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Professor as Disciple-Maker: The Life and Work of Sue Russell

ANTHONY CASEY

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Anthony Casey is Department Chair and Associate Professor of Intercultural Studies at William Carey Univeristy

Each Fall, JEMS features a life-history style interview with a missiologist in an effort to give readers a glimpse of the person behind the books and ideas. We are excited to feature Sue Russell, Professor of Mission and Contextual Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky. This interview was conducted by Anthony Casey and has been lightly edited for length and with an effort to retain a conversational tone.

Anthony Casey

Dr. Sue Russell, thanks so much for sharing a little bit about how God has worked and directed your life over the years. Would you mind sharing a little bit about where you grew up and what your early years were like?

Sue Russell

I grew up in Southern California, two blocks from Disneyland. I remember our favorite thing was every Saturday we went to the beach - Lifeguard Station Number 19 at Newport Beach. My dad took us way out and we'd body surf back. The beach was a huge part of my life. I was always interested in sports as well. We didn't have girls my age on our block, so I played baseball with the boys when someone saw me around and recruited me for their team. Later, my mom signed our family up for a softball league.

As a kid I wanted to be three things in life. I got it in my head that I wanted to be a professional baseball player. I didn't know girls didn't play professional baseball at the time. I wanted to be a fireman. This was before Title 9, so girls weren't supposed to do these things. I had no role models in this, but I knew I wanted to be a fireman. And the third was getting into backpacking. I wanted to be a mountaineering teacher, so those were my goals.

Sports and academics have been major influences in my life. Sixth-grade students played the faculty every year in a softball game. The 6th graders voted who would play in the game, and all the girls just voted for the most popular girl. But I had been playing baseball with the guys every day at recess, so they all voted for me! So, I got to play in that game and then I just continued playing sports as much as I could.

Coaches and teachers had a major impact on my life because they took an interest in me and encouraged me. I was involved in band and the band instructor invited me to join different music groups. He was as pleased as I was when I was voted "Best Bandsman" my senior year. Many other teachers took me under their wing and because of them I thrived in school. I didn't realize I was good at math until I started winning the math award. One science teacher allowed me to do an independent science project studying the environmental impact of a proposed development. I ended up getting 1st place in the science fair and later the student athlete of the year award, as well as award for top science student of our graduating year.

I also was given amazing opportunities in sports. Title IV came out while I was in high school. Although I played on the girls' softball team, we didn't have the dedicated coaching the boys team received. The coach of the junior varsity baseball team was my chemistry teacher, and I was an A+ student so he let me play on the junior varsity baseball team with the boys. We got to practice with the varsity team and their coach had been a professional catcher, which was my position, so I was able to get some really good coaching at those practices.

I also enjoyed the outdoors and was part of a mountaineering Girl Scout troop in High School. So although my friends wanted to be doctors and lawyers, I wanted to have a career outdoors. I was actually going to join the Navy to study meteorology but when I went to sign the final papers, they couldn't guarantee the school. So instead, I applied to Humboldt State University in California as a chemistry major. I wanted to eventually get into their forest management program. I wasn't planning to play softball, but someone saw me throwing the ball across the quad and recruited me. So, I ended up majoring in chemistry and playing college softball, the latter of which ended up having a lifetime impact on me by exposing me to the gospel.

My chemistry grades were good and I got into the forest management program. As a summer job I worked for the National Forest Service as a firefighter. I also went to the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) and spent thirty days mountaineering in the Rockies. At the end of the course, they asked me to come back and take their leadership course so I could become one of their instructors. I was now living my

childhood dreams; I was playing softball at the highest level, fighting fires for the Forest Service, and on my way to becoming a mountaineering instructor. But in my heart, I knew something was missing.

I was raised in the church, but when my parents divorced when I was 16, I wanted no part of Christianity. However, over the years I found that I felt close to God when I was in the mountains. But it was while I was at NOLS that I began to find my way back to God. We had a freak snowstorm in the middle of that thirty-day trip, 10,000 feet up on a mountain near the Continental Divide. We were stuck there for three days, never really in danger because of our seasoned leadership, but still just trying to keep warm. I remember going out of my tent and seeing a magnificent full moon and everything covered in white. I just sat on a rock and remember feeling very close to God and thinking of the John Denver song Rocky Mountain High – "talk to God and listen to the casual reply." I realized that as close as I felt to God, I didn't know how to talk to Him. It created a longing in my heart to know how to connect with God.

The next step on this journey was in the form of Judy, a new girl who was trying out for the softball team – my position actually, though she didn't' realize that I was the all-conference catcher. My coach asked me to work with her in case I got injured. I wasn't too thrilled about that. But here's this gal, who will probably never play an inning, but she outworks all of us. We're like, "Judy, just chill!" She wore this t-shirt that I recognized as something Christian. So, I'm watching her – she's a Christian, she loves everyone, and everyone seems to love her, and she is outworking all of us. I had to figure out what made her tick! So, I started asking her questions but later she told me she was too intimidated of me to really share her faith.

She also later told me she brought the director of Cru for our campus to my dorm window where they would pray for me every week. We soon became friends and decided to be roommates the following year. I really wanted to be like Judy so when she started a series on 10 steps to Christian maturity, I decided to do the same one. But since I am competitive, I thought I would do these faster and better. I started with the book she skipped called, Knowing Christ personally. I'm in my room going over the Bible study on my own and I got overwhelmed with the love of Christ. I wanted that love in my life and prayed to receive His love. When Judy found out, she connected me with her discipler, and we met every week for three years. She just loved me. I'm this crusty, tomboyish softball player and she's this Barbie-type person – pink and things. Not my style! But she came to all of our home softball games and by the end of the year, half the team were Christians! We are still friends forty years later! We meet every summer when I'm in Southern California.

Cru infused in me a desire for evangelism and discipleship. We did that all over the Humboldt State campus and then I'd go on the summerlong Cru mission trips. It was a great experience! God was working in me. I realized there were three things that were of eternal significance: God, His Word, and people. As I neared graduation, I'd fought enough forest fires to know that working in forest management did not lead to things eternal. I entered college thinking living in a forest by myself was the perfect career. Christ began to change those feelings, so I sat down and prayed for direction. I wanted to be involved in evangelism and discipleship using the unique gifts and training God had given me. I had no cross-cultural experience, but I thought, Lord, if you have me overseas, let it be China. I had a close friend from Taiwan, so that influenced me there.

Anthony

Hold on a minute! It sounds like you're in the middle of a major life event here. Where were your parents in all this? What did they think as you are on this path increasingly devoted to Jesus?

Sue

My parents had divorced when I was 16 and once I started college I was living on my own. My dad just kind of tolerated these things. My mom always went to church. We were nominal Methodists because her parents were Methodist. I never really knew what my mother thought about my devotion to Christ until her memorial service. One of her friends sought me out and told me that my mother was so curious about what took me all the way to SE Asia that she joined a Bible study called Experiencing God. When my sister and I talked, she was convinced that this is when my mother came to a personal faith in Christ.

Anthony

Alright. So, what about at college? I guess you've sort of stumbled into realizing you're academically gifted. Did you have any college professors in particular that influenced you along the way?

Sue

Not so much with the professors. It was mostly my coaches who had the bigger impact. But a cool story about my seemingly unlikely major – forest management – and how it actually prepared me for my later work with Wycliffe Bible Translators. I had a forest

management capstone class where you're actually developing a long-term plan for the forest. You know, integrating wildlife, fisheries, recreation, hunting, timber, that kind of stuff. I loved that class. I was really good at it. It just made sense to me the importance of managing the forest and integrating all of these activities into a healthy system. I didn't realize how that was preparing me for what God was going to call me to as a translation project manager for Wycliffe.

Anthony

Wow. That's neat. So how did you get from college to SE Asia with Wycliffe?

Sue

I was about to graduate and actually thought I might join staff with Cru. But I considered my background and training and just didn't end up feeling that was the right path. I prayed, "Lord, let me slow down here and see what you have." I tend to go full steam ahead in general but now I didn't know what I was going to do. I looked at all kinds of ministry organizations but did not even consider Wycliffe because I really struggled with learning languages.

Anthony

That's interesting, because maybe I'm off here, but it seems like a lot of people that are really good at math, and chemistry is sort of like math as well, tend to do well in languages. Do you know if there's a reason why you didn't like languages at the time.

Sue

Well, I don't know why, I just really struggled with learning languages so didn't think I would be a good fit in an organization that worked with languages. Anyway, here I am praying for direction. My roommate received the Wycliffe magazine, but I had never seen a copy. But one day I came home and there was one on the counter with a big headline that said: Lost! The feature story was about someone who had gotten lost at jungle camp and a search had been organized. I'm reading and thinking, "They really don't know how to do this! Maybe you could use someone like me who could teach you how to survive in the wilderness." So, I tore out the little coupon in the magazine for more information and mailed it in. I read all the information they sent me and thought, wow, here's a great way to do evangelism, reading Scripture to people in their own

language and asking what it means. And what a great way to do discipleship, going through the whole Bible with someone verse by verse as you translate it. So, Wycliffe ends up hitting one of my requests to be involved in evangelism and discipleship. But I still had a problem with languages, which were not my gift.

A couple in my church had a daughter who was actually with Wycliffe so I asked if I could meet with them. I'm still wondering just how my talents and abilities might fit. Out of the blue during the meeting the dad asks me if I'm good at math. Of course, I'm good at math! It's always been my best subject. So, he says, well my daughter says if you're good at math, you'd be good at linguistic analysis. My mind really begins working now! That is two of my criteria, but I knew that Wycliffe was not working in China.

Spring Break senior year of college I'm visiting my mom back in Southern California where Wycliffe's headquarters were at that time. I decided to visit their campus and ended up in a chapel service. Who was speaking, but linguistic legend Kenneth Pike! He was announcing Wycliffe's new partnerships in Asia, and I just said, "OK Lord, this is it!"

I had no idea what linguistics was or that I needed to take some graduate classes in Dallas to prepare but I moved in that direction, began raising support, and God serendipitously provided the money I needed for the first term through a roofing project I stumbled upon (yes, I used to be a roofer!), and the rest is history!

Anthony

That is a phenomenal story! Praise God! So, tell us something about your time in SE Asia and what the work was like.

Sue

First we learned the national language and then began work on the local language. The gospel had spread to about half of the 40,000 speakers about 40 years previous to our arrival. However, they still did not have Scripture in their language and the church was requesting a translation. The Bible Society decided to sponsor the translation project. We hired translators and then I needed to find people who would be readers and part of a translation committee. I began visiting all of the sixty little churches scattered around five river watersheds. After two weeks and sixty churches I couldn't find anyone that wanted to help! I got back and wrote one of those letters you're not supposed to write to your supporting churches. I thought to myself, if these people don't even care about

their own translation project, what am I doing here. Those were the days of snail mail, so you have to wait weeks for a response to arrive. They wrote back and said hang in there and we are praying for you.

About that time God put on my mind this man called Jimmy Libau. I had met him at one of the translation workshops and appreciated his leadership. I just had this sense that I needed to go find him, but I had no idea where he was. I employed the famous Jungle Telegraph where you go around and ask who knows Jimmy, where has he lived? Eventually I got directions to his house. I get there and we start talking. He begins telling me about his vision to form a committee of local leaders who would oversee the project and make sure the translation got done. I had no idea at the time, but he had heard about this project and had been looking for me to see if he could help! He was the man for the job because two weeks later we had our first meeting as a translation committee!

We had to figure out who's in charge of this committee, well I did anyway. They wanted to call me a missionary, but I was like no, no you can't call me that in this country. Then they wanted to call me a pastor but, no, I'm not the pastor! So, they settled on younger sister. What I didn't know was because of my age I was too young to be seen as a leader in that culture. Young people were under the authority of the elders. I was able to do all the training for translation principles, reading groups, the accuracy checks, and so on under their authority.

It was difficult at times because it was easy to think I was leading things. But the real turning point in the project was during the planning for our second meeting to check translation. I went to Jimmy's house and discovered the translation committee had already decided on the place and date for the next checking session. Because I thought I needed to be there, I asked Jimmy to change the dates based on my travel schedule. Well, the Holy Spirit made it clear to me that that wasn't my decision and I apologized to Jimmy. He had planned things around the school calendar so that the most educated people in the community, the schoolteachers, could participate. I got back from a Wycliffe meeting out of the area to find people doing exactly what they should be – checking translated Scripture for clarity and accuracy and teaching others the translation principles. It was amazing! But the Lord was not done with me. During the first day back, I got really sick and was out of commission for the rest of the week.

So, I'm laying in bed in at the pastor's house when I begin to hear singing at 8:00 that night. This goes on all week. What I didn't know is Jimmy had visited the church and

decided that they would have revival meetings. The committee checked translation from 8am to 4pm, and then held revival meetings from 8pm to 4am. The revival led to attracting many people from the area who ended up helping with translation. I literally saw anthropology at work as the people used their cultural community feasts to provide food and housing for large numbers of people who helped with the translation checking sessions. So over about five years revival broke out in the villages.

God used the project to help the church leaders achieve their visions. It was difficult for an individual church to have the funds for an initiative, but the project brought the churches together. Churches asked the committee if they would produce a songbook. So, they gathered local indigenous songwriters to write songs sung in churches. I helped train people on a computer to produce the music and compile the songbook. They formed a choir to perform all the songs and we recorded those sessions and sent cassette tapes to all the churches in the area so people could learn the songs.

They also were committed to evangelizing non-Christian communities. In their culture, young people could not go up to older people and preach to them. However, they could take the new Bible translation and ask non-believers if they could read to them and ask them if the translation was good in their language. It became a great way to do evangelism. The committee put together a small evangelism team using this approach. My home church bought a boat, engine, and fuel and the committee provided the personnel. Those evangelists spent two years doing translation checks in 14 villages who had been hostile to the gospel. They would simply read the new translation and have a question-and-answer session. Over time they went through the whole New Testament. Two years later on Christmas Day, Jimmy tells the evangelists that the people are ready. They put out the call, "Who wants to be a follower of Jesus?" Over 300 hundred people were baptized, and seven churches were planted that Christmas Day.

Another project the committee was involved with was literacy. About 50% of the women in the community were not literate. I had talked to Jimmy about the need for literacy but the committee had other priorities. However, I created a primer, writing book, and teacher's manual and made 50 sets of material. Near the end of the project, Jimmy talked about the need for more people to read the Scripture and I asked, "What about the people who don't know how to read?" He said, "You are right, you better do something about it." So, the committee asked each village to send one person to become their literacy teacher to the next committee checking session. I helped train them, gave them materials, and they went back to their villages to begin literacy classes.

People ask me, "Why Forest management?" Well, what the committee needed was someone to put together a long-term plan for translation, evangelism, discipleship, literacy, and song writing. I would have never thought it, but my forest management program in college gave me exactly the training and skills needed to help the church leaders fulfill their vision for their community.

Anthony

Wonderful. Well, we could spend days on that, but how do you know when your time is coming to an end with that kind of a thing? How did you end up transitioning to the next phase of life?

Sue

When the New Testament was done, the committee and I both felt for the good of the community's standing in the denomination, they needed to do the Old Testament on their own. I had been there about eight years without a real furlough other than short trips home, so I took my furlough to finish my MA while they started the OT project. I had worked with Sherwood and Judy Lingenfelter when they were anthropology consultants on the field, and I thought I would enjoy continuing to learn from them. I could finish a master's degree in a semester with my previous courses in linguistics. I had some visa issues getting back to the field long-term, so I decided to start the D.Miss at Biola while taking short visits back to SE Asia.

During this time, I met David, my husband now, who was working at Biola and we had conversations off and on and after three years he finally asked me out. He's kind of shy, but we really liked each other. But I had made a commitment to the church to go back until the Old Testament was finished. I knew the Bible Society might pull their funding if SIL wasn't involved so I told them I'd be involved until the OT was finished. As much as I liked David, I had promised I'd go back overseas. He kind of disappeared because he faced a dilemma. He didn't feel called overseas, but he didn't want to make it harder for me. So, I went back and then after three years the OT had been drafted and I was doing my next year's planning and I realized I was done with the project. For the first time in 15 years, I had no long term commitments.

I came home to California that Spring because my mother had went into critical care. The day she got out Doug Hayward at Biola had a heart attack. I had been his grader while working on my degree, so I ended up finishing teaching his classes that term

before heading back to SE Asia. One day as I was leaving campus I happened to bump into David. And he's like hi, what are you doing? I said well, I'm finishing up the translation project. He heard finished, and he asked me out. We dated for two months while I waited for my mother to be released from the hospital and realized we were serious about our relationship.

You asked, "How do you finish up a career as a Bible translator?" David and I had been talking and because of my unique situation I knew he was planning on coming to SE Asia at Christmas to ask me to marry him. He pretty much had to tell me six months in advance because I needed that much time to disengage from everything I was doing on the field. But, how do you say goodbye to the community where you've lived for fifteen years and an adopted brother and family who has taken care of you that whole time? I asked David how he felt about paying my adopted brother a water buffalo as a way to honor and thank him for all his care. I didn't think anything about it, and I got this e-mail from David: "A water buffalo? What's a water buffalo?" But I explained the cultural significance and David agreed to go through the full village cultural engagement ceremony.

So, David came out to my village and went through the ceremony, complete with water buffalo. In that culture, once the bride wealth is paid, the woman is expected to go back to her husband's village. So, the following day my brother and his family cleaned out all my stuff from my village house as part of the bride wealth and then waved goodbye! So that's how I ended up closing out my time in SE Asia and moving to California where I started teaching at Biola.

David already worked at Biola, and I began adjunct teaching. One day David said, "You should take this Greek class. It's a whole year of Greek in seven weeks. You're good at languages." Not really, but I took it and that ended up leading me down the path to full time faculty at Biola.

Anthony

You said you had been a TA, so you had gotten a little bit of a taste of teaching. Did you have aspirations to become a professor, or did you just stumble down the path and things opened up.

Sue

I've always had a heart for discipling college students. Campus Crusade gave me that. My last year in the village, I had a college intern come out for six months and working with her just reignited my passion for discipling college students. She'd got so excited about what was happening with the translation project, and she also was a speed typist. You have to back translate the whole New Testament into English for consultant checking. It would take me forever to do just a little. She was a speed typist, so we spent two hours every morning on that. I would read the local translation and translate to English, and she would type it.

