance, Paul described the need for inward purity with two very odd and diverse examples:

*“It is God's will that you be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God” (4:3-5).*

*“. . . No one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him” (4:6).*

At first reading, my first response was, “What shallow descriptors of what it does *not* mean to live a holy life!” Why not give examples of what this Christian church probably dealt with? Why deal with issues of impure thoughts? Uncommittedness? Prayerlessness?

But the “aha” moment occurred when I understood the ultimate result of each of these sins. You see when Paul chose sexual immorality and sexual undiscipline as an example, he speaks of an area of our lives

which resides at the very darkest and most secretive of our base nature: our sex life. Our choice to sin in the sexual arena meant a crime against our very self—the body that God created in his own image. It is a strategic destruction of our very soul. Paul writes to the Corinthians, “*Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body*” (1 Cor. 6:8). When we sin against our self, we are defiling the very temple in which God has ordained to dwell.

Paul then gives the opposite example of defrauding our brother. Paul has now gone from the most personal to the most public: taking advantage of one another. Our choice to sin against our brother or sister by *secretly* taking advantage of him stabs at the very nature of our Godly relationship with other Children of God and causing *public* shame. When we sin against our brother’s trust, we sever the very social nature of a Christ-community, in which only God’s holiness can be fully exemplified.

### **What Is God’s Point?**

God is pinpointing the extremes of who we ultimately are, and who we are ultimately sinning against. He then pronounces radical grace. God is saying, “I want to purify your most inward and personal life. I want to make holy the very secretive of your inward being . . . the very essence of who you really are and can be.”

God is saying, “I want to sanctify your relationships to others. I want to make holy the Godly formation of the community of Christ. I want to create for you relationships that form maturity and fruitfulness.”

Listen: God is focusing the cross-hairs of holiness on the very base nature of our relationship to ourselves and to others, to illustrate that the grace of God can pervade the very deepest of relationships and not just affect only surface godly platitudes.

### **Moving To Holiness Within and Without**

Our question at this juncture is: How do we receive today, what the Thessalonians needed yesterday?

First we must allow the Holy Spirit to recreate us into His own image until our very body becomes a living example of Christ-likeness. We must allow God to mold us until there is ultimate integrity towards one’s self.

I wonder what would happen if we took serious the admonition to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to our Lord and Savior? I wonder what would happen if we daily recommitted our passions, recommitted our private thoughts, and recommitted our pleasures to the glory of God.

Secondly, we need to allow the Holy Spirit to purify the very motives that determine your relationship with others. I wonder what would happen if we loved each other so intensely that graceful acceptance became the covenant by which we related to each other? I wonder what would happen if we trusted each other so deeply until total openness was no longer a liability, but an impetus to stand as sentinels over each other's weaknesses? I wonder what would happen if we shared in such responsible relationships that spiritual accountability became the ultimate expression of our purest love for each other.

### **Paul's Concluding Benediction**

To this wonderment, the gray-haired aging Paul gave the heart-felt benediction to a people stripped of all their outward appearances of churchly activity, and in a passionate voice that only a spiritual father could intone, said: *"May God himself, the God of Peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The One who calls you, is faithful and He will do it"* (1 Thess 5:23-24).

## **Part Three**

# **Application**



## Eight Easy Steps to Theological Maturity

Roderick T. Leupp

All three of the topics I was asked to address begin with “The Challenge of. . . .” How many different kinds of challenges are there? We are told to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength. That may be a good place to begin to think of challenges. Some challenges will seem especially to engage our hearts, others our minds, still others our souls. Some challenges may test our strength, which I think means more than sheer physical muscle and exertion.

Let me begin by suggesting a few things a challenge is not. For one thing, it is not our being called to overcome the hostilities of fate. Christian theologians in the Wesleyan tradition are trained to believe in the ultimate goodness of God. There may be momentary setbacks, even monumental struggles. But we must continue to believe that God intends *good* for us, even though our immediate circumstances of life seem to suggest God has forsaken us.

Fate is the ancient Greek myth of Sisyphus. He was condemned to roll a gigantic stone up a hill. That was bad enough, but every time he had nearly reached the top of the hill, the stone rolled back to the bottom. Sisyphus had to start all over again, at the bottom of the hill. That was his lot in life: always to roll the stone up the hill, but never to succeed.

Another thing a challenge is not is an end in itself. We have all heard the recitations of the physical accomplishments of John Wesley, that he rode 250,000 miles on horseback and preached however many thousands of sermons and wrote or published hundreds of books and pamphlets. But these stupendous accomplishments are not ends in themselves, not even ends for the particular life of John Wesley. They are ends as they meet in God and God’s kingdom. In other words, Wesley did not do all of these things for himself, but for the greater glory of God.

Becoming a theologian is not about earning academic degrees, joining theological societies or writing books and articles. To a certain extent, these steps and procedures are necessary, but one could accomplish all of this and still in my opinion not be a theologian.

Karl Barth is for some people the greatest Protestant theologian since the Reformation, and most would name him at least the greatest of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Barth had a theological education, yet never completed a doctorate, never even started one so far as I know. He was formed theologically by what he saw and experienced at least as much as what he read and heard in theological classrooms. His eleven-year pastorate at Safenwil, Switzerland, juxtaposed with the horrors of World War One, convinced him of the bankruptcy of theological and cultural liberalism. He was later dismayed when some of his own theological teachers joined the National Socialist party in Germany. During World War Two he opposed the Third Reich. He believed in theological activism, that one's theological studies should lead directly to action.

What are the eight steps to theological maturity? Some of these steps are probably more theoretical, others more practical. Some may touch more on being than on doing. In God, of course, there can never be any sort of gap between theory and practice, or between being and doing. That is one of the realities that makes God God: only of the Triune God can we say that being perfectly corresponds to itself, that being and doing are perfectly joined together, that form and function are one. For the rest of us, we strive to become through grace who God is by nature. In fact that is a good definition of holiness, which arises out of Eastern Orthodox theology: the holy life is to become by grace who God is by nature. Throughout what the Orthodox call *theosis* or deification, there is never any thought of our becoming God by nature. Only God is God. Yet through grace we can and must become sharers in God's very life.

**First Step:** *Become a Theologian of Culture.* This idea comes mostly from Paul Tillich, one of the greatest theologians of culture of the twentieth century. For Tillich, a theological life was to be lived within what he called the theological circle. The circumference or boundaries of the circle were determined by what is perhaps Tillich's most famous phrase, "ultimate concern." When you have found what concerns you ultimately, or perhaps better stated when it has found you, you have found your theological circle. Life within the theological circle was marked by the claims that your

ultimate concern made upon you, although because each of us is a finite sinner, life within the theological circle was for Tillich always one that was torn between faith and doubt, the infinite and the finite. Karl Barth disagreed with Tillich at the point of thinking that doubt was inevitable in the living of the theological life. Barth believed that doubt was a sin, but Tillich felt that it was not possible to live without doubt. Doubt is part of the existential condition of life, even theological life.

I obviously did not travel halfway around the world to encourage all of us to practice being doubters!! I would say, perhaps as an aside, that this is one of the areas that separate the Lutheran view of holiness from the Wesleyan. Lutherans, and probably Calvinists also, seemingly doubt that they could ever be really and wholly and intrinsically righteous. They would much rather say that their righteousness is altogether in Jesus Christ, and not at all in themselves. Wesleyans certainly believe that our righteousness is altogether in Jesus Christ, and yet we further believe that through the miracle of grace and the infused love of the Holy Spirit, the righteousness of Jesus Christ is made available to us personally.

The debate between alien or positional righteousness and actual and imparted righteousness became focused in Wesley's day in the parable of the Wedding Garment. Calvinists of that time believed that the Wedding Garment spoken of in the gospels was only positional holiness. Take the wedding garment off, and what remains after it is removed is only a mass of sin and perdition. The image of putting on and taking off a garment is probably not the best or most revealing image. We all remove jackets and shirts and coats without thinking about what we are doing. But some of you come from places where ceremonial dress is very important. Certain times and seasons of life—birth, maturity, death—may be accompanied by the wearing of ceremonial dress. The symbol of the wedding garment can remain a powerful symbol in such cultures.

To become a theologian of culture is to look at culture theologically. Since theology is the study of God, to look at culture theologically is ideally to look at culture through the eyes of God. For most evangelical Christians around the world, to look at culture is first of all to see it as fallen from the grace of God. Evangelicals have always been great at pointing out the sin of the world. We should not be naïve. The world is a sinful place. But we should not be hopeless either.



The horrors of three commercial airliners crashing into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon are still too fresh for us to be able to say very much about these events theologically. We need a longer perspective than one month can give us.

But I would say that almost immediately after these tragic events the wheels of divine providence started to turn mightily. Signs of moral and spiritual renewal erupted everywhere. Augustine's belief that God allows evil in order to turn evil into good was very much proven.

To become a theologian of culture is especially to practice the gift of discernment. It is to see which groups and forces within the culture control and interpret the symbols of the country. It is also of course to discern forces and currents that unite or divide any given country, or an entire region. For example, do secularization and modernization always accompany each other? As developing nations across this region continue to develop, will they at the same time lose their traditional spiritual sensibilities and understandings? Is it easier to proclaim the doctrine of holiness to someone fully secularized, whose real gods are wealth and technology, or to someone still respectful of the spiritual traditions of that country, even if the traditions are not Christian?