That gave me the longing again to work with college students, but I didn't know what that would look like since I was in a village in SE Asia. But when I came back and got married, I was reading Matthew 28, the classic Great Commission passage. It hit me that nothing had changed for me. My main vocation is to make disciples, whether in SE Asia or in a classroom in Los Angeles. So, I saw teaching, not necessarily as being a professor, but being able to disciple students. And I had the privilege of teaching a required Bible class that taught mission through the book of Acts. I had 200 students a semester with whom to teach missions in the Bible and talk about my time in SE Asia. Over time at Biola, I got to disciple 6,000 students in missions and missional living. I had only been a Christian for three years before moving overseas so I was really socialized as a Christian in the village culture in SE Asia. So, I brought that community aspect to the classes I was teaching. I got into education out of a desire to disciple.

Anthony

Yeah, that's a good way to put it and a very applicable way to describe Christian professors as well. Did you have any trouble adapting to the academic world or did you just sort of hit your stride?

Sue

I've always been kind of geeky and SIL encourages going to conferences and presenting. I had done research and presented quite a bit on language assessment in multilingual contexts. There was a nearby country to where I lived that had an outstanding linguistics library that I'd visit on visa runs. I'd worked with Sherwood Lingenfelter on some projects. Then I took graduate classes on furloughs. So, I had been around the academic environment over the years. The hardest thing for me was actually the gender debate in ministry that was going on at the time. It wasn't an issue in Asia, so I first heard about it at Biola. Based on my experience in anthropology and living in a group-

oriented culture, I felt people were making a construct that wasn't in the Bible. That actually got me into my PhD program at UCLA because I didn't have the academic credentials in New Testament to be able to address that as a New Testament scholar as well as an anthropologist.

Anthony

So, you did a PhD at UCLA, but you had already been a professor at Biola, right?

Sue

Yes. I was presenting in these areas but realized that to really have credibility to say what I was saying, I needed the New Testament degree.

Anthony

Sure, let's get to that in a second, but when you were a student and then an early professor at Biola, there were some really prominent figures there in missiology. Certainly, the Lingenfelters. Who were some of your colleagues there and what were these people like as neighbors down the hall?

Sue

When I came to Biola it was really weird. I knew Sherwood on the field and then I go back to Biola and he was the Provost. I walked into his office once and said, "Hey, can I see Sherwood?" They all look at me going, "Do you have an appointment with Doctor Lingenfelter?" I'm like, whoops! So yes, I knew Sherwood and Judy. We were really blessed at Biola to have a number of outstanding missiologists. Doug Hayward brought mission experience and expertise in anthropology. We worked closely together to develop an anthropology degree that he started, and I took over that program. Marguerite Kraft was there when I was. She, Doug Hayward, and Sherwood Lingenfelter were part of my D.Miss committee. Tom Steffen was also there but taught mostly at the graduate level. I really appreciated his work on the facilitator era in missions, because it affirmed what had happened with the translation committee. Through Biola I also got involved with EMS. When meetings were held at Biola, Doug Pennoyer would let us have our own student section at EMS so that was fun. One of the best parts of Biola was being able to hire somebody like Kevin Pittle, who's just absolutely brilliant and then Katrina Green in development, so I think we've really had a very strong contingent of anthropologists there and really, I was hoping that we would make an impact on missiology by having really solid anthropology.

Anthony

What were the faculty dynamics like? Were you friends? Did you spend time outside of Biola?

Sue

David had worked at Biola about 25 years when we were married, so we had a variety of faculty friends. One story that he told me was that when his father died, the Lingenfelters invited him over their house for Christmas and other occasions. That was very meaningful to him, and they were the first ones he told he was going to ask me to marry him. I enjoyed mentoring new faculty. When my husband and I had date night, Katrina would often come along. Kevin Pittle became like a younger brother. I also did a lot with the other female faculty and staff on campus. I talked about 13 women into doing their first triathlon at Biola. I loved working on committees because I got to meet many interesting people outside my department.

Anthony

Was Biola supportive of you going to UCLA and what was your reception like based on your background as a Bible translator going to a state university?

Sue

I went to UCLA because the head of the program in Early Christianity, Dr. Bartchy, was one of the founding members of the Context Group, the group that started using anthropological models in New Testament studies. I had been critiquing some of their work because they often overextended the models in their analysis. When I wrote to him, he was on sabbatical, so my husband and I went to his house to find out more about the program. Dr. Bartchy was excited because he had a real anthropologist who was interested in this program. Most people came in with either a background in classics or the Bible, because it required both. I was deficient in the classics, so a lot of my coursework ended up being there.

Dr. Bartchy, the program director, was known throughout UCLA as being a Christian. Now he wouldn't fit into narrow evangelical boundaries, but he was definitely a follower of Christ, so with him it was never an issue. The first thing he did was sit me down and say, “You need to know where I'm coming from as a follower of Christ.” It was fun to listen to him when he talked to students. He’d said, “Ok, these are the historic things

we can know factually." People loved him and his classes were always full. I'd be in seminars with him, and there would be Hindus, Muslims, Catholics, and Evangelicals all reading Paul's writings together.

I'm getting ahead. So, during the initial interview, Dr. Bartchy asks me to read an article he is working on and to tell him what I think. As I read it, I find he has overextended the model he is using. Now I am in a dilemma. Do I be nice or tell him what I really think? I thought if I'm going to get into the program, he ought to know what I really think so I told him what he was doing was interesting but that I would probably use this model in a more nuanced way. He actually replied that even if I didn't get into the program, he'd love to work with me more on these issues. I got in.

It was a neat opportunity. I remember walking on the UCLA campus and had the sense that this is my new village. When talking to someone usually the first question people ask is, "What is your major." When I told them I was studying Early Christianity often the reply was, "Well, I used to be a Christian." That gave me opportunity to say, "Well, tell me about that."

Anthony

So then along the way you made the move to Asbury Seminary, who being a southern California girl who lived in Southeast Asia, now found yourself in horse country! I went to Southern Seminary in Louisville but took a PhD seminar at Asbury with George Hunter actually, so I did a semester at Asbury as well. Tell us a little bit about that transition. What brought you to Asbury and what was the reception like there?

Sue

Well, my husband had just retired, and I had just finished at UCLA. So here we are, I'm done, he's done. We were at this place that I thought we should listen to what the next thing was supposed to be and if it was Biola, I was very happy to stay at Biola. I prayerfully began looking and there were six missiology jobs open that year. Fuller, TEDS, DTS, Asbury, and so on. I kind of drew a line across the US and determined I wasn't going any north of Tennessee. I mean, I'm a southern California girl, you know. But I felt like Asbury was close enough so we should look at them for various reasons. We came to Asbury on a visit and fell in love with the community. I laughed with people during my interviews. You don't laugh at interviews, right? But there was a joy here that was attractive.

Another thing that drew me was the large community of international students. Because of my husband's health I can't travel much anymore. I had hoped to bring leaders from my SE Asian village to seminary to train and go back to their communities. I looked around and thought, here are the global leaders sitting in these classrooms!

But the thing that impressed me the most was the commitment to community. They sent me the faculty handbook and it described this beautiful faculty community covenant to each other. I just wept and I had to read it to my husband. We felt this call to the community. But we still weren't sure, so I made a list comparing Biola and Asbury. We wanted to seek first the Kingdom and it seemed like Asbury was the place. I remember completing the list and turning to my husband to show him. His only remark was, "It is about time you figured it out." He knew before I did that Asbury was where we were called.

Anthony

Well, a lot of your background is coming together for me because I know you bought a house right there on campus because you want to have faculty and students over. I know you guys totally revamped that house at Asbury, which I love. So, you're plugged in. Wilmore, Kentucky is a small place, but that means everybody is right there. It's not Southern California, it's not urban, it's not Asia, but the community aspect of it is all you.

Sue

We wanted to be close to that so David could age at home, and little did I know that with his recent spinal cord injury how we designed the house remodel is exactly what was needed now. Students who have independent study classes come to my house. Students come over to talk about their dissertations. I hold my office hours here and people just come on over!

Anthony

You know when I do these interviews every year I'm always interested in the impact of professors on students' lives, and I can just imagine if I were to interview some of your students in 20 years how many of them would reflect fondly on time spent literally in your house! It's not often that students get to experience a holistic view of their professors, so that's really great.

We can start landing the plane here. So, I'm a runner myself. I did all different sports growing up, but I was roommates with some cross-country runners in college and saw a different side of distance running that became a beautiful thing to me. I started running later in college and actually was in a triathlon club. So, because of my background, I've followed your triathlon career with some interest from afar so how did you get into that?

Sue

It was actually in SE Asia. There was a state team that trained and were encouraging people to do triathlons. They started holding workouts for people, so I joined in those when I was able. I did the training but never got to actually do a triathlon because that's when my mom got sick, and I was back in the states a lot. I was also getting older and didn't think it was a good idea to do a ton of training in one event like the marathon so triathlon spreads that out over three sports. I really got into it. I always wanted to do a full Ironman. On my first sabbatical I did a 1/2 Ironman. That's what they had in California. So, I did that three times, but when I moved to Kentucky, they had the full Ironman nearby in Louisville. Tris take a lot of time to train for but what was really cool was when we sat down at Asbury to look at my contract, we had 50% for teaching, and then 25% for research, and 25% for community service. My dean, Greg Okesson said let's count your triathlon as community outreach.

For various reasons I haven't finished a full Ironman. One time I crashed on the bike and there's been some issues with my knee on other occasions. The last time I did an Ironman, the organization asked me to tell my story. I said, well, this is my third attempt. They wanted to know how I deal with failure and why I keep going. It became a part of their media promotions. I'm in Ironman Facebook groups and get to talk about how I handle disappointment. It's been good.

This year, just with everything going on with my husband, I hired a coach because I couldn't emotionally do the kind of training I need to on my own. Having a coach who's writing the workouts and keeping track of my progress makes me keep the commitment. Sometimes you just need somebody else to come alongside you. So, that's this year. It's great that doing triathlons is part of my work here at Asbury.

Anthony

Yeah, absolutely. Any other projects going on right now? What are some of your hopes and dreams for the next season of life?

Sue

One of the things I love at Asbury is we teach a class called Missional Formation and get to teach pastors how to learn about their communities. So, I'm writing a handy little book based on that class teaching pastors how to do ethnography. It's a non-technical how to with plenty of examples. So, I want to finish that project. I'm in a weird place academically because so much involves caring for my husband right now. Emotionally, it's hard to be creative. I have another sabbatical coming up so what do I want to do? I think I'll finally write up my Acts lectures in a book called When Ducks Fly Upside Down. It's a joke that my nephew taught me that I used at the start of every Acts class. What happens when ducks fly upside down? They quack up. Everybody talks about the Kingdom of God being the upside-down Kingdom, but Dallas Willard talks about it being the right side up Kingdom and the problem is we've spent our whole life living upside down, quacking up. The Kingdom of God is about living in this new way and living right side up life. So anyway, I think my next project is to teach through what does it mean to be living a right side up life because so much of our discipleship today seems to be about me being a good person versus me being a relational person, a good neighbor.

Anthony

Sue Russell, thank you for sharing a glimpse into all God's done in and through you. I've really enjoyed it!

JESSICA JANVIER AND LIONEL KING

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Jessica Janvier *(MDIV, ThM) is a PhD candidate at Columbia International University. Her research is interdisciplinary, intertwining the worlds of theology and history within the antebellum period of the United States, with a focus on African American Christianity.*

Lionel King *(PhD) has a bachelors in sociology and elementary education as well as a masters of divinity.*

> It is my solemn belief, that if ever the world becomes Christianized, (which must certainly take place before long) it will be through the means, under God of the *Blacks*, who are now held in wretchedness, and degradation, by the white *Christians* of the world, who before they learn to do justice to us before our Maker––and be reconciled to us, and reconcile us to them, and by that means have clear consciences before God and man.––Send out missionaries to convert the Heathens, many of whom after they cease to worship gods, which neither see nor hear, become ten times more the children of Hell, then ever they were, why what is the reason? Why the reason is obvious, they must learn to do justice at home, before they go into distant lands, to display their charity, Christianity, and benevolence; when they learn to do justice, God will accept their offering, (no man may think that I am against the Missionaries for I am not, my object is to see justice done at home, before we go to convert the Heathens).
>
> David Walker

Introduction

David Walker, a fervent Christian, and a fiery voice within the antebellum period, writing in his infamous Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World in 1829, provided what historian Herbert Aptheker concisely summarizes as "the first sustained written assault upon slavery and racism to come from a Black man in the United States" (Aptheker 1971, 41). While this is true, Walker's Appeal was also a scathing critique of American Christianity, particularly that among his antebellum White brethren,

intertwined with a missiological perspective that has been unique to the African American Christian missiology experience and especially to that of Black evangelicals. It is no secret that African American missionaries are not numerously represented within global missions organizations. Quandaries into why this persists have produced many pontifications such as financial barriers and historically discriminatory practices among missions organizations, to name a few. However, this article seeks to concentrate on a theological tradition within African American Christianity that has focused the Missio Dei within the American context. Walker, as others in this tradition, regarded the Christianization of American Christians as the pressing missiological imperative.

"Christianizing Christians" may seem like a tautological phrase, but it was an ever-pressing reality within Walker's 19th century Boston milieu. His militant Appeal was derived from a world of conflicting Christianities. Born in Wilmington, North Carolina on September 28, 1785, Walker was the child of a free mother and an enslaved father. His existence within his era and geographical locations placed him within competing interpretations of the Christian God and theologized rationales for Black subjugation, yet squarely within the height of the American evangelical tradition, as "Evangelicalism was by the early decades of the nineteenth century the predominant voice on the American religious scene" (Raboteau 1997, 102). Black and white evangelicals shared what religious scholar Glaude calls a "common grammar of belief" but were separated by sociological experience (Raboteau 2004, 331).

> Black Evangelicals, no less than whites, sought conversion, attended revivals, and viewed their lives in biblical terms. There was a fundamental difference between the two, however. American slavery and the doctrine of white supremacy, which rationalized and outlived it, not only segregated evangelical congregations along racial lines, but also differentiated the black experience of evangelical Christianity from that of whites. The existence of chattel slavery in a nation that claimed to be Christian, and the use of Christianity to justify enslavement, confronted black Evangelicals with a basic dilemma, which may be most clearly formulated in two questions: What meaning did Christianity, if it were a white man's religion, as it seemed, have for blacks; and, why did the Christian God, if he were just as claimed, permit blacks to suffer so (Raboteau 1997, 101)?

This theodicean wrestle brought some to the conclusion that the issue was not Christianity in and of itself, nor the Christian God but the issue was the malformed expression of Christianity within the dominant American culture, which needed salvation, beckoning a homeward focus for the Missio Dei.

A missions focus, in the context of the United States of America, for Walker and others in this tradition, served a fourfold purpose. It was the seedbed of hope for the birth of a Christianity that was authentically Christ-like and free from racism; it provided a foundation for an apologetic discourse that rebuffed the notion that Christianity was the White man's religion; it provided the moral grounding and strength behind the Black jeremiad tradition, that called for truth to be spoken to power; and it allowed for Black Christian voices to address pressing social issues related to racial degradation, depicting how expressions of racism were counterintuitive to the Christian message, in a world where Christian theologizing often provided the moral justifications for prejudice.

Walker and others understood themselves to be practicing a different form of Christianity than that of the dominant culture and missionizing in America meant providing an introduction to the "God of the *Blacks*"; that is, a God that cared for the lowly, stood in opposition to injustices afflicted against them, and who would hold oppressors accountable (Walker 1829).

Perspectives in Missions: The Shaping of Missiological Emphases

The outlook of America as a mission field had areas of continuity and discontinuity between Black and dominant culture evangelicalism due to a shared religious tradition yet varying core convictions. The antebellum evangelical revivals brought about mass conversions and missional efforts in which Blacks and Whites alike participated. African American denominations and independent churches were formed during this period, while White denominations and Dissenters experienced awakenings in a religious environment that had been, for the most part, nominal in the period preceding the Great Awakening revivals.

Organizations such as the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) among Anglicans in the South, which had the greatest concentration of enslaved peoples, produced efforts that sought to serve and enliven existing Christian communes while also encouraging slave masters to instruct their slaves or allow them to be evangelized.

Minimal progress in this effort was achieved among White Christians in part, due to the large geographical areas of parishes which did not correspond to the small number of clergy available to attend them. For the enslaved, however, access to the Christian message through White missionaries was severely limited because of economic interest and interrogations of their humanity.

For many slave owners, who entertained the slaves' humanity and their ability to convert, their assumed connection between conversion and manumission was the impetus to refuse missional efforts, as Christians owning other Christians was a questionable affair. Slave owners who jettisoned the idea of African humanity avoided the issue altogether. To little avail, efforts to make room for evangelism among the enslaved and assuage objections, missionaries such as Francis Le Jau while affirming the enslaved humanity, promoted the message that Christianity would produce more obedient and harder working slaves. Although an impasse was present between White missionaries and the enslaved, African Christians among the enslaved, namely Kongolese and Angolan Catholics, provided a missional presence and a challenge to the theologized rationalizations for African enslavement (Daniels 2014, 215-26). Nonetheless, despite their presence and colonial laws passed which eventually codified that conversion would not equate to manumission, widespread conversions of enslaved Africans did not emerge until the arrival of Evangelicalism. Its arrival brought about a changed religious dynamic for Blacks and Whites alike in the American colonies.

In its early years, Evangelicalism had various contributors that helped spread the revival birthed movement because of its simple message and openness to untrained laypeople proselytizing. Among early leading voices in the northern colonies was a Northampton preacher, Jonathan Edwards, who witnessed a diverse acceptance to the message centered around spiritual rebirth and repentance. For the southern colonies, George Whitefield's arrival and ministry in the 1740s proved to be electric as diverse crowds of thousands responded to his preaching. When Whitefield and Edwards brought their characteristically evangelical preaching to their colonial milieus, they entered plural Christian contexts, which before Evangelicalism struggled to view each other as authentically Christian. The ability of Evangelicalism to bridge theological and ecclesiological divisions became a hallmark of the movement. However, for detractors, primarily those from established churches, it represented a danger because of the possibility of upsetting existing social hierarchies which were undergirded by church doctrines. Paul Harvey conveys this sentiment well in noting the alarm of an upper-class Virginian man processing the revivals. "Evangelical persuasions, said one Virginia

legal authority, would be the means by which, 'Wives are drawn from their Husbands, Children from their Parents, and Slaves from Obedience of their Masters'" (Harvey 2016, 35). This concern over social boundaries was not purely imagined by detractors as the early evangelical revivals provided greater opportunity for women exhorters, along with strands of anti-slavery sentiment.[1] However, evangelicals' detractors' concerns over the possibility of the social order being disturbed could not foresee the unifying presence it would produce in the colonies.