A true theologian of culture is not only interested in subjecting the culture to a deep theological analysis. A Christian analysis of any culture goes on from there to attempt to transform the culture. Remember that in H. Richard Niebuhr's famous book *Christ and Culture*, he mentioned John Wesley as an example of how Christ can transform culture. I believe that is one gift the Church of the Nazarene can give to the world, to put forth an authentically Wesleyan analysis of culture. In some ways Wesleyan theology is uniquely poised to do this. We have theological relations with virtually the entire spectrum of Christian theology, Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and many kinds of Protestantism. This breadth of interest can, I believe, be traced all the way back to Wesley himself.

**Second Step:** *Construct a Theological Autobiography.* This is not the same as an account of how you became a Christian, although some of those details will be relevant. A theological autobiography will help you to take your own theological pulse. You will have a better idea of how you have arrived where you currently find yourself, where you have already been, and where through God's grace you hope to go.

A theological autobiography could take many forms. Simply sitting down one afternoon at a writing desk or computer and discussing influential books, favorite Scriptures, powerful teachers, helpful conferences and so on would be a traditional if somewhat boring way to do this. There might be better ways to accomplish the same ideal.

A theological autobiography is simply to look at your entire life through a theological lens. A theological lens should probably first of all look for *kairotic* moments, times of *kairos* in your life. Birth, travel, family, marriage, conversion, parenthood, education, major illnesses and restoration of health are all times of *kairos* for all of us. There are moments when God the Holy Spirit has shone with particular brilliance in our lives.

Many great theologians have reflected autobiographically. In the case of some of them, key events in their lives have been studied over and over again, for example what happened to Martin Luther in the tower, and John Wesley's heart being strangely warmed along Aldersgate Street. Augustine was traumatized by stealing pears as a youth, an event he reports in his *Confessions*. Closer to our time, Paul Tillich was a Lutheran chaplain in World War I. During those war years he not only saw the horrors of trench warfare, but also purchased cheap reproductions of famous paintings in military stores. Thus did he begin to become a theologian of culture. Jurgen Moltmann became a theologian in response to having been a prisoner of war during World War II.

Luther once said something like this: There is no place so big, God is not bigger. There is no place so small, God is not smaller. To me this says that God wants to meet us everywhere we go, in whatever we do. Every time of our lives can be a time of theological pondering.

I told David Phillips, Nazarene missionary in the Philippines, that I am preaching every Sunday morning at a small United Methodist church in northeast Oklahoma. He responded by saying I need to learn to ride horses, hunt, and fish to identify really and truly with the people of that area. He is probably correct in saying this. All of us need to try new things, or remember old things we have forgotten, so that we can grow as Christian theologians and as ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Remember Paul's hope of becoming all things to all people, so he could win as many people to the cause of the cross as possible.

If we construct a theological autobiography, I hope we will see God and not ourselves at the center of our universe. If we do, we are well along the way to the **Third Step** to theological maturity: *Look Upon the Whole World as Our Parish*.

Few of us will have very many opportunities to travel around the world and live in different parts of the world. Few of us will be as fortunate as Wilfredo and Lourdes Manaois, who have spent significant time in three world areas: the Philippines, Africa, and the United States.

If we cannot always take ourselves to the world, we can try to bring the world to us. The easy way would be, I suppose, to read books and articles, listen to music, and watch videos about world cultures that are of interest to you and yet largely unfamiliar to you. A slightly more adventurous plan would be to eat in ethnic restaurants or to shop in stores selling merchandise not from your place. The best way, of course, is actually to meet people from different world areas. Meet them not on your terms, but allow them to reveal themselves to you on their terms. This will admittedly take some time. For some of us, it may take a lifetime, and still we will have only begun.

I heard a lot about Filipino hospitality when I arrived in the Philippines, and continued to hear about it as I continued to live there. I believe that Filipino hospitality is better than Western hospitality. Western style hospitality typically cares for the physical needs of the weary traveler. Western hospitality feeds, cleans, and gives rest to someone and then is typically done with that person.

Filipino hospitality is more about creating space where a person can be free to be himself. God is a God of hospitality in that sense also. The Triune God, who has space within for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to indwell each other in the way of *perichoresis*, is big enough to allow us to be ourselves. The great Lutheran theologian Robert W. Jenson has written that “God makes narrative room in his triune life for others than himself. . . . God opens otherness between himself and us, and so there is present room for us.”

Filipinos in particular, and Asians as a whole, open up the space necessary to become a self. Filipino hospitality may or may not invite a foreigner or stranger over to dinner. Sometimes I was invited over to eat, and sometimes not. But Filipino hospitality *frees one to become oneself*, and that

is the greatest hospitality of all, because it mirrors the hospitality we find in God himself.

This divine hospitality helps us to view the whole world as our parish. All of the words in this declaration are significant. God wishes us to see the *whole*, to see with eyes of faith, to see with the eyes of God. The whole is always more than just adding up all of the parts. The whole adds a dimension that is not fully present in any of the parts.