The American colonies during the evangelical awakening revivals also coincided with political turmoil and discussion about the relationship the colonies would have with England. Evangelicals would come to help shape the controversy by their theological input. These societal questions soon resulted in the founding of an independent nation. Questions about republicanism and democracy were tackled by both politicians and theologians, and overwhelmingly dominant culture evangelicals put their weight on the side of independence.[2] Thus, evangelical revivals were instrumental in the process of the nation's sense of being a collective. Just as social order was experiencing change, boundaries that divided states – who once thought themselves as separate countries – were being softened. This softening was due in part to evangelical preaching that offered a religious historical trajectory of America through a theology which usurped Biblical language of election concerning Israel, along with the paradigm of liberation found in the book of Exodus; these texts were typologically applied to America.[3]

Furthermore, early American Puritans, who inherited this perspective from English theologians' use of biblical election language applied to their nation-state, had long viewed themselves through this lens but revolutionary and evangelical zeal helped intensify its use within the colonies.[4] This way of preaching also aided in producing language that articulated the colonists' thirst for human rights, which they did not see as being consistent with British loyalty and in turn sought independence and freedom. The call for national freedom preached from pulpits, applied from scripture

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[1] For concerns over social boundaries and anti-slavery sentiment see Kidd, Thomas S., and Barry Hankins. *Baptists in America: A History.* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2015), 1-148; Wesley, John. *Thoughts Upon Slavery*. No. 11204. R. Hawes, 1774; Paul Harvey, *Christianity and Race*. For concerns specifically over gender boundaries see Brekus, Catherine A. *Strangers & Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America*, 1740-1845. (University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

[2] This is not to say that all supported the American Revolution but those who did outweighed those who did not. See "The Churches in the Revolution" in Noll, Mark A. *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada.* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992).

[3] Mark, Noll. "The Image of the United States as a Biblical Nation, 1776-1865" 39-58 in Hatch, Nathan O. *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History*. (Oxford Univ. Press, 1982). Cf. "African-Americans, Exodus, and the American Israel" in Raboteau, Albert J. *A Fire in the Bones*. (Beacon Press, 1995).

[4] For an example of early Puritan use of Israel's election, see "John Winthrop, A Model of Christian Charity: A Modern Transcription" in Rodgers, Daniel T. *As a City on a Hill*. (Princeton University Press, 2018).

undergirded by nationalistic theology created a paradox particularly for Black and White evangelicals wrestling with the question of slavery in relationship to the Christian gospel. Evangelicalism's notion of spiritual equality before God proved to be attractive for Blacks and Whites alike. Howbeit, the dividing query became how spiritual equality should affect the temporal order. As the revolutionary period waned and evangelicals sought respectability, slavery became a dividing line and would remain so into the Civil War period.

While anti-slavery sentiment did not belong to African American Christianity alone, the issue proved itself to be a point that shaped the way in which Black evangelicals would view America. White evangelicals, on the contrary – those who aligned themselves with abolitionism and those who were pro-slavery, even after the Revolutionary War largely maintained scriptural election language applied positively to America. For them, the new nation was still the light of the world, even if it needed some reforms. This perspective produced a primarily outward looking missiology. Contrarily for African American Christianity, the stain of slavery on a nation that regarded itself as Christian was incongruous. Slavery along with the violence and injustice it produced could not be reconciled with their understanding of the Christian God, producing a strain of African American missiology that was primarily homeward focused, in an attempt to see authentic Christianity genuinely take root in their homeland.

Perspectives in Missions: America as a Mission Field

The antebellum era – until the post-Civil war period – was marked by widespread millennialism, creating an ethos of eschatological expectation.[5] Millennialism promised the ushering in of a utopian era in conjunction with Christian reform efforts, with its telos being the reign of Christ appearing. For White evangelicals, America was key to this schematic, as seen in Jonathan Edwards in *The Latter-Day Glory is Probably to Begin in America*.

> This new world is probably now discovered, that the new and most glorious state of God's church on earth might commence there; that God might in it begin a new world in a spiritual respect, when he creates the *new heavens* and *new earth* (Edwards 1998, 55-60).

[5] For more on American millennialism, see the helpful compilation by Phillips, Jason, Robert Nelson, Ryan Cordell, Nina Reid-Maroney, Joseph Moore, Jennifer Graber, Scott Nesbit et al. *Apocalypse and the Millennium in the American Civil War Era.* (LSU Press, 2013). Especially helpful for millennialism within the context of African American Christianity see, "Emancipation and African American Millennialism" 154-174.

The American church would evangelize and participate in societal reforms at home, extend Westward, and move out to complete the Great Commission. Evangelicals following Edwards' thinking, believed that America had the "moral power to evangelize the world." (Edwards 1998). However, Black evangelicals doubted not only the moral strength of America but its connection to authentic Christianity.

Reverend Francis Grimke fostered hope in his post-Reconstruction congregation that had witnessed 1,240 unabashed lynchings of Black men and women between 1889 and 1899 by relaying the message that God would grow the "little grain of mustard seed" that existed in America. Speaking to his Washington, DC based congregation in 1899 after a highly publicized and celebrated lynching he remarked,

God has promised to give to his Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession and in that promise this land is included. Christianity shall one day have sway even in Negro-hating America…Jesus Christ is yet to reign in this land. I will not see it, you will not see it, but it is coming all the same. In the growth of Christianity, true, real, genuine Christianity in this land, I see the promise of better things for us as a race (Grimke 1942, 268).

Homeward Missiology and Black Freedom

Moving into the 20th century, Black theologians and preachers continued to struggle with the connection that White supremacy and American Christianity shared. Howard Thurman, in his preface to *Jesus and the Disinherited* inquired,

> This is the question which individuals and groups who live in our land always under the threat of profound social and psychological displacement face: Why is it that Christianity seems impotent to deal radically, and therefore effectively, with the issues of discrimination and injustice on the basis of race, religion and national origin? Is this impotency due to a betrayal of the genius of the religion, or is it due to a basic weakness in the religion itself (Thurman 1949, xix)?

Thurman's first chapter answers these questions by depicting the Western Christian tradition in which America is situated as one that had distorted the person of Jesus Christ and therefore the character of God. This came about by removing Jesus from his oppressed Palestinian Jewish context and by placing him "outside of the sense of community which Israel held with God" (Thurman 1949, 5). He argued, "[I]t is necessary

to examine the religion of Jesus against the background of his own age and people, and to inquire into the content of his teaching with reference to the disinherited and underprivileged" (Thurman 1949). Without doing so the result is,

> ...it reveals to what extent a religion that was born of a people acquainted with persecution and suffering has become the cornerstone of a civilization and of nations whose very position in modern life has too often been secured by a ruthless use of power applied to weak and defenseless peoples (Thurman 1949, 2).

In engaging the misinterpretation of Jesus, he also engaged the missiological implications that explained how a form of Christianity could spread that was impotent towards racism. He went on to say,

> It has long been a matter of serious moment that for decades we have studied the various peoples of the world and those who live as our neighbors as objects of missionary endeavor and enterprise without being at all willing to treat them either as brothers or as human beings (Thurman 1949, 3).

Thurman, who participated in cross cultural and international conversations about Christianity, nevertheless went on to focus his theologizing and church work within in the American context, following in a tradition within African American Christianity that saw the Missio Dei and the rise of authentic Christianity in America not only as participating in their Christian calling to missions but as an avenue to relieve the oppression of his people. Christianizing Christians, or the reintroduction of the Christian Faith was the pressing imperative for the Black church.

Missions in the Contemporary African American Church

The Southern Baptist Convention's International Missions Board's 2020 report found that of its 3,700 missionaries, only .035% were African Americans. The historical context, covered previously in this article, contextualizes one aspect as to why there is a lack of African American representation in international missionary work. Walker's *Appeal* helped give voice to the theological context within the African American church. It focused on the concept of domestic justice in the face of racism and White supremacy, which at times, were interlocked with White Christian theologizing. This led segments of the African American church to focus on "backyard" missions (conducting

missionary work in local-underserved communities) and social justice issues. Furthermore, there has been a hesitance within this segment of the African American church to participate in missions on the continent of Africa because of the complex relationship between missionaries and European colonialism. Dwight N. Hopkins refers to this history as he contrasts the future aim of African American missions versus traditional European American ones:

> Rather than follow a type of imperialistic missionary work that we see carried out by Europe and the United States in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a different Black church missionary activity would focus on solidarity, healing, and liberation for oppressed communities and nations globally (Hopkins 2016, 265).

Historically, the African American church has had to focus on the "mission" of fighting racial injustice in the United States, which lessens room for more formal global missions work. With the current climate of racial tension in the wake of several high-profile police killings of unarmed Black people, this mission will most likely remain a predominant focus of the Black church.

The Social Gospel as Mission in King's Theology

> Let us continue to hope, work, and pray that in the future, we will live to see a warless world, a better distribution of wealth, and a brotherhood that transcends race or color. This is the gospel that I will preach to the world (King 2007, 6).

The African American church has long been entrenched in the movement for racial equality. It has produced some of America's most prolific and profound leaders against racial injustice, such as Rev. Adam Clayton Powell, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, Rev. Jesse Jackson, and Rev. Ralph Abernathy. In fact, the leading civil rights organization of the 1960s, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), memorialized the importance of the church in its name. Historically, the African American church has never been merely a place of worship; it was also the center of civil rights organizing, a haven for leadership development, and a social network that connected Black communities long before social media.

The social theology of the African American church was further shaped in the twentieth century by the ideology of the social gospel – the idea that the church must focus on practical and social issues and not just spiritual and religious conversion. The

social gospel became an essential teaching within socially involved Black churches and theologians after a long history of development which saw the idea spread from White churches in the northeast to southern Black Baptist congregations. Walter Rauchenbusch, an early advocate of the social gospel, argued in his book *Christianity and the Social Crisis* that the church must focus its attention on social and moral problems (Rauschenbusch 1907). Pastor Henry Emerson Fosdick, a social gospel proponent and contemporary of Rauchenbusch, cautioned the church's condemnation was imminent if it did not focus on social issues. Fosdick pointed out the hypocrisy of a church that,

> ...pretends to care for the souls of people but is not interested in the slums that damn them, the city government that corrupts them, the economic order that cripples them, and international relationships that, leading to peace or war, determine the spiritual destiny of innumerable souls (Fosdick 1933, 25).

These two men greatly influenced Martin Luther King Jr., who would later use these ideas to construct a social theology to challenge racial injustices in the United States. King became the most well-known African American proponent of the social gospel. His views of racial justice, a redistribution of wealth, and political reform influenced the following generations of Black pastors and preachers. As King understood it, the social gospel included a mission to reach White Christians that professed the gospel but had not translated those words into practice as it related to their treatment of African Americans.

As in the past, a segment of today's African American clergy focus their ministry on the immediate concerns of their congregants, and many of those concerns center around the many extrajudicial killings of Black people by police officers. In her book, *Ferguson and Faith: Sparking Leadership and Community Awakening,* seminary professor Leah Gunning Francis wrote about the intersection of social justice work and faith while participating in the protests following the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri.

> As a woman of faith, I did not separate my actions in pursuit of justice for Michael Brown from my faith. Instead, I understood them as an expression of my faith...throughout days, weeks, and months since...many other people of faith were taking similar and greater actions. Specifically, I am talking about clergy people (Francis 2015, 7).

For her book, Francis interviewed clergy from the St. Louis area about their participation in the protest movements surrounding the death of Michael Brown. In weeks following the murder of George Floyd, Black clergy such as Reverend Chris Harris, Reverend James Meeks, James T. Roberson III, and the Baptist Ministers Conference of Southern California led rallies and non-violent protests in their respective cities.

While many White churches have had the social luxury of mainly focusing on sending missionaries abroad, Black churches have had to dedicate time, energy, and attention to confronting the harsh realities of racial injustice domestically. Leroy Barber, in an article for *Urban Faith* by Maisie Sparks, points out that "the African American voice and story has much to lend to global missions;" however, the current and continuous presentation of racial injustices in their home context beckons a segment of the African American church to be preoccupied with issues of police killings, wealth inequality, unemployment, and mass incarceration (Sparks 2018). Simultaneously, racial injustices continue to confront White Christians to compel them to connect the principles of Christ to the praxis of their Christianity.

Conclusion

The historical tradition of a homeward or "backyard" focused Missio Dei within African American Christianity speaks not only to a missiological outlook but to a theological concern. This theological concern seeks to connect the American context to a more authentic form of Christianity, which can defeat social and racialized degradations that not only have persisted in the dominant culture but have been upheld – too many times – by Christian theologizing. While this homeward focused missiology does not encapsulate the whole of African American Christianity, because the Black church is not monolithic and has also participated in a sending missiology, it does answer the "why" regarding the lack of global representation of Black missionaries within the African American context. Yet, while there is an absence, there is also a need. To this end, author and leader Leroy Barber eloquently asserts,

> Our history of struggle, of forming a vibrant culture within a culture, and of sacrificing for justice and freedom, witnesses to the truth that the arc of God's love leans toward the betterment of all people. While we might feel a sense of being a minority here, we soon discover that globally, we are not (as cited in Sparks 2018).

Jessica Janvier *(MDIV, ThM) Jessica Janvier is a PhD candidate at Columbia International University. Her research is interdisciplinary, intertwining the worlds of theology and history within the antebellum period of the United States, with a focus on African American Christianity.*

Lionel King *(PhD) has a bachelors in sociology and elementary education and completed a Masters of Divinity at Nyack Alliance Theological Seminary. He is teaching pastor with Christ Church in Montclair, NJ, and also serves as part-time professor at Nyack College.*

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The Formation of Mission Theology for the African American Missionary in the 19th Century

KENT MICHAEL SHAW I

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Kent Michael Shaw I, PhD is the lead Pastor of The Life Center Community Church in South Florida and serves as an adjunct Professor of Missiology at Seminaire Theologique Evangelique Renaissance D'haiti (Sterh).

To understand the formation of the African American Missionary in the 19th-century one must slow down and observe polarizing discontents that affect all Americans in some measure. These observations in no way indicate that these assessments influence each person to the same degree. In the United States of America, the church has chosen – on numerous occasions – to remain complicit and mute regarding the overt and covert bigotry directed to her African American brothers and sisters in Christ.

Africans who entered the American shores did not arrive by their own volition; they were subjugated by the European slave trade. Those arriving from the West Coast of Africa did not have expectations and anticipations as newcomers. Their hopes as well as dreams were not like our forefathers who landed with the possibility of a new and better life. Africans disembarked in chains, terrorized by their captors and in many cases isolated from the family they knew. Husbands were separated from wives, and parents from their children, never having the privilege to say I love you or laying eyes on them again.

The transatlantic slave trade devoured millions of innocent Africans as they traveled over the brutal seas in route to America. Their primary purpose was not for a better life but to build America based on a system of free labor because they were considered less than human. While the exact total of enslaved Africans is not officially documented, some estimate the total between twelve and fifteen million – over the four centuries of this bludgeoning atrocity. It is hard to fathom how one could justify American slavery while believing in the biblical teachings of Christ the Son of God. This rationale was espoused by slaveowners and a segment of religious leaders throughout the United States during the 1800s though. Scripture revealed no evidence neither did it substantiate the authorization to subjugate other humans against their will, yet to some Scripture was the impetus. "From the very beginning of the Atlantic slave trade, conversions of the slaves to Christianity were reviewed by the emerging nations of Western Christendom as a justification for enslavement of Africans" (Raboteau 2004, 96).

With this rationalization promulgated throughout American society, was this the mask that would hide the quilt of enslavement from their hands as they proclaimed Jesus as their Savior. Did they maintain an emerging belief that this was the God-ordained method to reach the African people with a loving message of salvation?

The Black church in America was birthed as a persecuted church. Unfortunately, many American evangelicals do not view this state of American history – past or present – as a sin issue that requires repentance. For one to repent of sin, it must be an acknowledgment of a transgression that has been committed. To many Christians, sin is invisible to them because everything in their culture looks, talks and believes in like manner. When the sin of complicity is exposed, it is often shunned or even ignored as existing decades ago and unlikely not practiced currently.

It is hard to comprehend how Christians could allow and support the enslavement of another individual based solely upon their ethnicity and the color of their skin. Albeit the impetus for the deadliest war that took place on the continental United States was slavery. There were Christians on both sides of the divide that fought, some fought in opposition to the bondage as well as the inhuman treatment of another human. The opposing side fought vehemently to not relinquish their power over their slaves as well as the continuance of free labor. Jemar Tisby, in his work *The Color of Compromise*, makes a compelling statement about the genesis of the Civil War, "two facts about the Civil War are especially pertinent to our examination of race and Christianity in America: that the Civil War was fought over slavery and that countless Christians fought and died to preserve it as an institution" (2019, 71). Why would God-fearing Christians feel so adamant about slavery and its continued implementation? Were they willing to risk their lives to the extent that thousands died because of an unrelenting desire for power, wealth and ultimately the sin that drove them to this demise? How could the church allow this brutality, this savagery, and remain complicit? Was there a different interpretation of the bible that omitted this treatment to others.

The deadliest war on American soil is not only linked to the liberation of the enslaved; it also laid the groundwork for religious liberties granted to individual states. "The Civil War-as a conflict to define the Union, determine the legitimacy of slavery, and specify the limits of states' rights-was also fundamentally a religious battle over how to interpret the Bible and how to promote moral norms in public life" (Noll 2008,14). The majority of abolitionists during this period ascribed to the Christian doctrine, thus giving them freedom to use scripture as their compass in the fight for freedom. They were able to use these established laws to their advantage as they petitioned courts to overturn unconstitutional laws.

The majority of African American missionaries in the 1800s were born before reconstruction yet obtained a systematic strategy to navigate the malfeasance of slavery and discovered a course of action to bring to fruition their missionary vocation. These black men and women were not by any means granted the same rights and privileges as their white co-laborers in theological education, global missions' awareness, nor equal distributions of missions funding.