It is the *world* we are to look upon as a *whole*. At the outset, at least, it may be helpful to look upon the entire world as being recreated in God's image. Perhaps we should first see the whole sweep of God's grace, covering all of the world, and only after seeing grace should we look for places where people have refused grace. I am confident that this is the way God sees the world.

The whole world is *our* parish. I think John Wesley said the whole world is *my* parish, and to say "my parish" may add responsibility and urgency to the calling each of us senses from the Lord. If God has assigned this particular responsibility to *me*, it may not get done if I do not accomplish it.

But to say "our parish" sounds to me, at least, to be more appropriate for this part of the world. There is strength in numbers. Our primary path to theological maturity should be as surrounded by a cloud of witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and only secondarily as isolated pilgrims.

To say "our parish" instead of "my parish" may further remind us that as theologians and ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ we work together with students and members of our churches. Knowing our students and knowing the people in our churches is essential to knowing what sort of work God wants us to do in our parish, for after all it is not our parish but really the Lord's.

If to say "whole world" is huge, to say "parish" localizes it. Each of us has come here from a local parish. We must never forget where we have come from. We can never really contextualize any part of theology without learning as much as we can about our local circumstances.

**Fourth Step:** *Practice the Art of Spiritual Geography.* By that I simply mean that we must be aware of the holiness of God wherever we live, or to

put it in other words, the physical surroundings of where we are will inevitably color and shape our spiritual perceptions.

The psalmist looked to the hills. The psalmist also walked beside still waters and laid down in green pastures. The whole earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof. To practice the art of spiritual geography is to understand more and more that the gap between the physical and the spiritual is perhaps not as large as we have imagined. We have already mentioned that the Asian world view is more cosmic than the Western. The art of spiritual geography will narrow the gap between the physical and the spiritual.

It is simply not possible to ask "Does God get wet in the monsoon?" outside of the tropical lands where the monsoon blows. I did not realize until I had left my native state of Oregon what a great gift it had given to me, and continues to give to me. Non-Oregonians can never appreciate Oregon's warm gray winters and overcast summer mornings. The Pacific Ocean, the Willamette Valley, and the Cascade mountain range are forever a part of me.

To practice the art of spiritual geography is finally to know our home. We can never know our own hearts unless we know our home. We can never be effective workers in the Lord's vineyard unless we know both our hearts and our homes. To know either one of these two is necessarily to know the other.

Sometimes it may take an entire lifetime to find one's true heart. We have learned to speak of the instant of crisis and the moment of surrender when speaking of how one becomes entirely sanctified. In speaking in this way, we remind ourselves that the Holy Spirit is able to work thoroughly, quickly, and immediately.

Yet sometimes the Holy Spirit seems to be slow in his workings with people, perhaps because people are slow to respond. Some conversions are agonizingly slow. Jaroslav Pelikan spent virtually his entire professional life as an historical theologian in the Lutheran tradition. But at age seventy or so he converted to Eastern Orthodoxy, and remains to this day.

Filipinos have a charming expression: *my place* or *your place*. Here I think place means about what Americans mean by home. Americans do say "there's no place like home," which perhaps captures the best insights

from both cultures. Filipino men who squat by the side of the road take the full measure of their place.

T.S. Eliot has written:

We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.

(“Little Gidding” in *The Four Quartets*)

A place becomes home when it supports a community. Through the Exodus the captive Israelites became a nation. They inherited the promised land. Moses helped bring a nation to birth. Through Moses God formed a nation, but through Jacob God named a people. The people had first to be named, before they could be formed as a nation. In Genesis 32 Jacob wrestles and contends all night long with an unknown man. As the day is breaking and each man’s energy is long since spent, the stranger begs to be released from Jacob’s hold. Jacob refuses to release him without receiving a blessing from him. “What is your name?” And he said, “Jacob.” Then the man said, “You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed.”

**Fifth Step:** *Do Not Be Afraid to Argue With God.* Do not be afraid to argue with God, for you may win. Jacob prevailed against God, and because Jacob prevailed, his name was changed from Jacob to Israel.

Jacob limps away from his all-night wrestling match. The man he contended with struck Jacob on his hip socket, pushing his hip out of joint. Jacob’s prevailing against God is not the defeat of God but the victory of Jacob. “For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved,” Jacob confesses. He did not expect to be spared, but he was.

To see God face to face is one definition of what holiness means. In the case of Jacob, he survived this encounter, and in his survival he named an entire people. The whole event illustrates what Hannah later prayed, in 1 Samuel 2:6, “The Lord kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up.” Through his night of wrestling the Lord was killing Jacob and turning him into Israel. When morning came and Jacob realized his life was preserved, the struggle had named a people.