Regrettably, the contributions and participation of 19th century African American missionaries have been whitewashed. For the most part, their work and limited scholarship is devoid from our intercultural studies, theological and divinity schools. In addition, many books that contain American missions' history were composed without the mention of "George Liele, the first missionary from America in the year 1784" (Smither 2019, 13), or Betsey Stockton, "the first single female appointed by an American missions board" (Moffett and Andrew III 2012, 66). These omissions stem from a deletion in America's history and the historical implications of Christianity prevailing alongside the heinous trans-Atlantic slave trade that engaged in the stealing and auctioning of Black bodies. "Concealed was the verity that the Ethiopian Eunuch, as narrated in the book of Acts, deliberately traveled to Jerusalem to worship God, thus dispelling the misnomer that the African continent was destitute in the context of the knowledge and redemptive plan of Jesus Christ" (Gay 2021, 13).

The Mission Theology of these early African American missionaries during the 1800s is a discipline that has garnered limited contemplation. At the same time, there are identifiable causes that explain why the formation of Mission Theology – that shaped these missionaries – is extremely important. Furthermore, there is a historical narrative that necessitates discovery. "Early African American Christian theology was birthed and grew up in the context of American chattel slavery and the colonial experience" (Anyabwile 2009, 17). This period in a historical framework of America was met with slavery, war, and political tension. The unrelenting institution of dehumanizing the Black body and the establishment of colonialization inhibited the slave from invaluable theological enlightenment. While such opposing authorities were unrelenting, these early missionaries were able to confront and overcome extreme adversity as they propagated the gospel into uncharted areas.

Before one can explore this Theology, an applicative definition must be determined. "Mission theology is foundational to the processes of promoting, integrating, and contextualizing the elements of Christian mission through encounter, proclamation, communion, dialogue, and social transformation" (New Catholic

Encyclopedia April 13, 2021). This statement of meaning is uncomplicated and simplistic yet yields foundational actions as a response. The early African American missionary merged both the sacred text and lived experience to establish a theology of mission. This intersection fathered a new consciousness for this infant theological development from the lens of African American Christians.

There was a rather large swath of African slaves in the 19th century that did not embrace the religion of their master based on his premise. "Since many of the enslaved questioned the sincerity of the slaveholders' religious commitments, it is not surprising these enslaved disregarded any biblical teaching that proceeded from people whose ethical practices were considered suspect" (Powery and Sadler 2016, 156). While the forced life of obedience and submission did not relegate the slave to practice and embrace Christian principles by their own volition, it did provide an environment of assessment to this new religion to the masses. "In the hands of white slave owners, the Bible was a tool of oppression" (McCaulley 2020,138). This book became an agency to justify their enslavement while advocating that the White race remains free and authoritative. During Christian worship gatherings, slaves listen to sermons that emboldened this narrative as God's divine purpose for their lives. Some laws were enforced that forbad any enslaved person to receive formal education. Consequently, slave owners summarized it would be in their best interest to maintain an uneducated person who would not challenge them legally or spiritually. However, "some planters, ignoring the law or customs prohibiting slave literacy, did not hinder their slaves' efforts to learn" (Raboteau 2004, 240). This was an anomaly on many plantations in America, yet a fraction of planters did permit their slaves to obtain biblical literacy.

There were some faithful believers who somehow concocted the notion that slavery brought the Christian message to the unlearned and in some cases soulless people. History has a way of shedding light on the truth. It was not the Europeans of that day – who thought they were the catalyst for introducing Christianity to the Africans – Christ and his message were there centuries earlier. The author of *The Color of Compromise* has a riveting explanation, "Christian luminaries like Augustine, Tertullian, and Athanasius helped develop Trinitarian theology and defend the deity of Christ long before Western Europeans presumed to 'take' Christianity to Africans" (Tisby 2019, 37). The gospel had already reached the shores of the continent of Africa, and subsequently, there were people who embraced this message.

There were slaves who discovered attending religious services was an opportunity to learn to read. This was accomplished by listening to their master's

sermon and committing to memory what was being quoted from the Bible. "Slaves mimicked what they heard from white preachers and readers, and in repeating what they heard they often improvised on it" (Callahan 2008, 11). Later upon returning to their slave communities, they would discuss among themselves what was asserted by the preacher. Some were gifted with this innate phenomenon of recall, while some learned through iteration. "Slaves were distrustful of the white folks' interpretation of the Scriptures and wanted to be able to search for themselves" (Raboteau 2004, 239). The behavior of their master and the message that was conveyed from scripture was scrutinized with judgment. Observation was another method adopted and implemented in pursuit of divine truth. This approach was actualized in the life of their white Christian slave owner and family.

The enslaved would grapple and engage critically with scripture that was learned from retentiveness. Created out of systematic oppression emerged a sanctuary of disimprisonment for the slave without hesitation to engage scripture. "The formerly enslaved were critical interpreters of the biblical text, not because they questioned the literal interpretation of a passage, but because they challenged the dominant cultural (and popular) paradigm of possessor with interpretive tradition of a biblical reading" (Powery and Sadler 2016, 21). This theological thought for the enslaved – void of academic training – provoked a fascinating inquiry of interpretation. In their examination was raised the contextualization of scripture and thus application. The Black Christian did not bring into question the validity or the authority of Holy Scripture; what was scrutinized was the interpretative lens that was imposed upon it. Rightly dividing God's word was not at the nucleus of their motivation; it was a continuance of subjugation by implementing unsubstantiated scripture. "Biblical justification of slavery was increasingly popular as the mainstay of the South's proslavery argument" (Boles 1988, 106). This ideology galvanized many slave owners to perpetuate this message of Black enslavement through religious propagation. The enslaved believer rejected this philosophy and applied their own hermeneutic. "But those who chose to accept and develop a Christian faith cultivated a hermeneutical strategy that allowed them to manage the biblical stories, interpret them, and integrate them in meaningful ways that contributed value to their identity" (Powery and Sadler 2016, 168). With this technique, the slave contextualized the message of scripture as not to bring marginalization, yet they could see themselves in the Bible. It was amidst these settings that a space of freedom emerged so the slave could intersect their blackness and theology, which produced an exegesis of scripture; a realization that God who talked through the Book was a God of freedom and liberation to all His creation.

The early African American missionary's emergent mission theology crystallized through those processes. They were not insulated from the trauma and dehumanization of the 19th century, yet through God's providence, their missionary exploits were launched. This article provides a snapshot into a theology that was the agency for their missiological participation.

George Liele was the first American to travel outside the continental United States of America with the message of Christ. "It is interesting to note that just as the spread of the Gospel in New Testament times was due, in part, to persecution (Acts 8:1), so Liele left the country of his birth for fear of being persecuted through re-enslavement" (Cornelius 2002, 49). Liele, a former enslaved Black who obtained his freedom was cognizant to the probability of being re enslaved, and he responded in like manner like the terrorized Christians in Jerusalem who fled into Judea and Samaria. He boarded a ship as an indentured servant and began his missionary undertakings in Kingston, Jamaica. George's conversion experience reveals the development of his theology of mission. He lamented,

> [I] saw my condemnation in my own heart, and I found no way wherein I could escape the damnation of hell, only through the merits of my dying Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; which caused me to make intercession with Christ, for the salvation of my poor immortal soul; and I full well recollect, I request of my Lord and Master to give me a work, I did not care how mean it was, only to try and see how good I would do it (Rippon 1790-1793, 333).

This spiritual reckoning and conversion were the commencement of the new Christian life and the inward call that would ultimately lead to global missions. His spiritual awakening prompted a prayer of supplication to be used by God. Henry Sharpe, George's master, and the Reverend Matthew Moore were instrumental in his spiritual formation, theologically and practically. "Liele's conversion awakened an urgency within him to reach the lost with the Gospel, especially slaves and those of African heritage" (Saunders 2020, 64). This moment in history formed a simultaneous spiritual transformation and explicit imploration to trumpet the message of Jesus to those with whom he identified, the enslaved alongside those of the African diaspora. Liele contends, "desiring to prove the sense I had of my obligations to God, I endeavored to instruct" the people of "my color in the word of God: the white brethren seeing my endeavors, and that the word of the Lord seemed to be blessed, gave me a call at a quarterly meeting to preach before the congregation" (Sernett 1999, 46). The mission motif that Liele utilized is found in the scriptural text, Acts 1:8. Christ challenged and

charged his disciples to proselytize those without His message commencing first with the Jerusalem nonbelievers, then expanding to Judaea, Samaria, then concluding globally. His affinity was directly linked to the enslaved as he understood the gravity of their plight in bondage. This was the theology that fueled his undertakings in America and Jamacia with an applied Christology intersecting with Missiology.

"The Christianity practiced by Liele was not limited to one nation, colony, or ethnic group but was formed and spread through interaction with colonist and national leaders in the Americas and England" (Shannon, White, and Bingham 2013, 23). Liele's exposure to a broad perspective of Christianity and theology was unprecedented for this period while he endured slavery, and as a free person. George's cross-cultural interaction began in his early spiritual formation with the watchful eye of his pastor. "Convinced of his ministerial gifts and seeing how his work had already been blessed among his brethren, the church unanimously licensed him to preach" (Liele, Cooke, Marshall, Clarke, and Swigle 1916, 69-92). Reverend Moore's church was comprised of white members who held all leadership offices and slaves of local planters. This introduction to cultural inclusion would prove invaluable to his theology of mission in future years. "At the same time, Liele was encouraged to preach on many of the plantations in the area, as well as to the predominantly white congregations around them" (Morrison 2015, 19-20). For certain, this platform was a practicum providing an agency to hone his spiritual gifts in environments that included both Black and White members.

George Liele was acclaimed for his oratorical and persuasive sermons when he exhorted the lost to repent of their sins. "Even when he preached very orthodox sermons that never overtly encouraged disruptive behavior or insurrection, he constantly expressed his strong desire that his listeners be freed from sin and its consequences" (Pugh 2003, 27). He was able to traverse laws legalizing slavery while introducing an ideology of spiritual liberation. He was acquainted with the imposed regulations in Jamacia and constructed sermons that would not incite a revolt against the establishment. The significancy of his declamation inspired hope in the immediacy to a new life in Christ. "He promoted cultural diversity in the body of Christ while emphasizing orthodoxy" (Raven 2019, 104). The uniqueness of his church included slaves, free Negroes, Jamaican, British and Americans. As Liele's ministry multiplied in ethnic inclusiveness he was riveted to the customs and traditions of scripture. The Acts paradigm became a continuation in Liele's leadership and theology of mission as a reenactment that transpired eighteen hundred years earlier during Pentecost. Liele composed a letter describing the numerical growth of the mission in Jamaica, on one

occasion he reported, "I have baptized four hundred in Jamaica" (Liele, et al. 1916, 69-92). These numbers present an exact calculation to the conversion on this Island directly linked to Liele's ministry actions. Emphasizing baptisms unveils that their might remain additional members who were not baptized. The exponential growth of the Christian message was expansive throughout the country of Jamaica as evident in a written correspondence. "We have, together with well-wishers and followers, in different parts of the country, about fifteen hundred people" (Liele, et al. 1916, 72). This biblical multiplication framework had its genesis in the scriptures he loved.

"Through the suffering of Jesus Christ, he makes humans understand that God is wherever humans experience oppression, humiliation, and suffering" (Cone, Paris, and Douglas 2020, 63-64). Liele inarguably devoted his life to making Jesus known while applying Christ's identifiable distinctions as he assimilated with humanity. The subjugated enslaved aligned with Christ's narrative on earth concluding with an emancipation from sin and human misfortune.

Unfortunately, early African American missionaries, who were model members in good standing in their mainline church denomination and possessed outstanding abilities, did not receive an invitation to serve in senior global missions' leadership positions or outposts throughout the Caribbean along with the nations of Africa. Absent from their board tables and conference rooms were the voices and revelations of gifted African American missionaries. This neglectfulness prevented a keen insightfulness on vital social interactions, family structures, and religious practice, as well as a contextual understanding of the people groups that these African Americans possessed.

"These constructs of exclusion – which remained entrenched during the 1800s – failed to immobilize the dedicated missionaries in their unrelenting pursuit to fulfill a God-ordained call as missionaries" (Watson and Stevens 2009, 26). They persevered, traveling throughout the Caribbean nations of North America and Western Africa, proselytizing these distant relatives. From these exploits, Christianity's expansion morphed into establishing educational structures, the construction of church buildings, and a tangible understanding of God.

As we move through 2021, there are some perceptible advancements to the critical engagement of African Americans to global missions. The term "woke" is spoken among many African Americans referring to the enlightenment of social engagement, issues, and awareness that affect them directly. Another term that one might understand is being consciously aware of what is taking place in their community and throughout America. In Ephesians 5:14 there is a call for the church to wake up and

become keenly conscious of the now. This leads to an assessment of the Church in America when it comes to these concerns. The Church has undoubtedly made evidential and tangible strides to bring healing, and a concerted endeavor to address grievances that impact marginalized people. While the eras of slavery, the antebellum south, and Jim Crow are in our rearview mirrors, the question remains, has the church traveled an upward trajectory from her ill-fated past?

There are mainline denominations that have made public statements repenting of their sins for their contributions to as well as silence regarding these incidents. These acts are appreciated and gratefully received, but that is not the end of the narrative. As the voice of the prophetic church seeks to keep her focus on the Great Commission, she must also persevere to remain woke, she cannot afford to fall asleep.

While the percentage of career African American missionaries remains inadequate, there is an optimism and concerted effort in many spaces to transform this quandary. Moreover, we collectively affirm and participate in this plan of action. The intentional implementations of past EMS president, Dr. Edward Smither, and current president, Dr. Robin Harris, in conjunction with their leadership teams are manifested in the creation of Missiology and the Black Experience track of this year's conference. While the creation of this platform is unprecedented, this could not be executed without the competent and qualified leadership of Dr. Michelle Raven and Dr. Linda P. Saunders. These missiological sessions are structured to foster and showcase the African American experience in global missions, past and present. As a catalyst for future interest, infrastructures like missions' conferences and societal gatherings that highlight African American missionaries and their involvements toward global initiatives will aid in awareness that will lead to participation. In addition, a concerted commitment from the academy, such as a willingness to employ African American missiologists and a curriculum that will incorporate their scholarship and expertise will shine a much-needed light on this topic.

Kent Michael Shaw I, *PhD (Columbia International University) has participated in global initiatives for over 33 years throughout the Caribbean, Europe, and Africa. He is the lead Pastor of The Life Center Community Church in South Florida and serves as an adjunct Professor of Missiology at Seminaire Theologique Evangelique Renaissance D'haiti (Sterh).*

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LISA P. CHRISTIAN

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Lisa P. Christian is a PhD student at Liberty University who has 20 years in missions experience. She currently serves as the Executive Director for Community Faith Partners in Ithaca, NY.

Introduction

Missiology and the Black experience co-existed during the colonial period and predated the inception of the Black Transatlantic Crossing. Some historians contend the absence of racial tension, so embedded in the culture today, was non-existent in the early years of the New World (Tisby 2019, 26-28). Blacks and Africans received liberties and opportunities to live in colonized communities. They received resources to farm, pursue professional careers, and conduct business with other colonists. However, these liberties eventually ceased as the colonists gradually established slave codes to regulate African subjugation (Tisby 2019, 34-35). The suppression of Africans persisted as the colonists sophisticated the slave trade and increased their financial interest in the Black Transatlantic Crossing.

Scholars often disagree on the historical retelling of the Black Atlantic experience, but some historians confirm the Black Atlantic's authenticity. Saunders mentions the central disagreement between Black and White scholars arises from their interpretation of how the Black Atlantic experience occurred (2020, 42). Historical accounts of the missionary movement exclude Africans, Afro Americans, and Caribbean Blacks during this period; nevertheless, these individuals were dominant figures in disseminating the gospel. Their geographical associations bear witness to this fact (Saunders 2020, 42).

Furthermore, the Black experience, particularly after the twentieth century, is void of significant global missions involvement because their relationship in missions was suppressed and even oppressed. Unfortunately, many Caucasian historians and scholars downplay African and Afro American contributions (Saunders 2020, 42), especially in missions and religious records. This absence created a vacuum, particularly in Western Christian history, that provoked an apparent theological rift among Black and White Christians. To effectively communicate missions related to the black experience, a comprehensive review of the incongruities between Black and White missional theology

is a prerequisite. Moreover, this is a communication dilemma as much as it is a theological one. This article will argue the theological rift between African/Black and Caucasian/White American Christians contributed to seemingly irreconcilable differences that must be acknowledged for the Black and White Evangelical Church to operate in unity in global missions in the twenty-first century and forward.

A Theological Schism

Defining Theology

Theology is the study about the nature and persona of God. Its broadest sense ascertains who God is as He relates to His creation and as His creation interrelates with one another (Bird 2020, 38-40). Since the patristic period, the church fathers endeavored to create a theology that encapsulated the essence of God as revealed in Scripture. Moreover, they accepted Scripture as the final source of authority, "All Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness;"[1] therefore, the first-century church established a criterion for using Scripture to interpret Scripture. Nevertheless, the extensiveness of theology originates from humanity's experience. So, theological studies are essential in a rational, post-modern era (Bird 2020, 81). Also, Bird highlights the complication of developing an overarching theology derived from an attempt to reduce Scripture to one coherent thought void of controversy or diversity yet with the intentions for a particular purpose or purposes (2020, 89). For instance, Evangelical Theology and Black Theology attempt to present God through their advantaged or disadvantaged positions. Both theologies must examine its weaknesses and its preclusion of other theologies. Evangelical Theology too often conveys the tenet of its theology as comprehensive and conclusive. While on the other hand, Black Theology explores God through the lens of the Afro or African American's suffering as they struggle with racism and racial discrimination to the exclusion of other experiences within the Black Church. In the strictest sense of the term, Black Theology began during the civil rights movement; although, its foundation traces back to colonial America. McCaulley notes that enslaved Afro Americans viewed God as a liberator and identified with the Exodus account. Their plight was the same as Israel's (2020, 25). This rationale has continued for centuries and is arguably the foundation of Black Theology.

[1] 2 Timothy 3:16. Scripture quotations marked NASB are taken from the New American Standard Bible. Copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

A Cursory Historical Overview of the Theological Schism[2]

The Founding Fathers arrived in the New World with unappeasable aspirations for individual and religious freedom. These men asserted that the British Monarchy prevented them from practicing their religion of choice by denying them their God-given rights and freedoms. As a result, the Founding Fathers rejected the strict British rule and created a democracy that promised "liberty and justice for all." The framers of the Constitution fled a monarchy that at times operated as an autocracy, with no regard for the enslaved Africans who scarcely survived under their subjection. This new religious freedom allowed the Founding Fathers to deny an individual his or her freedom irrespective of that individual's God-given rights, creating a theology that superimposed its cultural beliefs – and Scriptural interpretation – onto others (Woodson 2012, 15-17).

This burgeoning theology afforded its adherents the luxury of ignoring those they rationalized as soulless in the new world. The Constitution's framers erroneously and subjectively determined enslaved Africans did not possess the intellectual, psychological, or emotional aptitude to be considered fully human (Mason 2018, 79). Their framework of the Bill of Rights, Declaration of Independence, and the United States Constitution intentionally precluded enslaved Africans and the Afro Americans (Tisby 2019, 42-43). It is this type of ideology that allowed the oppressor the ability to ignore responsibility for and acknowledgment of marginalized groups. A theology imposed upon a group of people to bolster them out of deprivation, or a theology deemed so superior that it does not necessitate a prefix like Liberation, Black, Latina, Native American, or Women holds an unyielding influence over those who adhere to its principles.

Additionally, the original intentions of the early settlers to the New World were grounded in a desire to proselytize and make Catholic converts of the indigenous peoples (Woodson 2012, 16-17). Even then, the African slave unknowingly forfeited the privilege of evangelization. "Later, when further concessions to the capitalists were necessary, it was provided in the royal decrees of Spain and France that Africans enslaved in America should merely be early indoctrinated in the principles of the Christian religion" (Woodson 2012, 13). The Founding Fathers' newfound 'freedom of religion' increasingly shaped a theological worldview that benefited Caucasian men and

[2] Author's disclaimer: This section includes a cursory overview but does not include every Black and White theological, denominational development, it merely highlights both theologies overarching ideologies.

granted liberties to a privileged class of people. One might suggest this theological perspective still exists (Tisby 2019, 86) because various indicators of this mindset still linger. A case in point. Evangelicals told McCaulley the social gospel corrupted Black Christianity. Therefore, it would be prudent not to place his hope in that; instead, he must discard it for a theology developed during the colonial era or 'post-war boom of American Protestantism' (McCaulley 2020, 18). He further remarks that these historical periods were enormously horrific, especially for Afro and Black Americans; therefore, he is troubled by the unconscious disconnect one would need to possess to suggest that theology originating from this era is superior (McCaulley 2020, 17-18).

The new "settlers" also sought to proselytize and manipulate Native Americans while simultaneously denying numerous freedoms to Africans forcibly brought to the New World. The suppression these Africans endured included stripping them of fundamental rights, freedom of religion, and "liberty and justice for all." Under the guise of religious freedom, the newly formed British Colonies inflicted the most abhorrent abuse upon its citizens. The Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution were created at the expense of non-white citizens. For example, Thomas Jefferson, who wrote one of the first drafts of the Declaration of Independence, held slaves along with his contemporaries but did not consider it hypocrisy because the colonists and Founding Fathers had reduced the Africans to mere human chattel and unequal to White citizens in every way. By so doing, they devalued their (enslaved individuals) humanity and rendered them undeserving of equality (Tisby 2019, 42).

Furthermore, Anglican missionaries encountered opposition from slaveholders when they attempted to convert enslaved Africans to Christianity. Initially, Anglican missionaries, adhered to Britain’s common law and indiscriminately proselytized in the British Colonies. However, they received relentless opposition from slaveholders who maintained enslaved Africans did not have the fundamental right to accept Christianity because it was exclusively reserved for white colonists (Gates 2021, 30). This opposition eventually forced the Anglican missionaries to compromise their position regarding the institution of slavery. Britain willingly acknowledged that Christians should not participate in slavery and held this belief as common law (Gates 2021, 301). Unfortunately, Anglican missionaries eventually acquiesced to the slave owners’ demands. Gates contends Anglican missionaries theologized the gospel by asserting that white colonists received Christianity through the privilege of their race (Gates 2021, 31). The Founding Fathers held that freedom to practice one's religion is applicable only if one is of a particular ethnic, racial, social, political, or economic status, evinced by their demoralizing acts toward slaves. The enslaved African or the

Afro American did not possess the arbitrary right to freedom of religion because the Colonists barred them from the elite status that afforded them this privilege. The framers of the United States Constitution rationalized freedom not as a right bestowed upon any individual, rather, as a privilege afforded to one born as an American citizen with an asterisk on American. The asterisk represents the American who is not of the African diaspora and automatically conferred with "liberty and justice for all."

Unfortunately, too many Americans sanctioned this faulty belief that those in authority possessed the right to confer freedom on those deemed subordinate. This self-ascribed authority morphed into individualistic theological convictions cloaked in the veneer of freedom of religion. The disparaging treatment of Afro Americans is a manifestation of this faulty ideology. Theology is informed by its environment (Bird p 89); therefore, it possesses an inherent ability to demand obedience to its credence. Thus, Evangelical Theology developed within the structure of a budding nation whose identity fluctuated between freedom and bondage across racial lines. Within this environment, the Evangelical Church created doctrine steeped in racial disparity.

In addition, the flawed facets of Evangelical Theology convey Scripture as supportive of the debasement of African and Black Americans. This attitude intensified in the south with the emergence of the Southern Baptist Church (SBC). For instance, one of the SBC's staunch supporters, Reverend Basil Manly, Sr. (1798-1868), a leading Christian voice in the SBC during the early nineteenth century, vigorously debated northern abolitionists and unapologetically backed the institution of slavery (Jones 2020, 47-49). Jones further asserts, "Manly was a steadfast and sought-after religious voice justifying slavery and white supremacy" (2021, 53). Jones laments, "American Christianity's theological core has been thoroughly structured by an interest in protecting white supremacy. While it may seem obvious to mainstream white Christians today that slavery, segregation, and overt declarations of white supremacy are antithetical to the teachings of Jesus, such a conviction is, in fact, recent and only partially conscious for most white American Christians and churches" (Jones 2020, 13-15). Reconciling Black and Evangelical missional theology requires a shift in centuries-old dogma. Also, Black and White Christians must begin correcting historical narratives regarding the black experience in missiology. For example, George Liele is considered an "informal missionary" by some White historians/missiologists. They argue the Revolutionary War forced him to travel to Jamaica to avoid re-enslavement; therefore, his trip cannot represent intentional missions; therefore, Adoniram Judson is the first "official missionary" from the United States (Finn 2020, 152, 181).

Mission Theology: Two Interpretations

A Polarization

> At a pragmatic level, white churches served as connective tissue that brought together leaders from other social realms to coordinate a campaign of massive resistance to black equality. But at a deeper level, white churches were the institutions of ultimate legitimization, where white supremacy was divinely justified via a carefully cultivated Christian theology. White Christian churches composed the cultural score that made white supremacy sing (Jones 2021, 47).

White Evangelical missionaries, particularly from the West, perpetuated this falsity for centuries. Gates suggests Protestant Christians struggled with the idea of evangelizing slaves because many considered them unworthy of salvation and questioned their right to the pursuit of liberty (2021, 17). Religious rights are established by the majority group's perceptions of them. If a person of color does not perceive religion/theology in the same manner as the majority group, this individual is considered to operate from an unacceptable theology. McCaulley contends, White Evangelicals habitually reject Black Theology as lacking theological soundness because preachers do not speak seminary (McCaulley 2020, 19).

Therefore, Black theology sought to mitigate the psychological, emotional, and social wounding of such doctrinal teachings by developing a theology that emphasized the God-given value of Black individuals. In the Black Atlantic, Afro American missionaries often focused on the inclusivity of the gospel and God's intention that all profit from this inclusive gospel. Black Missional Theology developed largely from this focal point.

Black Missional Theology: A Cursory Overview

Africans, forced to cross the transatlantic through the slave trade, lost their identity, culture, and theology. Saunders mentions that this crossing unwittingly thrust Africans into a new identity and religion that morphed into the Afro American identity (2020, 37). Africans arrived in the Americas with profound religious devotions and practices. However, the dominant role religion had begun to play in the newly established British Colonies became a convenient instrument to psychologically force the enslaved into

submission (Tisby 2019, 35-37). Consequently, Black Theology responded to the failure of Evangelical Theology to reach African/Black Americans, and in the absence of truth, doubt arises.

Black Missional Theology proceeded from the experience of the Black Church combined with the Black Church's desperate need to offer hope to enslaved congregates who often struggled to understand the doctrines of Evangelical Christianity and the value of its guide, the Bible. As a result, enslaved Africans and Islanders relied on their slave master's interpretation of the Bible. Christian principles explained from the perspective of the slave master and the general English-speaking population often eluded the enslaved Africans because they had not fully acquired the English language. For several centuries, Africans and Islanders were barred from obtaining literacy in English. The enslaved Africans could understand Scripture; but they could not read, write, or speak English; moreover, their dependency on their slave masters for biblical interpretation prompted many slave owners to duplicitously misrepresent the Bible. The Negro Bible is an example of this exploitation.

The Negro Bible, commonly referred to as the Slave Bible, perhaps further sanctioned the Christianization of slavery. The accurate claim that slavery dehumanized, delegitimized, and demoralized enslaved Africans and Afro Americans lost its efficacy as one of many consequences of the Negro Bible. Christians who read or taught from it could recklessly accept the hypothesis that the Bible defended slavery and God's plan included the debasement of those of the African diaspora. This erroneous belief soothed the conscience of the Christian slave master, clergy, and the Founding Fathers. Moreover, some enslaved individuals, unfamiliar with the unabridged version of the Bible, unknowingly and sometimes knowingly acquiesced toward the Christianization of slavery. This foisted ignorance created a fierce tension among the enslaved, those who vehemently opposed slavery, and those who seemingly were progressively influenced by the abusive institution. Some scholars, however, argue that tension already existed between enslaved Africans with or without a tainted Christianization of slavery. Unquestionably, though, the creation of the Negro Bible further exacerbated the growing chasm between Afro Americans' and White Americans' theological perspectives because of its (Negro Bible) gross misrepresentation of Scripture. The Negro Bible, published in 1807, represented a mere 10% of the Old Testament and 50% of the New Testament (Lumpkin 2019, v, viii). Slave owners eagerly offered this truncated version of the Bible to their slaves to Christianize them and legitimize this wicked institution.

The Negro Bible, depleted of some of the most sacred passages in Scripture, excluded most of the Psalms, the Torah, and the wisdom books. Interestingly, Lumpkin observes, the editors of the Negro Bible did not eliminate Joseph's account because it detailed unambiguous references to slavery (2019, v); thereby, reinforcing the conjecture that Scripture supported the institution of slavery. Regardless of the alleged intent of the Negro Bible it presented the slave master an opportunity to teach Africans how to read while simultaneously emphasizing the notion that slavery enriched God's plan for those of the African diaspora.

Notably, the misrepresentation of truth, apparent by the Negro Bible's dearth of Scripture, is juxtaposed against the efforts of abolitionists who encouraged southern slave masters to provide Bibles for their slaves. Abolitionists maintained the distribution of Bibles would accomplish two aims. First, the enslaved individual would have an opportunity to learn to read. However, most slave owners opposed the action of teaching slaves to read; thus, this concept barely gained traction. Second, the abolitionists relied on the Bible's principles to expose the contemptibility of slavery (McKivigan 1982, 62). This movement, spearheaded by the newly organized American Bible Society (ABS), encountered stern opposition from southern slave holders as well as Christians who held to the notion that slavery upheld biblical principles. The project failed. The ABS concluded the initiative to distribute Bibles harmed their overall mission and chose to end their participation in the project (McKivigan 1982, 62-63). Subsequently, the tension that arose among the abolitionists and southern slave holders or those who supported slavery proved too much to defeat and eventually the abolitionists abandoned the idea to involve churches or the use of Scripture in abolition endeavors (McKivigan 1982, 63). Too often, those in Christian leadership satisfied their conscience to justify slavery by concealing Scripture or through deceptive interpretations of Scripture. For instance, "Manly asserted forcefully an unapologetic theology of white supremacy, arguing that slavery was not an unfortunate necessity but rather part of the divinely ordained hierarchical order of Christian society" (Jones 2020, 49).

As a result of the stark reality of a flourishing evangelical theology, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Afro American pastors, theologians, and biblical scholars established a central theme comprised of deliverance and freedom. They unapologetically superimposed the Black experience onto Scripture texts. Sadly, these scholars were not viewed as viable and too often White pastors, theologians, and scholars dismissed their scholarship as objectionable. Tisby argues, "The implicit message from many conservative white pastors and professors is that Black Christians

have theological integrity to the degree they adopt the teachings that come from approved European and white American sources. This should not be so" (2019, 202). Therefore, reconciliation among Black and White Christians in a missional context requires not only Black missionaries' participation but also contributions from Black scholarship. Moreover, Black scholarship must be given equal attention as White scholarship. Mission agencies, missionaries, and churches have an obligation to reexamine presuppositions that immediately dismiss scholarship/theology that is not created from a White Evangelical perspective.

Black Christian scholarship increased as opposition continued to force Black Christians to split from churches and missional theologies due to discriminatory practices. Tension between the slave master and his slave, abolitionist and pro-slavery groups, and White and Black pastors intensified, this strain created an enormous need for Black theologians and biblical scholars during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; consequently, the Black Church, fraught with oppression, motivated by a quest for political, social, economic, and religious freedom, emerged. Its culture, ideology, and theology are unique to the purpose for which it was created.

> For a people systematically brutalized and debased by the inhumane system of human slavery, followed by a century of Jim Crow racism, the church provided a refuge: a place of racial and individual self-affirmation, of teaching and learning, of psychological and spiritual sustenance, of prophetic faith; a symbolic space where black people, enslaved and free, could nurture the hope for a better today and a much better tomorrow (Gates 2021, 1-2).

From its inception, the Black Church served as a sanctuary not only for the spiritually lost but also society's marginalized and its teaching reflected this mission. The plethora of Black denominations within the Protestant movement – each having its unique purpose – proves the Black Church is not a monolith; yet most of the Black Church's denominational beliefs include some adaptation of Black Theology dogma. For example, one of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church's mission is to 'spread Christ's liberating gospel.' The term 'liberating' is the operative word in this phrase.

So, the Black Church initiated, preached, and indoctrinated its people with theological ideologies congruent with freedom and liberation. Gates explains the

enslaved Africans' attraction to Scripture arose from biblical narratives that conveyed deliverance and God's eternal love for everyone regardless of race, ethnicity, or creed (2021, 20-21). The enslaved Afro American Christian's responsibility included proselytizing his or her fellow enslaved and freed Afro Americans. This involved assisting one's neighbor in whatever capacity that might entail. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Black Church's missional theology incontrovertibly focused on evangelism with a dual focus on home and global missions. The enslaved Afro American's understanding of the great commission included outreach to the West Indies and Africa. During this period, Afro American's involvement in global missions remained at the forefront of the Black Church's agenda. For example, George Liele was the first Afro American to go abroad as a Baptist missionary. Although, some post-modern mission scholars insist he was the first American to carry the Gospel abroad.

Liele insisted the Black Church accept its responsibility to engage in foreign missions mandated by the Great Commission. "Liele's conversion awakened an urgency within him to reach the lost with the Gospel, especially slaves and those of African heritage" (Saunders 2020, 29). Decades before the Civil War, Afro American Christians embraced evangelization, including foreign missions. The black church in the antebellum south encouraged foreign missions as much as 'home' missions because it valued the life of its black brother and sisters in Colonial America. Liele held this conviction, and his handwritten letters provide great insight into his life as a missionary (Saunders 2020, 168). Some missiologists suggest Liele's idea to engage in missions occurred when he received the good fortune to sail to Jamaica with British soldiers; although, they do not recognize this voyage as a call to missionary service.

During the Revolutionary War, the British offered freedom to enslaved Blacks who enlisted and served (Catron 2016, 197). By the end of the war, freed slaves seized the opportunity to leave the newly formed United States to travel to countries that broke with the British monarchy (Catron 2016, 198). Liele, who experienced the brutality of slavery, racist attitudes, and misrepresentation of his people, nonetheless embraced the mandate of the Great Commission, and acknowledged it as his responsibility to "…go and preach to all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt 28:19).

At the conclusion of the Revolutionary War, Liele seized the occasion to travel to Jamaica because it offered him the possibility to evangelize enslaved and freed blacks on the island (Catron 2016, 197-198). The willingness Liele exhibited to travel to the islands demonstrated his commitment to evangelization and his missionary calling.

Historical accounts portray Liele as a man of high regard, immeasurable faith, eager to reconcile with White Christians. He readily accepted ministry opportunities with White pastors, evident by his service to the Yamacraw Church in a Savannah suburb which included white and black congregates (Davis 1918, 120). Liele left a legacy as a missionary and reconciler.

Another notable Afro American missionary, who adhered to the principles of the 'Great Commission', is Rebekka Protten. Protten, a Moravian Missionary, is considered by Saunders as the mother of the Protestant missionary movement, as well as the impetus for the Protestant missionary movement as we know it today (2021, "The Future of the Evangelical Missionary Movement," 42-43, 46-48). She is also the forerunner for using education as an evangelistic tool. What is especially notable, "Rebekka conceptualized and implemented a contextualized delivery of the gospel decades before William Carey or Adoniram Judson modeled this concept" (Saunders 2020, 45). Other noteworthy pre-twentieth-century Afro/Black American missionaries include Richard Allen (1760-1831), Reverend Joseph C. Price (1854-1893), James Theodore Holly (1829-1911), Amanda Smith (1837-1915), and Dave George (1742-1810) to name a few. These men and women pioneered the missions' movement. However, the Black Church experienced vicious racism combined with opposition from most White Churches and White missionary agencies in the years following the Civil War and Reconstruction periods, resulting in an utter transformation of its missional theology. The Black Church increasingly became insular in focus, and Black missionaries began to lose ground in the foreign mission effort. The Black Church's mission and consequently its missional theological stance slowly changed. The concept of 'backyard' missions evolved and continued to take root during the Reconstruction and Jim Crow eras relegating black missional theology to an almost irrefutable 'backyard' mission's philosophy by the late-19th century.