Those who have gone before us in the holiness movement have striven with God and have won. They have been killed by the Lord and they have been brought to life by the Lord.

**Sixth and Seventh Steps:** *Speak the Truth in Love* and *Never Lose Your Theological Voice*. “Speak the Truth in Love” (Ephesians 4:15) is the sixth step and “Never Lose Your Theological Voice” is the seventh step.

To *speak* the truth is an activist approach to truth. Truth is truth not simply as thought, because it must also be spoken. The Christian cannot be content merely to speak the truth, if the truth is not spoken in love. The Christian and the theologian must speak the truth in love.

If one truly speaks the truth in love, one will never lose one’s theological voice. Others may try to steal or suppress your theological voice, but if you speak the truth in love your theological voice will sound forth with great clarity, truth, and depth.

The Taiwanese Presbyterian theologian C.S. Song has often advised Christians in Asia to theologize using Asian resources. He endorses using Buddhist, Hindu, Taoist, Shinto, and Confucianist resources in a way that we cannot. Or to put it more exactly, C.S. Song advocates adopting such ancient Asian resources uncritically, whereas we must use them critically, sparingly, even prophetically. We may be able to use the vessel, the form of the story, if not all of its contents.

This may be true of the Buddhist idea of nirvana, which means extinction or emptiness. It is of course often said that Buddhism is a religion of emptiness, absence, even nihilism. By contrast, Christianity is said to be a religion of fullness, presence, and confidence. Yet there are elements of emptiness in our Christian faith. Even in our holiness language we seek to imitate the *kenosis* of Jesus Christ in “dying daily” and “being crucified with Christ.”

We all need to learn much more about Eastern or at least non-Western philosophies and approaches to reality than we currently know. We too easily dismiss our relative ignorance by the fear of syncretism. We fear that the more we know about, for example, Buddhism, the less we will know about Christianity. Yet I am convinced that my limited studies into Buddhism have made me a better Christian theologian. If I lived in a country where Buddhism had decisively shaped my nation’s history and culture, I would feel obligated to learn a great deal about it.

At a minimum we must encourage everyone here to look more seriously at the long and rich history of Christianity in Asia. Christianity does not begin in Asia with the arrival of the Protestant missionaries, and not even with the Roman Catholic missionaries who came before them. There is a viable historical tradition that one of the apostles founded Christianity in India. So your Christian history is as old as that of anyone. Realize the richness of your tradition, learn about it, grow with it.

The American holiness movement has recently been looking at itself, and has realized that its own tradition reaches back to apostolic Christianity. No longer is it thought that the doctrine of holiness was taught in the New Testament, and then not again until John Wesley arrived on the scene in the eighteenth century. Early Christian spirituality, medieval Roman Catholicism, and Reformation piety must now all be taken into account.

At the centennial of the 1898 independence of the Philippines one newspaper writer said that freedom denied is not freedom extinguished. Soon after the 1898 declaration of freedom the Philippines was once again under foreign domination, first by the Americans and, during World War 2, by the Japanese. But throughout this near half-century, freedom was not extinguished or obliterated, only denied and subverted.

Every theologian develops his or her distinctive theological voice in full recognition of heritage and history. It must be the same with all of us.

**Eighth Step:** *Receive Your Theological Voice From the Holy Spirit.* With mortals, this is impossible. With God, all things are possible! The Holy Spirit, the bond of love between God the Father and God the Son, is the only one who can really give us a theological voice. In Trinitarian theology, we might say there is a perfect three-part harmony voiced by Father, Son, and Spirit. The Triune God sings not three songs, but one song. Because we are mortals and not God, our harmonies will not be the perfect harmony of the Triune God. But all of our voices can aim at one thing, at glorifying God. And if our voices take seriously the triune dynamic of the many expressing themselves as the one, we will have found our theological voice and voices, and we will speak it and them in love.



## Slices of Wesleyan Theology In a Word

A. Brent Cobb

Near the top of the world in northern Thailand, he sits on the porch of his slit-bamboo house. Sweat streams, dripping from his chin and ears. He peers down the Maekok River running in front of his house. Suddenly, Jasuh—powerful witch doctor of his Red Lahu hill tribe—sees walking toward him on the shiny surface of the water two men dressed in white.

With flowing white hair and beards, they stride straight to him, look into his eyes, and one of them announces, “The true and living God will send a messenger to tell you how to know him, the true and living God. Trust his message.” They quickly turn away and disappear.

A young evangelist on his way to a distant downstream village soon comes. He asks for the village headman or the witch doctor, to get permission to spend the night. Jasuh welcomes him. Following dinner with the witch doctor and his family, he draws from his shoulder bag a “Viewmaster” that missionary Sam Yangmi had given him.

He instructs Jasuh to aim it toward the light to view its pictures. The first picture is from the story of Moses. To the shaman’s surprise, it shows the two men he’d seen in his vision. Jasuh exclaims, “I’ve been waiting for you to come to tell me about the true and living God. The men in this picture came to me. They told me to receive your message. How can I know the true and living God?”