Unfortunately, the demands for racial justice justifiably constrained the Black Church to look inward for its primary mission focus. Black Theology clarifies the church's mission is to remain within the confines of one's region and cultivate the needs of the 'neighbors' in proximity to the church. This belief is justified through Lukan letters. For instance, Luke's parable of the Good Samaritan is at the crux of Black Missional Theology. According to Black Missional Theology, the neighbors are as close as the community 'down the road.' This viewpoint aligns with 1 John 4:20, "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen." Thus, Black Missional Theology responds to Jesus' parable with a clarion call to go into one's

immediate vicinity to advocate for the disenfranchised and marginalized. This missional theology often deviates from the doctrines reflected in Evangelical Missional Theology, which focuses on evangelizing people in foreign countries. Nevertheless, both missional theologies recognize the need to act upon the Great Commission, but the Black Church is at odds with how to accomplish foreign missions without neglecting 'backyard' missions. Perhaps the means for achieving racial unity in missions is to create a model that encapsulates both theologies, a reconciliatory model. The creation of this model would necessitate having a thorough understanding of the essentials of both theologies.

Evangelical Missional Theology

Bird claims the primary rationale for Evangelical Theology focuses on 'living' the gospel while conveying its message worldwide (2020, 39-41, 81). Quite feasibly, Evangelical Missional Theology emerged from Evangelical Theology. Evangelical Theology examines God from a missional viewpoint found in the Great Commission (Bird 2020, 2). There are specifically identifiable attitudes toward missional theology exhibited by many evangelical church leaders, which are generally absent in black church leadership. According to Saunders, Black pastors are committed to the Great Commission but grapple with how to balance 'backyard' and global missions simultaneously (2020, 187-189). First, evangelical attitude toward mission is defined by how they prioritize missions. For example, countless evangelical denominations include missions as a focal point of their vision. Additionally, these churches create budgets that exclusively account for mission expenses. Lastly, numerous evangelical churches create mission boards or work directly with mission agencies to support the churches' mission activity. Unquestionably, the Evangelical Church's emphasis is global mission. Blue insists, Psalms are God's mission book because of its emphasis on the world's nations (2001, 56).

The evangelical church’s missional theology is the focal point of who they are evidenced by mission activity in the overall systematic review of evangelical theology. The constant focus on missions has endured even as the theology has progressed in the United States and the Western world. Missions conducted by White Christians during the colonial period reveals its impact on Evangelical churches and even the misrepresentation of the Black Atlantic and the mission movement among Afro Americans. Adoniram Judson, considered the first Protestant American missionary, spent one year in India. Judson is noted for his rejection of infant baptism and eventually resigned his position with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) over the controversial matter (Finn 2012, 151-153). After one year in

India, the Indian government demanded the Judsons leave the country, and they relocated to Burma (Finn 2012, 154). Judson experienced a life filled with enormous hardships which caused immense loss and grief during his almost forty years as a missionary; however, he remained undeterred (Finn 2012, 162-173), and his legacy endures. He translated the Bible into Burmese and is attributed with editing several dictionaries.

While evangelicals consider Judson the first "official" missionary from The United States, numerous prominent evangelical missionaries forged remarkable legacies during America's colonial years and continued into the twenty-first century. They evangelized in India, China, African nations, and various other countries. However, these mission accomplishments do not excuse the unfair prejudicial treatment inflicted upon Afro and Black Americans. White missionary agencies often prohibited Afro and Black Americans from contributing to mission endeavors because White Evangelicals' preclusion of Afro and Black Americans from global mission involvement seemed appropriate and justifiable. White Evangelicals (which includes missionaries) influenced by cultural bias tend to accept discriminatory and racist practices as norm.

This mindset typified the practices inside mission agencies and persisted as discriminatory and racist practices persisted. For example, in the 1600s, enslaved Africans were persuaded to convert to Christianity not only for the sake of salvation but also to improve their earthly conditions (Gates 2021, 21). This attitude, which permeated mission agencies across the United States, also influenced their policies.

Finally, evangelical missionaries tend toward a mindset for organizational structure. There is a plethora of mission agencies who represent Evangelical Missional Theology. Unfortunately, too often many of these agencies work from a framework that make allowances for racially prejudiced practices. Some of these practices include adhering to culturally inappropriate ways. Sadly, this attitude persists today among White Evangelicals as demonstrated by Robert P. Jones's study. Jones conducted a study to answer the question, *What Role Do Racial Attitudes Play in Structuring White Christian Identity?* Jones concluded, "The models reveal that, in the United States today, the more racist attitudes a person holds, the more likely he or she is to identify as a white Christian" (2021, 207-220).

Furthermore, some mission groups aimed to share the gospel and colonialize anyone deemed "uncivilized" (Mason 2018, 80-82); unfortunately, these beliefs guided the practices of mission agencies. Consequently, a narrative that religious freedom

afforded its recipients a privileged status became the prevailing attitude throughout the colonies, and the Evangelical Missional Theology was reinforced under these conditions. Evangelical Missional Theology began exercising its dominance globally as superior to other religions and even other Christian theological ideologies. However, refuting theological inaccuracies regarding race and skin color is complicated because they have persisted for centuries, and various evangelical pastors and leaders too often echo them. For example, racial superiority is rationalized by utilizing theological arguments which purports those of African ancestry originated from Cain; therefore, they naturally have criminal proclivity (Jones 2012, 27). These theological inaccuracies hinder reconciliation and widen the gap between Black and White evangelicals and missionaries.

Other factors gave rise to the decline of Afro and Black American missionaries; although, the inequalities existing within White mission agencies also constrained Black missionaries to reconsider serving abroad. Evangelical pastors and most biblical scholars insist that global missions (the Great Commission) is among the most important commands for every believer. Several White evangelical denominations place priority on global missions evident by the numerous diverse mission agencies and organizations. A final attitude to consider is Evangelicals' focus on expenditures and funding. Funding is an essential element in countless evangelical churches and missions organizations. Many White Evangelicals consistently support missions financially. This article does not analyze the differences between budgets for White Evangelical churches and Black churches, but Black pastors often lament the lack of resources for foreign mission endeavors. Finance and/or budget, establishing mission oversight organizations, and prioritizing missions in the local church is the bedrock philosophy of many evangelical churches and their missional theology.

It is also necessary to reiterate the cultural influence placed on Evangelical Theology. The culture impacts the theology as much as the theology impacts the culture - this is a two-edged sword. It is imperative for missionaries to recognize the culture she or he takes to the mission field influences how Evangelicals engage in missionary activities (Bird 2020, 113). Global missions is fundamentally essential to the belief system and/or theology of evangelicals. Within this belief system, the Evangelical culture often attempts to superimpose its cultural dogmas upon those who hear and accept the gospel.

During slavery, Christian and non-Christian slave owners, pastors, etc. inflicted upon people of color a theology assumed to be divine, virtuous, intelligent, and, therefore, correct. This theology implicitly superseded any theology the enslaved African practiced prior to being forced to into involuntary enslavement. The slaves' theology was inferior because African slaves in the United States were thought to be, by most standards, barbaric and lacking the ability to reason or learn (Tisby 2019, 37). American slaveowners forced upon their slaves a theology born out of their superiority complex and privilege (Tisby 2019, 36-38). Evangelical Theology in American culture is preoccupied with "gospelizing" (Bird 2020, 9) the world rather than the advocacy for the plight of African/Black Americans and the marginalized. This theology - Evangelical Theology - seeks to advance the Kingdom of Christ through the teachings of Scripture focused on Christ's work on Calvary with a small measure of regard to His radicalization for justice (Mason 2018, 55-57). "As incarnational missionaries, our mission flows from the mission of the gospel of practicing peace" (Mason 2018, 57).

Evangelicals place the weight of responsibility on Believers to share the gospel as opposed to being the gospel. Too often, missionaries go abroad with the erroneous goal to make disciples or converts to Evangelicalism rather than Christ. There is hope. A modicum of evidence exists that suggests the Evangelical missiology has progressed in its thinking during the past two or three hundred years.

Conclusion

Incontrovertibly, a theological chasm exists between White Evangelicals and Black Christians concerning foreign missions' endeavors. There are numerous reasons why this gap exists; however, finding viable solutions is problematic and demanding. Various issues point toward reasons for theological differences which include, historical factors pertaining to slavery in the United States, racism and racial tension, origination of the Black Church's theological origin, White Evangelical dogmas, differences and even a small measure of similarities within the White Evangelical and Black Church as it relates to missions, the inaccuracies in the narratives of Black and White missionary pioneers, and reasons for the ever-widening gap between White and Black Evangelical missionaries.

Therefore, in a missional context, reconciliation with White and Black evangelicals requires an understanding of their respective theological stance within this context. In a broad sense, White Evangelicals approach missions from the perspective of the great

commission (Matt 28:19), and Black Christians approach missions from the perspective of the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10). In this instance, 'neighbor' is interpreted as the person in proximity to one's church/home. White Evangelicals view their responsibility as taking the gospel abroad, while Black Christians perceive their responsibility as focusing on missions in proximity to one's home, school, or church.

Fostering racial unity and healing between the Black and White Church regarding its missional endeavors demands time and resolute effort. For most reading this article, at this moment in time - early twenty-first century - time will most likely expire before the one reading this work can realize the fruition of the work of reconciliation. This statement is not prophetic gloom but rather demonstrates the immense time and work needed to accomplish the goal of reconciliation between Black and White American missionaries. There is not enough time for those living now to see major milestones; this work is too vast.

To accomplish racial unity in global missions in the twenty-first century and forward, three things must occur. First, Afro and Black American missionary pioneers, who achieved incredible feats during the eras of the Black Atlantic, Colonial years, Antebellum South, and Post Civil war, must be acknowledged. Moreover, the historical missionary narratives must be told with accuracy because historical accuracy will benefit both Black and White American missionaries. Second, it is imperative to scrutinize erroneous theologies which continue to perpetuate the ideology that slavery and White supremacy are analogous with Christianity. However, the challenge to correct faulty theology is enormous because of its subjective nature. At its core, theology is humanity's perspective of – and experience with – God. Finally, acknowledging differences between the two theologies does not mitigate the integrity of a specific theological view. If a theological perspective is grounded in biblical truth, it is reasonable to admit there may be several applications relevant to one passage of Scripture.

"At our core, without being conscious in Christ, our souls are still in bondage and can only see things from the natural..." (Mason 2018, 27). The missionary must awaken theologically if they are to reach a twenty-first-century world. North American and particularly the United States of America mission groups will realize tremendous success when they open their hearts to genuine reconciliation. Reconciliation involves accepting that both Black and Evangelical theologies have deep roots in biblical theology, and both are committed to serving their neighbors and carrying out the Great

Commission. Bird suggests the way to remain theologically sound is to discern – as one hears other theological views – but not blindly reject other theologies (2020, 125). The need for global mission is tremendous. To fulfill the Great Commission, African/Black Americans and Caucasian/White Americans must begin to view mission through the lens that both theologies are viable and acceptable for home and global mission.

Lisa P. Christian *is a PhD student at Liberty University. She served as a missionary to Russia for 15 years and served as a cross-cultural worker in the Middle East for five years. Lisa currently serves as the Executive Director for Community Faith Partners in Ithaca, NY.*

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The Significance of Blackness in Dominican Republic Short-Term Missions Work

KURTRAN B. WRIGHT

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Kurtran B. Wright is a PhD student at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He has served as a Missions and Outreach Pastor for 14 years.

This article explores how race and ethnicity influence intercultural engagement and effectiveness in short-term missions by evaluating the differences between the impact of a predominantly[1] African American short-term mission team and an all-white American short-term mission team in the Dominican Republic.

Recently some American evangelicals have brought attention to the lack of African American Christians involved in the overseas mission work of U.S. evangelical denominations (Roach, 2020).[2] The infinitesimal amount of African American missionaries in the Southern Baptist Convention has been the feature story of various popular Christian magazines including *Christianity Today,* and several predominantly white, U.S. evangelical denominations and mission organizations have made it their goal to increase their number of black missionaries by creating new positions and dedicating resources to this endeavor.[3] The current climate of racial awakening in the United States has intensified their call for more black missionaries in their ranks (Hopkins, 2021).

It is difficult to understand the lack of black participation in missions within these denominations given the rather long history of African Americans in missions. Indeed, America's first missionary, George Liele, was a black American missionary to Jamaica. He is just the beginning of a long and underappreciated history of African American missionaries who despite racial discrimination and injustices in their home country and within the American church, answered the call of the Great Commission (Stevens 2012, 12, 49, 83).

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[1] In this essay I will use the term "predominantly" as an adverb to describe the ethnic feature which is most noticeable in a short-term missions group (Collins, n.d.).

[2] Much attention has been paid to the fact that in 2020, the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest sending agency, only had 13 full time African American missionaries out of 3,700 (less than one percent of their missionaries) (Roach, 2020).

[3] In January 2020, the Southern Baptist Convention created the position of full-time African American church mobilization strategist as well as the George Liele Church Planting, Evangelism, and Missions Day (Roach, 2020).

What is clear is that the American brand of missionary work is under heavy scrutiny. According to a recent Barna survey, a growing number of young American Christians believe that past mission work "has been unethical" and today's Christian mission is "tainted by its association with colonialism" (Barna 2020, 79).[4] Critics outside the Church claim American evangelical missionaries are trained agents deputized to promote the cultural and moral superiority of the United States. They hope indigenous people groups "come to 'see the light' and become like them so that they too will "enjoy the many benefits that accrue from Americanization and an Americentric world view" (Ashwill, 2016). Moreover, short-term missions, the popular style of missions practiced by more than a million Americans yearly, is under even greater scrutiny for its excessive financial waste and paternalism (Priest 2008, 36, 506). A report conducted by Barna in 2020, suggests these issues have contributed to the disinterest of young black Christians in North American intercultural mission work (Barna 2020, 78).[5]

One of the main selling points evangelical denominations and mission-sending organizations have used to encourage black churches to send more missionaries is their belief that black missionaries have a distinct advantage when sharing the gospel with many indigenous people groups. They emphasize that black missionaries empathize with oppressed and impoverished people groups better than white missionaries and because African Americans are free from the baggage of colonialism that hinders many indigenous people from receiving the gospel, they can more effectively reach people groups with similar experiences.[6]

These arguments seem persuasive, however, are they true? There is little evidence to support the claim that black missionaries have a special advantage in cross-cultural missions. As a missions pastor of a predominantly African American church who has taken more than 40 short-term mission teams in thirteen years, I must admit my skepticism.

In full transparency, I am caught in the middle. I am both an advocate of short-term missions and a cautious critic. I recognize that when done well short-term mission teams who partner with indigenous communities have the potential to reach countless

[4] One-third of young adult Christians (34%) agrees that "in the past, missions work has been unethical," compared to one in four adults 35 and older (23%). Two in five (42%) agree that "Christian mission is tainted by its association with colonialism" (vs. 29% older adults 35+, 31% teens) (Barna 2020, 79).

[5] Among Americans under the age of 35, black engaged American Christians (61% teens, 62% young adults) are more reluctant than the white majority (74% teens, 73% young adults) to say they value missionaries' work (Barna 2020, 78).

[6] Black and brown missionaries simply bring credibility that's hard to obtain otherwise. On top of this, diverse missionary teams avoid sending the wrong message about our faith. Simply by virtue of being different, they help the world see that the gospel is for all types of people.

lost souls and rebuild communities while encouraging participants to consider long-term mission work (Priest 2008, 35, 64). I also know the damage that a poorly trained and insensitive short-term mission team can do. Admittedly, I have experienced both.

The COVID pandemic has suspended my overseas short-term mission efforts and consequently allowed me to reassess the nature and goal of our short-term mission philosophy. Because my church is a very large, predominantly black, non-denominational, evangelical church, we are heavily influenced by the methodology of white, megachurches. There is a strong tendency to imitate the practices of these churches in hopes of getting similar results in a black context. Many of the ecclesiological practices and theories of church growth have been successfully contextualized for our upper, middle-class, black American context. Consequently, we began our mission ministry by incorporating the short-term mission strategies of these churches as well.

After years of personal experience and study, I have since learned to critically appraise these missiological approaches rather than adopting them wholesale. Yet, like many others, I too desire to see more black involvement in cross-cultural missions. However, before I use the rallying cry of "the gospel is received better when it comes from minority people—that is why we need more African American missionaries!" I want to explore the veracity of these claims. I cannot use this strategy to promulgate the American version of cross-cultural missions to other black churches unless I am confident of these assertions.

It is not the goal of this essay to present quantitative research on this issue (perhaps the subject of a future study). Rather, I want to conduct a preliminary inquiry into the role of race in my short-term mission work in the Dominican Republic. By interviewing the pastor of the local church that we have been working within Barahona, DR, I hope to begin to understand whether there is any perceptible difference between a short-term mission team composed of primarily black Americans and a short-term mission team composed of white Americans.

Over the past six years, I have engaged in mission work in the bateyes of the Dominican Republic. Batey communities are disadvantaged villages of mostly Haitian immigrant workers and their families who harvest (or once harvested) sugarcane. Individuals who live in the bateyes often struggle to receive necessities like healthcare, clean water, food, and education. As Haitian immigrants, their dark skin and inability to speak Spanish make them easy targets of discrimination.

In Barahona, a batey 6 hours west of Santo Domingo, we have worked with mayors, educators, community leaders, and pastors to provide citywide garbage receptacles, water wells, and public restrooms. Our coalition of pastors has also provided meals for the neediest in the community and has renovated houses for the handicapped. We have also hosted a citywide Vacation Bible School, basketball clinics, provided financial support to local churches, and adopted a Christian school for Haitian children. All this was done to unite local churches to reach their community with the gospel.

In my time in the Dominican Republic, I have never stopped to question what effect my race had on our work there. Having been raised in a predominantly white neighborhood, and attending a predominantly white church, I have grown accustomed to being a minority amongst a majority. I have learned to adapt my disposition to fit most situations, so the significance of my blackness is not something that I notice right away. It was not until I began to read about the shortage of African Americans in cross-cultural missions did I begin to question whether the arguments for the unique opportunities of black Americans in missions had any relevance to my work. So, in the spring of 2021, I decided to conduct an interview with Pastor Louis, the leader of the coalition of pastors that we partner with in the Dominican Republic.

It is important to communicate any preconceptions that I had when I approached this interview. I hypothesized that the potential benefit of being black in a cross-cultural mission context was overstated to promote black participation in the North American model of intercultural missions. My cynicism was bolstered by a prior conversation with Marcia, my translator, and the Dominican Republic ministry leader at my church. She was born in the DR but has spent much of her life in Texas and is a citizen of the United States.