The evangelist marvels at such openness by a medicine man. He changes his plans and stays longer. Jasuh and his whole family trust Christ as their Deliverer from demon powers. The evangelist goes and gets Sam Yangmi to lead a service at the river’s edge in celebration of Christ’s superior power to evil’s power. They burn demon shelves, idols, and witchcraft paraphernalia.

Jasuh is the first Red Lahu baptized in northern Thailand. Persecution soon breaks out. Villagers blame their deserter witch doctor for every

illness and difficulty. When he refuses to forsake Christ, they hire a hit man to kill him. He flees with his family to a far village where Christians teach him to read and write. The pastor must be away one Sunday, so he has Jasuh give his testimony. It has a powerful impact on everyone.

He and his family become full-grown Christians. In time, Pa Yang village needs a pastor. Sam goes to Jasuh, and hears the former witch doctor's story. Years before, fleeing from an assassin, he'd told God that if he lived, he would serve him full-time. God had formed Jasuh into a Christian leader.

He becomes pastor at Pa Yang. Through a visiting Korean team's intercession and witnessing, revival breaks out. Many turn from Satan to the Savior, including the village headman and his wife. All are baptized.

At the district pastors and wives retreat, Jasuh stands with a Bible in his hand and tears streaming. "Please teach me how to be a pastor," he pleads. "I don't have much education, and I don't know the Bible well but I want to learn so I can help my people. Please teach me how to be a good pastor?"

Jasuh's haunting question sows seeds that give being to Southeast Asia Nazarene Bible College. Jasuh has taken every course offered at Maetang extension center, graduating from the course of study for pastors. His daughter Jane has graduated from the degree course in Bangkok. She serves her people in the "Golden Triangle," opium-growing capital of the world. At the district assembly Jasuh is ordained. The former witchdoctor has been transformed into Christ's agent of deliverance through Christ's supreme Power. Today he is leading and equipping others for fruitful ministry because of the theological education that he received at Southeast Asia NBC's Maetang Extension center.

A student at Tokyo's renowned Sophia University, he is an English major. The Catholic school offers religion classes, but he is not exposed to the gospel. Talking with international students and teachers, his English ability soars. Helen Wilson and Thelma Culver, Dean of Women and Academic Dean respectively of Northwest Nazarene College, are two foreigners who come.

Wilson asks him if he would like to study in America. "Yes," he says, "but I can't leave here now." She gives him her card, that he puts in a drawer and "out of mind" for 2 years. It is the late 1960s. A nationwide

student revolt is underway. Protests and clashes with riot police shake university campuses.

The turmoil tires him. Feeling no hope for the future, he recalls Ms. Wilson's card, and finds it in the drawer. He wonders if she remembers him, as he writes her about his desire to study at NNC. Her reply comes quickly.

She expresses genuine interest in him. Inviting him to come, she promises: "I will consider you my *son*." He has never heard such words. He wonders why she offers to sponsor him legally, help him financially, and to assist him in other ways—like a son.

Upon arrival in at NNC, he finds Wilson, Culver, and others eager to be "family" to him. Wilson secures an international student scholarship, plus a Rotary Club grant for him. They all call him "Paul." Administrators, teachers, and students show him kindness and acceptance, "birthing" in him a yearning to know this way of love.

Going to church on Sundays, on Wednesday evenings, and to college chapel services, he tries to grasp the gospel, but grows dismayed. Something hinders him. Besieged by doubts, he thinks: I don't know if there is a God. If there is, I must find Him and follow Him. If there is no God, then I'll give up on it all.

One November Sunday in 1968 his struggle intensifies. He resolves to find God that night, or to give up trying. At the close of his message, the speaker invites people to commit their lives to God for service. Paul does not understand what "coming to the altar" means. Yet, not knowing how he got there, he finds himself there!

A sharp sense of his own sinfulness stabs him. Amid unspeakable light, Hitoshi "sees" evil in his own heart. He feels he deserves hell, yet he senses mercy, forgiveness and grace flowing to him. He will never forget the twin revelations of his sinfulness and of God's mercy.

He knows he is a "new creation" in Christ. Bart McKay and Phyllis Hartley, who had served in Japan, give him a Japanese Bible and books. He searches Scripture and devours devotional literature. He grows by leaps and bounds in grace, faith, and in his intimate walk with Christ.

Pastor Jim Bond's preaching help Paul to lay a firm foundation on which he begins to construct his Christian belief system. A magnificent mentoring relationship develops between pastor and Hitoshi.

You know him—NTS graduate, Boston University Th.D., and APNTS professor—Christ's "new-creation," made possible by means of His people "living out" their biblical "theology of agape."

At the Johannesburg Education Conference, Dr. William Greathouse, in his keynote address, confided that he has come to believe that the dynamic of Wesleyan holiness is that it is "a theology of love."

I will draw upon the book by Wynkoop titled with those words, written to answer the questions: "Is there a principle of interpretation. . . which can explain Christian doctrine and Christian life in the same system without either one undercutting the integrity of the other?" "Can theology and real human existence meet meaningfully?"<sup>1</sup>

John Wesley contributed an approach to theology that does this, adding a spiritual dimension that puts theology into a framework of personal relationship and experience.

Wesley did not consider justification and sanctification to be totally separated by time and experience. Rather, he saw them as two aspects of one truth. One does not believe for justification, and later believe for sanctification; rather he trusts in Christ by means of a personal relationship, and on the basis of that relationship of trust, he appropriates God's grace and begins a life of holiness.

Wesley saw in Scripture that a clear and adequate concept of justification alone is able to support a biblical concept of sanctification.

I will attempt to do three quick "slices" of Wesley's theology. Like slicing into an orange with a knife, if we cut into Wesley's theology at any point, we are likely to find the same ripe "fruit" of Wesley's having done his theology in a context of practical, passionate ministry.

Glimpse with me three slices of Wesley's theology:

1. The **essence** and **dynamic** of Wesley's theology

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<sup>1</sup>Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1972).

2. The **relevant practicality** of Wesley's theology
3. The key **contribution** of Wesley's theology.

## 1. Wesley's theology's essence and dynamic is agape.

Rather than Wesley representing a theology of **holiness**, it is more faithful to his major emphasis to call it a "theology of **love**." The following by Wesley shows that **love** is central to his theology:

If you look for anything more than love, you are looking wide of the mark, you are getting out of the royal way, and when you are asking others, "Have you received this or that blessing?" if you mean anything but more **love**, you mean wrong. . . . Settle it then in your heart, that from the moment God has saved you from all sin, you are to aim at nothing more, but **more** of that **love** described in the thirteenth of the Corinthians. You can go no higher than this, till you are carried into Abraham's bosom.<sup>2</sup>

When we say that **love** is the "**dynamic** of Wesleyanism," we imply that holiness is "**dynamic**," and that its character is **love**. Wesley did not merely **relate** the terms "**holiness**" and "**love**"—he **equated** them. They were, for Wesley, says Wynkoop, "one blazing unity of truth."

Cyril Squire compiled a list of Wesley's accomplishments that hint at his great heart of love of God and neighbor that motivated him:

- He rode over 250,000 miles on horseback.
- He preached over 45,000 sermons.
- He founded a school for boys and wrote textbooks.
- He compiled a Christian library.
- He published 233 original works on a variety of subjects.
- He wrote a medical book.
- He set up spinning and knitting shops for the poor
- He, according to some historians, helped save England, morally and spiritually, from the disaster that threatened Europe.

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<sup>2</sup>John Wesley, "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection," *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed. 14 vols., edited by Thomas Jackson (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1872; reprint ed., Kansas City, MO.: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1979), 11:430.

## 2. Wesley's theology's relevant practicality relates to the prominence he gives to personal relationships.

Wesley wrote: "Love is the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment.' It is not only 'the first and great commandment,' but all the commandments in one. . . the royal law of heaven and earth is this, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and mind and strength.'"<sup>3</sup>

For Wesley, love is a quality of a person, never a "thing." It has to do with persons in relationship. He declared: "Religion is nothing more or less, than pure love to God and man." Wesley wrote 14 volumes of his main works, plus many other books, articles, and hymns. Yet all are a commentary, elaboration, and exegesis of love—the multi-faceted **agape** kind.

In the *New Living Translation* we read about Enoch: "He enjoyed a close **relationship** with God throughout his life" (Gen 5:24 NLT). About Noah we read: "He consistently followed God's will and enjoyed a close **relationship** with him" (Gen 6:9 NLT).

If **we** are committed to Wesleyan theology, we must know it to be a theology of **love**. We learner-theologian-teacher-preacher-practitioners know that four main Greek words are often translated "love," but that one, **agape**, is different from the others. It refers to the quality of a **person** and a **principle** by which he orders his life. It is not an emotion but a deliberate policy by which **relationships** are set right and kept right.

Wynkoop writes that "**Agape** cannot so much be **defined** as it can be **demonstrated**." It motivates outreach. It loses itself in others. Holiness is wholeness; **agape** is sharing that wholeness.<sup>4</sup> This is part of what Wesley meant by "social holiness."

On a ferry in the Philippines are three Americans—Flora Wilson and her daughters, Elizabeth and Brenda. They strike up a conversation with **Julieta** who is surprised to hear them speaking Ilongo.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 367.

<sup>4</sup>Wynkoop, *Theology of Love*, 34-35.