When I asked Marcia to translate for me and I told her that the questions were concerning the impact of being black upon our work in the Dominican Republic, she was very skeptical. She wanted to save me the trouble and answer the question for him. She concluded that there really is no difference at all, “but sure, we can ask him.”

We concurred that we had not seen any difference in treatment from our partner churches or the people in the DR. We had not had any intentional or non-intentional conversations about our “blackness” in comparison to white mission teams. Until this point, the idea that we were different from any other mission team working in the area was foreign to us. Marcia had been on other mission trips to Nicaragua and could not recall any differences in how she was treated by the indigenous people there or any noticeable effect on her work there.

I began the interview by asking Pastor Louis a few general questions to gain an understanding of his experience with short-term mission teams. He has worked with over 15 different mission teams in twelve years. All of them were all-white teams from the United States except my team and another team from Puerto Rico.

The short-term mission teams participated in community revitalization projects, food programs, and neighborhood evangelism. When I asked him what were the most meaningful things that these teams did, he said it was the relational work that they accomplished through personal interaction with the people in the community. Initially, I thought that he was talking specifically about the neighborhood evangelism programs but upon clarification, I realized it was more than that. He emphasized that anything that built rapport and fostered authentic relationships had the greatest impact. That is the main reason that he continues to host short-term mission teams.

"When other people come into my community and show concern, it is very impactful," he said. Many of the people in the batey are Haitian immigrants or of Haitian descent and have been marginalized and oppressed all their lives because of their immigrant status. To have Americans reinforce their importance and value to God is transformative. For Pastor Louis, this alone is well worth the many sacrifices, risks, and personal loss of pastoral ministry time with his flock.

Finally, when I asked him if there was a difference between white mission teams and black mission teams, his answer was, "Yes." He said, "My people identify more with black Americans. We have a similar culture. They look like us." He was careful to clarify that the two different types of groups are not treated differently. All teams are welcomed and appreciated. He and his people just feel more comfortable with a team of African American missionaries. "They are a part of us. We are family."

When I asked him if there was a difference between the demands that a black team places upon him as a host and a white team place upon him, he said that there was no difference. Both teams seem to desire the same level of comfort that he tries to accommodate. However, he did say that it is easier to host a black team because his community identifies with African Americans right away. The Dominican Republicans in Barahona bond with a team of black Christians much more readily which makes his job as a host, easier. As far as perceptions go, he candidly admitted that "They feel like white people do not know hard work. Black people do."

I asked Pastor Louis if they use the same terminology to describe black Americans as they do for white Americans. I knew that in many Spanish-speaking countries "gringo"

was the term used for foreigners. I wanted to know if it was a term that was used for all foreigners or just white foreigners. Before I asked him this question, Marcia, my translator, told me that there was no difference. "Gringo" was a term used for black and white foreigners alike. But to her surprise, he said that "gringo" only refers to white foreigners. When I asked if there was a special word for black Americans he said, "No." They are just called black Americans. Marcia stated that in Nicaragua that was not her experience. She recalls being called "gringo". She now wonders if it was because she was the only non-white American in her group of short-term missionaries. Perhaps the term, "gringo" gets applied according to the general ethnic make-up of the group.

I asked Pastor Louis to recall any issues that he had due to cultural misunderstandings with the short-term mission teams. He did not recall any instances, rather he stated most difficulties arise when the team has an established program and schedule they are committed to keeping, not taking into account the constantly changing dynamics they are unaware of because of their inherent cultural blindness. Many danger factors cause him to change course, and this creates conflict when the team wants to keep to the schedule. In a word— "paternalism" (Priest 2008, 508-509).[7]

I cringed as he spoke because I too am guilty of this. As a novice missional pastor trained in the ways of American corporate leadership principles, I did not see my cultural blindness as an issue when there was conflict. I arrogantly believed that most of the conflicts were leadership issues. I subconsciously believed that I was a superior leader and could see and solve issues better than he or the other leaders that I was working with could. Many times, he obliged my arrogance to maintain the relationship trusting that in due time I would recognize the error of my ways. We have had many such reckonings in which I had to sheepishly apologize for my paternalism.

I concluded our conversation that evening by apologizing again for all my transgressions. Pastor Louis enlightened me once again. He confided that he tolerated a lot more things from me than he would a white leader. He would have been more offended by some of the things I have said if it had come from a white person. This made me feel even more terrible. He could sense my conviction and guilt, so he affirmed me by telling me that I am his little brother and there are many things that the older brother must put up with. We are family and he loves me and my family very much. "All is forgiven."

[7] Robert J. Priest defines "paternalism" as the combination of, "benevolence with an assumption of superior knowledge, experience, and skills" (Priest 2008, 508-509).

This conversation was eye-opening for me in several ways. Although by no means conclusive, it begins to help me understand the significance of being black in short-term intercultural mission contexts. It is the starting point for future inquiry, and it stirs many more questions that I hope to investigate. First, it must be pointed out that blackness does not prevent paternalism. It may help African Americans connect better with nationals, but black Americans engaging in short-term mission trips are also susceptible to colonialism and paternalism. This fact points to a deeper problem. Kyeong Sook Park states in, "Researching Short-term Missions and Paternalism" that many have suggested that short-term missions may have built-in paternalistic tendencies because it combines "economic power" with "naive optimism" (Priest 2008, 506). This may seem to be the case regardless of race. It is a question worthy of further exploration.

The interview also seemed to bolster Kyeong Sook Park's conclusion that the best way to decrease paternalism is to have a close relationship with national leaders. My relationship with Pastor Louis has been six years in the making. We have been through a lot together. One time he even had to confront me with the fact that I rarely call him unless there was an impending trip. I repented and now we talk every other week consistently. It has been this relationship that has curbed my paternalistic tendencies. I continue to learn a lot from him and cherish our friendship.

Finally, although I support the effort to engage African Americans in global missions, I do not believe that any positive effects of being black in an inter-cultural context should be used as a "recruiting tool." I believe this is unwise for many reasons. First, I fear an overemphasis on the special opportunities African Americans may have in some intercultural missions contexts discounts the role white missionaries, without these advantages, have historically played and continue to play. It may discourage white American missionaries, and instead of solving a problem, create a new one.[8]

Secondly, this approach fosters the idea that cross-cultural missionary work is best done by those who resemble the phenotype and cultural characteristics of the indigenous people group. The degree of cultural differences between missionaries and those to whom they are called should not be a determining or delimiting factor in where a missionary is sent. Using this as a marketing strategy overstates the advantages of being a black missionary and masks the possible disadvantages. Moreover, the cultural distinctiveness of a missionary has many advantages as well (Pelt 1989, 28-37).

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[8] In fact Barna's survey in 2020 indicates that young white churchgoers are the least eager about engaging in missions (48%) when compared with black (61%), Hispanic (54%) and other ethnic minorities (57%) (Barna 2020, 78).

Lastly, I believe if this tactic were to succeed, it may inadvertently create a movement of black missionaries who would be inclined to serve exclusively in countries where their ethnicity is advantageous. I could easily foresee a new stereotype forming in which black evangelical missionaries are pigeonholed into going exclusively to African countries or ministering exclusively to people of African descent. This has a long historic precedence that we do not want to repeat. I pray we can learn from the history of America's segregated church and not perpetuate the same mistakes in other lands.[9]

[9] I am referring to the AME church's split from the Methodist church in 1816, the Assemblies of God's split from the Church of God in Christ in 1914 and the Southern Baptist split from the Baptist denomination in 1845.

Kurtran B. Wright *is a PhD student at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He has served as a Missions and Outreach Pastor for 14 years. His academic interests include the significance of African American missions, the efficacy of short-term missions, and cross-cultural church partnerships.*

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Lee P. Christian Jr.

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Lee P. Christian Jr, is a DMin candidate at Regent University. He pastors City of Hope Family Worship Center in Cleveland, Ohio.

Fulfilling the Great Commission

The universal call to salvation is pronounced when the LORD promises Abraham, "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen 12:3 KJV). The redemptive motif of Scripture has always included the totality of humanity, not just a select group (for example, the Jewish people). Jesus speaks in alignment with the universal call to salvation when he says, "for God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16 ESV).[1] This message of God's saving grace and love should be shared by men and women who have a heart for souls.

Like Jesus, who came to seek and to save the lost, anyone who represents His kingdom by sharing the Gospel, must have the same burden. This burden cannot be tainted by ethnic, racial, or cultural prejudices. This burden cannot be jaundiced by political or philosophical nuances that often come between people. Under the New Covenant all humanity is made into one people, namely the Church. Paul reenforces this idea when he writes, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). Therefore, any presentation of the gospel that marginalizes people who are different than the presenter of the Gospel fails to emanate the true love of God and the full glory of the Christ of the gospel. Moreover, the Great Commission should be executed through love and compassion.

The execution of the Great Commission, originally given to the 11 disciples of Jesus, is the same assignment for the Church today. The Lord declared, "All authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all

[1] All Scripture references are quoted from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:18-19). Making disciples from all nations (ethnos in Greek), centers Jesus's command around the idea of a kingdom which is an all-inclusive, multicultural community of people here in the earthly realm. An impactful presentation of the Gospel requires those who carry the message, of necessity, be given to a heightened sense of multicultural intelligence. In this verse the word, "nations" demonstrates the Lord's desire to reach and save all humanity. Nations, according to the Strong's concordance is, "ἔθνος (eth'-nos); a race (as of the same habit), for example, a tribe; specially, a foreign (non-Jewish) one (usually, by implication, pagan): Gentile, heathen, nation, people" (Blue Letter Bible). The Lord desires to reach the entire world not just in a geographical context but in an ethnic and cultural context as well.

To press His desire further, the Lord challenges Peter not to consider cultural (and by implication ethnic) differences as He was preparing Peter to present the gospel to Cornelius and those in his house. In the narrative of Peter's ministry to Cornelius, the Bible shares that Peter did not understand the vision which was given to him three times (Acts 10:17a). However, when Peter entered Cornelius's home, he was able to understand the meaning of the vision. He acknowledged the laws that governed the interaction of Jews with men of other *ethnos*, however, God revealed to him the precious status of all humanity (Acts 10:28). This led to Peter's presentation of the gospel, which he prefaced by giving special notice to God's acceptance of ALL who seek Him with all their heart, working works of righteousness to honor him (Acts 10:34-35). In view of this background, anyone who engages in missions should have a healthy sense of the love and compassion God has for humanity. There must be willingness to serve God by serving His people – all nations – with an infectious and engaging presence, one that exudes the person of Christ.

Ministry in Our Own Jerusalem

Global missions is the common context in which missionary work is considered. Leaving the shores of America and carrying the Gospel, along with various supplies, to poor, under-developed nations, seems to be the model upon which the Western world has built its current missionary model. However, sharing the gospel and growing the Kingdom of God begins in the local community. Local missions are an integral part of God's mission – the Missio Dei – and is the responsibility of the local church. Local mission endeavors, therefore, compels the church to engage in the life of the

community they serve. Terry notes, "while one might think that the purpose of missions is self-evident, the late David Bosch in *Transforming Mission* (1991) demonstrated that the missionary efforts of the church throughout the centuries have reflected considerable variety regarding purpose. This variety has ranged from the embodiment of agape to the 'Christianizing' of culture to the expansion of Christendom, both in terms of government and orthodoxy" (Terry 2015, 19).

It is this "variety" in American church history that presents a challenge. Before addressing the small number of African American Christians on the mission field, one must contextualize the collective historical framing of the African American Christian perspective. What is meant by, the "Christianizing of a culture"? Does that imply Euro-centric or Anglo-American centric Christian culture? Is the expansion of God's kingdom to be divorced from the heart the message of the love of God? Here lies the challenge in American church history. Why are those who carry the gospel across oceans not willing to be the embodiment of a loving Savior to men and women of color who live around the corner and down the street from them?

In a country split by slavery for its first one hundred years, many white Christians worshipped and gave devotion to God while showing hatred and disdain for those enslaved in their society. As Lincoln and Mamiya assert, "Two hundred and fifty years of slavery were followed by one hundred years of official and unofficial segregation in the South and the North" (1990, 3). As the events of the recent past indicate, far too many white American Christians are not willing to standup for or lock arms with Christians of color in the fight for social and economic justice. Since the time of slavery, the Black Church has been the epicenter of theological thought, bridging the gap between the atrocities of the Black American experience and the peace-loving God of the Scripture. From the days of slavery, through the Jim Crow era, the Civil Rights era, and post-Civil rights period, the Black Church has been at the forefront to champion the cause of "the least of these my brethren" (Matt 25:40) in its own communities.

American Church history shows that major denominations experienced splits along racial lines during the early years of the nation. This notation is important because the theology of the African American church has been centered around – not only the redemption Christ offers – but the survival of a despised people. The preaching and teaching in African American churches included – and still does – an emphasis on a God who would rescue the hurting and despised. For example, Lincoln and Mamiya maintain, "the Old Testament notion of God as an avenging, conquering, liberating paladin remains a formidable anchor of the faith in most black churches" (1990, 3).

Existing as a house of refuge, the African American church became the place where their members could rise-up and be recognized as, not three-fifths of a man, but a whole man. As this began to happen, denominations that were once interracial, begin to splinter.

Early American church history chronicles the racial divide that plagues the nation to this day. The Methodist, Baptist, and Pentecostal denominations recorded how their respective denominations separated along racial lines. Lincoln and Mamiya contend, "Unlike most sectarian movements, the initial impetus for black spiritual and ecclesiastical independence was not grounded in religious doctrine or polity, but in the offensiveness of racial segregation in the churches and the alarming inconsistencies between the teachings and the expressions of the faith" (1990, 47). The message of light from the Cross of Christ, the life of the believer, and fulfilling the Great Commission, through missionary efforts both home and abroad, was dimmed by the blatant disregard by white Christians toward their fellow man. Lincoln and Mamiya suggest, "It was readily apparent that the White church had become a principal instrument of the political and social policies undergirding slavery and the attendant degradation of the human spirit" (1990, 47). If there is a true commitment to God, there must be a renouncing of this type of hypocrisy. Therefore, they continue, "against this the black Christians quietly rebelled, and the Black Church emerged as the symbol and the substance of their rebellion" (1990, 47). In the process of African American denominations becoming established in polity and doctrine, their history also suggests a modest effort to develop and deploy missionaries to other parts of the world, mostly the Caribbean and Africa.

These authors also point out, "The Methodist church is noted as being the first denomination formed by African Americans" precipitated by mistreatment of the colored members at the hands of the white members (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, 47). "The early black Methodist churches, conferences, and denominations were organized by free black people in the North in response to stultifying and demeaning conditions attending membership in the white-controlled Methodist Episcopal churches" (1990, 47). Despite this existential reality, the Black church was determined to spread the gospel around the world. The earliest missionary efforts of the Methodist and Baptist (Pentecostalism not yet being organized as a denomination) were the sending of preachers and missionaries from northern states to the south. For the Methodist, per Lincoln and Mamiya, "Missionary efforts at home were augmented by a strong desire to plant the flag of African Methodism wherever that flag would fly. Consequently, the A.M.E. Church has been the most effective of all the black denominations in its overseas

missionary efforts, claiming 1 million members and over 22,000 churches in Africa and the Caribbean" (1990, 54).

Concerning the Black Baptist movement, it is noted, "During the antebellum period, [however], fugitive slaves and free Blacks in the North did form abolitionist missionary associations and societies, the leaders of which then organized the first regional black Baptist conventions" (1990, 20). Lincoln and Mamiya go on to clarify,

> the American Baptist Missionary Convention, had been organized fully two decades before emancipation at the Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York City in 1840, for purposes of evangelization, education, and general racial uplift. This convention was restricted in its activities to the New England and Middle Atlantic areas until after the Civil War, when it sent black ministers to the South as missionaries (1990, 27).

Race consciousness and strife aided the conception of Black Baptist Church organizations, called conventions. Towards the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, United States congressional activity caused the Black church to galvanize. "From 1890 to 1910 legislation was passed by all southern states which effectively disenfranchised African Americans and gave license to lynchings and other forms of racial suppression" (1990, 28). For the Black Baptists, it is highlighted, "The first step toward denominational structure was taken in 1814 with the formation of the General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States of America for Foreign Missions" (1990, 23). There also existed a heart for overseas missions, even during this time. These authors add, "As early as 1815 the African Baptist Missionary Society of Richmond was organized by two black ministers, Collin Teague and Lott Carey, with the aid of a white deacon, William Crane. In 1821 Lott Carey became the first Black Baptist missionary to Africa" (1990, 45). There is a wealth of global missions' history among the Black Baptist movement of the early 19th century. Lincoln and Mamiya continue, "Much of the Black Baptist missionary endeavors were limited to Liberia and the West Coast of Africa during the nineteenth century. In 1889 the Baptist Foreign Mission Convention published a magazine called The African Missions. During the twentieth century missionary efforts were extended to Central and South African countries" (1990, 45).[2]

[2] National Baptist.com. Missionary endeavors around the world is still growing in the National Baptist convention and according to their website they are intending to open several more stations in the coming year. According to their website, The National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., are currently supporting 11 missions stations in Africa, the Caribbean, and Central America.

Pentecostalism, the youngest of this group, began forming around the turn of the 20th century. This movement is noted to have been interracial at its inception here in America. However, as Jacobsen insists, "Early Pentecostal theology cannot be discussed without examining the issue of race" (2003, 260). He acknowledges, "Multiracialism was part of the fabric of the movement, and it naturally tinctured the rhetoric of many early Pentecostal theologians" (Jacobsen 2003, 260). The Azusa Street Mission is where the glossolalia phenomenon occurred and was experienced by people from all walks of life, whites, and blacks. Jacobsen writes, "The leaders of the mission believed that the egalitarian nature of the gospel required Pentecostalism to be anti-racist in faith and practice" (2003, 260). Jacobsen continues, "[W]ith time, and as the movement became more institutionalized, patterns of [pentecostal] organizations unfortunately tended to become more segregated" (2003, 261). The pattern in the Pentecostal divisions differed from that of the Methodist and Baptist because it was the white brothers who splintered away from the main body of the mixed congregation to form segregated groups.

For the trinitarian believers, the formation of the Assemblies of God was a breaking away from the African American leader Charles H. Mason's Church of God in Christ organization. And according to Jacobsen, although the Oneness Pentecostal movement held the races together longer, they also experienced the White brothers breaking away from the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World to form the United Pentecostal Churches. "It is a sorry comment on white Pentecostalism that virtually no church leader or theologian considered the racial division of the movement an issue worthy of his or her serious and sustained theological reflection" (Jacobsen 2003, 262).