Their kindness to her stirs a hunger in her to know **Christ**. She calls that conveniently-graced day “the beginning of my conversion.” One month later, she boards a ferry and hears Flora Wilson call her name! Hunger is written on her face.

During the long voyage to Manila, Flora “gossips the good news” about a personal saving **relationship** with Christ. She tells Julie a new church is being planted in her town, giving her its location.

Upon returning to Bacolod, Julie goes to the Nazarene storefront on Wednesday evening to meet young pastor Jerry Tingson and the other joyous Nazarenes. She says she has met missionary Flora Wilson. They welcome her to the “family,” taking her to their hearts, and making her promise to return on Sunday.

That Lord’s Day is another turning point for Julie. They make her feel that **she** is the most important person present. Pastor Tingson preaches a clear salvation message. The entire service centers on Christ. When the pastor extends an invitation, she goes forward, along with others. Jesus becomes her personal Savior, and her heart feels as though it will burst with joy!

God calls her to His service. When she talks with the Wilsons about her call, they urge her to come to Iloilo City to study at VNBC, where they teach.

Her thirst for knowledge is insatiable. In the Doctrine of Holiness class that Stanley Wilson teaches, he invites students to consecrate their lives to Christ. Julie kneels and presents herself completely to the Lord as a living sacrifice. The Holy Spirit purifies her heart by faith.

Dr. and Mrs. Kenneth Rice come to VNBC to conduct a Sunday school workshop. The Lord leads them to get to know Julie and to offer to help her to go to America for advanced studies.

In 1979, she arrives in Kansas City to begin at NTS. She stays in the home of the Rices, and works in the Sunday School Ministries Department at Nazarene Headquarters. She works with women’s ministries, singles’ ministries, and senior adult ministries.

What explains (accounts for) this radical reorientation of her life? It is the grace of God, yes; but in large part, it is flesh-and-blood “dealers in hope,” living out their holiness lifestyle and “theology of **agape**” in

**relationship** with her, that brings God’s grace to Dr. Julie Macainan Detalo.

### **3. Wesley’s theological contributions include personal involvement in grace (as opposed to pre-determinism or a fatalistic predestination).**

Carl Bangs, on the directness of the Wesleys’ (John and Charles) faith, says that it “lies in the way in which the Bible functions for them, informing their perceptions, thoughts, and actions. It lives through them. Exegesis and life are one and the same.”<sup>5</sup>

When T.W. Willingham was a student at Olivet Nazarene College, some fellow students began to tell each other what they wanted to do when they graduated from college.

“I’m going to become District Superintendent of this district,” boasted one student.

“I’m going to become President of this college,” boasted another.

“I’m going to become Director and Preacher for the Nazarene denominational radio broadcast,” boasted a third student.

“T.W., what are you going to become?” they asked. “I don’t know,” he said. “I haven’t thought about what position I will have. I want to serve the Lord; **HE** will choose what he wants me to do and be.”

After they graduated, they went away—one to become District Superintendent, one to become college President, and the third to become director/preacher for the Nazarene radio ministry. T.W. Willingham went forth to serve the Lord because he loved Him.

Within a short time, however, here is what happened:

- The student who had wanted to become district superintendent had left the ministry.
- The one who planned to become President had left following Christ altogether.

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<sup>5</sup>Carl Bangs, *Our Roots of Belief: Biblical Faith and Faithful Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1981), 40-41.



- The student that had wanted to be the Nazarene radio preacher and director had turned his back on the Lord!
- T.W. Willingham, however, was serving the Lord with all his heart as a loving, fruitful pastor and a faithful evangelist.

In time, he was elected District Superintendent. And he kept serving Christ. During a crisis at the college, he was made President of Olivet Nazarene College. And he just kept serving the Lord. One day, when denominational leaders were looking for a godly man to direct the radio ministry and to be the preacher for the radio broadcasts, they chose T.W. Willingham. And he just kept serving his **LORD!** I grew up hearing Willingham. He was a faithful “existential” biblical theologian, his feet firmly fixed on the ground of ministry engagement.

Theology infused with the personal experience of God’s grace is genuine Wesleyanism. Wynkoop summarizes: “Wesley’s ultimate hermeneutic is **love**. Every strand of his thought, the warm heart of every doctrine, the passion of every sermon, the test of every claim to Christian grace, was **love**. So central is love that to be ‘Wesleyan’ is to be committed to a **theology of love**.”<sup>6</sup>

#### LET YOUR LOVE FLOW THROUGH ME

*Let Your love flow through me,  
Let Your love flow through me,  
Make me a blessing, Lord,  
Wherever I may be;  
Keep me pure, keep me clean  
So that You might be seen,  
Let Your love flow through me,  
Through me.*

Words and Music

Rodger Strader

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<sup>6</sup>Wynkoop, *A Theology of Love*, 101.