Once again, with the ugly underbelly of American racism infecting the church, the leaders of the Black Pentecostal movement established polity and orthodoxy. Furthermore, the main Black Pentecostal movements have established and maintained a global presence on each of the (inhabited) continents. According to their website, the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World have affiliate churches in 30 international dioceses and the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) boast of having 63 countries where affiliate churches are established. Lincoln and Mamiya comment, "Throughout much of the twentieth century COGIC'S resources have been directed to domestic missionary work, especially in urban areas, building congregations from house churches and storefront churches to regular church edifices" (1990, 90). Ministry in their own Jerusalem is priority, however, there remains a commitment to taking the gospel to the world. As these authors also explicate, "Since the end of the civil rights period, COGIC has emphasized foreign missions in Africa and the Caribbean. According to recent studies, the fastest-growing sector of Christianity in African countries has consisted of African

independent church movements, which are usually Pentecostal in form" (1990, 90). This information suggests there has been and continues to be an international missionary presence among predominantly African American denominations.

Urban Ministry and its Domestic Missions Agenda

Now, it is imperative to consider the Black church's inherent role as caretaker/guardian/advocate on the home front. This assignment includes the commitment to the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. Furthermore, this assignment – in the grand scheme of her role in the community – is the Black Church's missiological calling. It encompasses a holistic approach of ministry, including socio/economic, political, and social engagement. When one considers the church's role in any given society, the missiological construct is at the core of its very existence. To be clear, "in the early stages of the church, missions was more than a function; it was a fundamental expression of the life of the church" (Terry 2015, 6). The mission of the church has always been encapsulated by the Great Commission and Commandment. It is the missiological framework that presents the actions of the Great Commandment, the love of Christ on display in a tangible, impactful measure. Terry adds, "The missionary endeavors of the church have helped theology to a fuller understanding of its task by providing a much-needed corrective and a wider perspective for its thinking. Missiology and theology must be – 'conjoined twins' – in the theological curriculum; they are mutually interdependent" (2015, 7). In other words, do not just tell them about Jesus, show them His love in action. Therefore, in a land where racism has infected the hearts of many white Christians, the Black church has stood in the gap for her community, to be the place of healing, belonging, and acceptance. A place where the voices of the community are heard and appreciated.

Considering the journey of the Black Christian in America and the history of the institutionalized Black Church, it is no wonder many pastors have chosen to focus on the pressing needs in their community versus being more actively involved in foreign missions. However, there are a few points that must be considered. First, it should be mentioned that the African Methodist, the Black Baptist conventions, and the major Pentecostal movements, like the Church of God in Christ, provide missionary support through which their affiliate churches are able to provide financial support. Unlike independent churches, who sponsor their own missionaries, these organizations maintain their international presence through the collective, organizational support. With that being acknowledged, it is also reasonable to concur with Hopkins where she

asserts, "many African Americans who are called to ministry have prioritized the needs in their own communities, focusing on preaching the gospel or pursing justice locally" (February 1, 2021). Furthermore, there continues to be an ever-pressing need for urban ministry to mobilize both their resources and their community engagement. This does not negate the need for global engagement through missions, but it does suggest that pastors of urban ministries are on the local mission field, unique to their surroundings.

Embodying the work of Christ requires that ministries are anointed to bring good news to the poor, comfort the brokenhearted, proclaim that captives will be released, and prisoners will be freed, and to tell those who mourn that the time of God's favor has come. To all who mourn in Zion a crown of beauty for ashes, a joyous blessing instead of mourning, and festive praise instead of despair (Isa 61:1-3, NLT). The message of the urban church continues to address the social dilemma American society continues to perpetuate on the lives of its members as she – the urban church – pushes the message of hope that life in this nation can get better.

Police brutality, rampant poverty, violence, drug abuse, addictions, single parent (no parent) homes, are only of few of the myriad issues confronting the urban church. Ministries that can address these and many other social ills of today, with practical insight and tangible assistance, are the ministries that thrive in the urban centers of this nation. Home ownership programs, debt relief and financial freedom initiatives are areas of concern that garner attention. Encouraging the pursuit of higher education, which opens the door for good paying jobs, constitute social programming the Black Church has needed to (and still must) address.

In the 'Land of the Free,' it is necessary for the Black Church to engage in these types of endeavors to ensure their members have opportunities to pursue the American dream. Lincoln and Mamiya argue, "In spite of the harsh realities of the American racial dilemma, the majority of African Americans have desired to be part of the American dream and to share more equally the fruits of their singular contributions to this land of opportunity" (1990, 239). Because this nation has prided herself as being Christian, citizens of color – especially members of the Black church – have an obligation and the right to hold her (this nation's) feet to the fire concerning how she deals with their community. Many pastors in the urban centers of this nation are products of the cultural environment where they serve. Therefore, it is needful for them to connect people to God based upon the unique Christian worldview from the African American perspective.

Robert C. Lawson's Writing and Impact

Bishop R. C. Lawson, a Oneness Pentecostal and founder of the Churches of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, addressed the race issue head on. Jacobsen writes that he was, "the first person of the Pentecostal movement to address race with any degree of sustained theological attention" (2003, 263). Lawson's anti-racist vision was one that clearly rose above his contemporaries. Jacobsen notes, "Lawson's analysis and critique addressed virtually all of white Christianity and Christian-dominated Western culture, and his theological solution was, if anything, even more universal in scope and application" (2003, 263). It is chilling to hear the words of Lawson, penned in the 1920s, in the context of today's climate. Per Jacobsen, "Lawson believed that racial prejudice was 'the greatest enemy of humanity'" (2003, 265). Jacobsen contends, "[I]n Lawson's own theology, brotherly love – mutual care and concern that treated people from all races the same – was a core value" (2003, 266). Lawson's assessment of the Scriptures moved him to believe he must kill racism. He believed, "Most white people were so completely bound by prejudice in matters of race – 'so biased to the Negro in every phase and department' – that it was difficult to know where to begin" (Jacobsen 2003, 265). To understand the depths of the roots of racism in America, Lawson need look no further than the upbringing of white children.

> Lawson explained that white boys and girls were taught from the earliest days of childhood to 'look upon the darker races as inferior in both blood and in intellect,' and that elementary school prejudice was then reinforced for the rest of their lives by the incessant drone of white 'newspaper logic and propaganda,' which insisted that black people always be portrayed in the worst light possible and whites in the best (Jacobsen 2003, 265).

As a student of the Scriptures, Lawson surmised, the best place to gain traction against the poisonous venom of racism would be in the church, after all, the church is the one place the Bible is taught as the infallible word of a loving God. Jacobsen observes that in Lawson's view, "the churches were supposed to be committed to 'the high Christian idealism of the 'Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of all men'" (2003, 265). Much to Lawson's dismay, the white churches were just as guilty of the racism of the day and were totally locked into its logic. This left him to wonder "how white Christians could so easily ignore Jesus's command to love others in the same way they loved themselves" (Jacobsen 2003, 265).

The devasting effect of the rise of racial hatred grew immensely and the impact was devastating the world evangelism scene. In a scathing, yet telling critique of the circumstances, Lawson writes, "Largely because of color prejudice the Christian missionary movement is at a standstill in India, China, Japan, and Africa .... Indeed, it appears that Africa is destined to become a great Mohammedan empire. He further explained, "the darker races have reached a point where they will not kindly accept a gospel of love and brotherhood when the denial of their essential manhood by Christian [*sic*] people negative [*sic*] the tenets which they are asked to accept" (Jacobsen 2003, 266). The Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, the foundation upon which Lawson promoted his cause, had been popularized in European and American churches by a series of lectures from a well-known theologian by the name of Adolph Harnack. The Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, writes Jacobsen, "had been part of the African-American Christianity from its very beginning" (2003, 266). In fact, it was upon this premise that the first African American denomination (the African Methodist Episcopal Church) was birthed, in the early 1800s.

Lawson was hopeful that his Pentecostal movement would succeed where other denominations had failed. He believed a genuine Pentecostal experience was powerful to transform men's hearts into the image of a loving Christ. Lawson writes,

> We thought for sure that wherein the other churches had failed upon the issue of the 'color line' and had divided into race and national groups, for instance colored and white Baptist and Methodist churches, etc. Welsh Presbyterian Church, German Lutheran Church, etc. that the [Pentecostal] people would teach to these a wonderful lesson by example in showing that the true people of God are one regardless of what nationality or race they may belong; by abiding together in the bonds of fellowship, love, and organization, thus bringing on them the blessings recorded in the 133rd Psalm...We trusted that the Pentecostal people would rise to redeem man by example and precept (Jacobsen 2003, 267).

Lawson's hopes were dashed, and the Pentecostal movement became infected with the same venom of racism which plagued the other groups. The contributions of R. C. Lawson to the discussion of racism and the church in America are invaluable, still holding true today. Jacobsen declares, "[L]ike William Seymour and the other leaders of the Azusa Street Mission, Lawson believed that people whose lives were filled with racial hatred could not possibly be filled with the Spirit" (Jacobsen 2003, 267). Incongruency of Biblical theology and Christian praxis befuddled Lawson.

Conclusion

What gospel is being presented by missionaries who are infected with the hatred of racism? How can White, racist Christians possibly fulfill the Great Commandment while harboring hatred towards people of color? Furthermore, how is White Evangelicalism addressing these issues today? Where are the voices "crying out in the wilderness" of racial prejudice? How are the missiological pursuits of the church impacted today?

Perhaps the best way to summarize these thoughts is by offering a plan for the missiological networks to consider. First, the major denominations from the majority side must be willing to seek reconciliation by collectively offering a scathing rebuke of their forefathers misplaced racist mentality, and for their missing the opportunity to stand with their African American brothers and sisters. Secondly, the missions' departments from these groups should began to coordinate cooperative efforts that tear down walls and begin to build bridges. Leadership from all groups must be willing to make a concerted effort to bring an end to the divide that is not representative of the unity Christ prayed for concerning His Church.

The Universal Church is called to fulfill the Great Commission by loving and serving others as Christ did (and does) by example. The failure of American Christianity is that it has been split along racial lines. This article has explored and uncovered a troubling past. A past which includes a history of racial division – prompted by the maltreatment of African American believers – which gave rise to denominational splits along racial lines. The Black Church movement, across denominations, determined their missiological pursuits were their response to the Great Commission, regardless of the mistreatment to which they were subjected in the States. And their history confirms a steady presence in missions work in third world countries down through the years.

Finally, the apostle Paul suggested that he was willing to become all things to all people so that he could win some of those people to Christ (1 Cor 9:22). Is it possible that the Evangelical Church and the Black Church can learn to look through the lenses of one another's perspectives in order that others may be won to Christ? I wonder.

Lee P. Christian Jr. *is a DMin candidate at Regent University. He pastors City of Hope Family Worship Center in Cleveland, Ohio. He and Delsa (wife of 31 years) are passionate about serving God and His people by championing kingdom marriages and biblical instruction in victorious living.*

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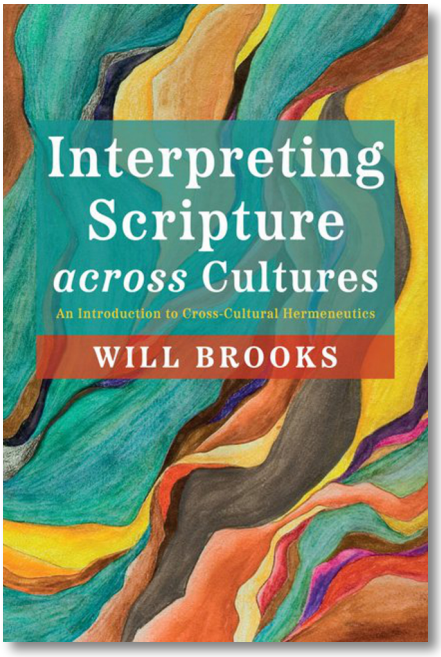
REVIEW: *Interpreting Scripture Across Cultures: An Introduction to Cross-Cultural Hermeneutics* by Will Brooks

REVIEWED BY
SOCHANNGAM
SHIRIK

Brooks, Will. *Interpreting Scripture Across Cultures: An Introduction to Cross-Cultural Hermeneutics,* Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2022. Pp. 210,
ISBN: 978-1-6667-0748-9 $26.00 paperback.



I have often wondered whether the inspired Bible comes with an embedded hermeneutic, which people from all cultures should adopt. Will Brooks says "Yes." The biblical hermeneutic he propagates is one in which the interpreter upholds the authorial intent of the meaning. He contends that this method, namely, "the grammatical-historical method" could and should be adopted in different (cross)cultural contexts (5). He does not argue that the grammatical-historical method itself in an inspired method, but he maintains that the inspired Scripture shows that this method is the right method for faithful interpretation. He encourages missionaries to focus not only on the best ways of communicating the gospel but also on the best ways of training indigenous leaders. One of the ways to accomplish this goal is to help people interpret the Bible correctly, and his book attempts to do just that.

The book is divided into three main parts. In the first part, Brooks raises the contextual challenges of reading the Scriptures together, the necessity of pursuing the authorial intent in biblical interpretation, and the difficulties—and also the possibility—of applying the grammatical-historical method across different cultures. He demonstrates that while we are separated from the context of the biblical writers and from one another, it is still possible to retrieve the author's intended meaning of the biblical text.

In the second section, Brooks introduces his readers to some alternative ways of interpreting the texts. After briefly discussing Postcolonial hermeneutics, cross-textual

hermeneutics, rhetorical-interactive hermeneutics, and ethnohermeneutics, he finds them falling short of, if not distorting, the hermeneutical models embedded in the Scripture.

In the third section, Brooks comes full circle by providing principles for his proposed hermeneutical model and offering some practical implications of how to apply this model to different contexts including oral learners. He concludes the book by reemphasizing the necessity and urgency of properly equipping Christians with the right method of interpretation.

Brooks has given the global church a helpful tool. Considering that his audience is primarily global conservative evangelicals (as inferred from his bibliographical references), Brooks has formidably argued his thesis by establishing a solid case for the priority of the grammatical-historical method in interpreting Scripture. His argument becomes clearest when reading his discussion of ethnohermeneutics (Ch 8) where he presents his view in contrast to Larry Caldwell's thesis. Caldwell believes that the Scripture itself provides more than one legitimate hermeneutical model, and therefore Christians should adopt indigenous hermeneutical models they are already acquainted with. Hence, according to Caldwell, insisting on one model as Brooks does is unhelpful, if not unbiblical (95–98). I find this chapter to be the most informative in the debate. Ironically, however, I find elements of Caldwell's proposal persuasive.

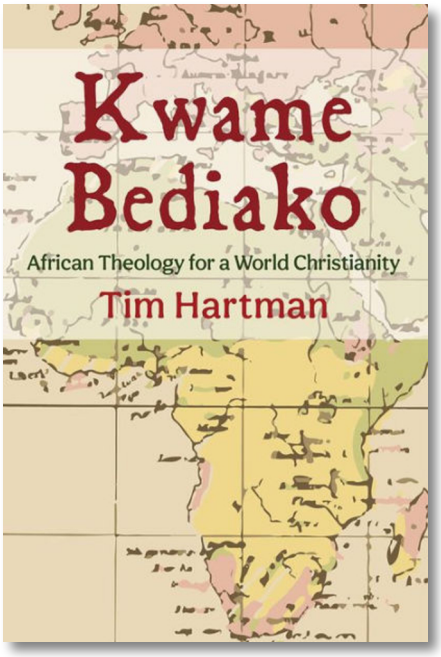
The ethnohermeneutics that Brooks finds fault with (in one sense, postcolonial hermeneutics, cross-textual hermeneutics, and other indigenous hermeneutics Brooks discusses are forms of ethnohermeneutics) do not need to stand in opposition with the grammatical-historical method. Interpretation, after all, is making sense of the text in a context. Possibly some versions of "ethnohermeneutics" are antithetical to Brook's proposal. But they need not be always. For instance, some forms of postcolonial reading attempt to take into consideration the grammatical-historical context of the biblical text. An example could be a form of Indian Dalit theology. Perhaps a more nuanced discussion of this topic will benefit the reader. Additionally, evangelicals who subscribe to the grammatical-historical method of interpretations do not necessarily agree on the precise hermeneutical approach within this method. Nonetheless, Brooks is correct that our hermeneutical method cannot do away with the author's intended meaning of the text.

Sochanngam Shirik

REVIEW: *Kwame Bediako: African Theology for a World Christianity* by Tim Hartman

REVIEWED BY
ABENEAZER URGA

Hartman, Tim. *Kwame Bediako: African Theology for a World Christianity*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2022. 209 pp., ISBN: 978-1-5064-8045-9* $29.00 paperback.



In his theological introduction to Kwame Bediako's thought, Tim Hartman explicates the major theological themes in Bediako's works. Bediako, "an apostle to the west," offers incisive critiques and guidance to the self-assured Western theology. Hartman notes that what motivated Bediako's theological task is that the Global South has become the center of Christianity.

Chapter 1 narrates Bediako's faith journey. Although he grew up in a religious context, he had imbibed a secular ideology that led him to atheism, but he eventually embraced Christianity while he was a graduate student in France. Loneliness, exhaustion and depression in a foreign land were instrumental for his conversion. Secular intellectual thought almost erased Bediako's Africanness, but his concession to Christianity enabled him to embrace the gospel while also appreciating and embracing his African identity. Bediako stressed that while Western thought led him away from God, Christianity led him to God and his African roots.

Hartman highlights that Bediako's calling is to enable "African Christians to understand their identity in Jesus Christ as Africans" (p. 9). In other words, he envisions that they "can be authentic Africans and true Christians" (p. 10). The link between two strange bedfellows—Christianity and colonization—is the source of the identity crisis among African Christians. Colonization forced Africans either to dismiss or abandon

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** The listed version is the newest edition. The reviewer read the 2021 version printed with Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Langham Global Library, 2021. Xviii + 166. ISBN: 978-1-8397-3073-3 £ 13.99. The UK version is not available in the US or Canada.*

their heritage. The presentation of the gospel by missionaries did not take into account the African traditional religions as fertile ground for the gospel. As such, many Africans live "on a borrowed gospel" (p. 12).

Bediako strove to uncover the causes of the identity crisis among Africans. In this endeavor, his interlocutors were the Congolese poet Tchicaya U Tam'si, the Martinican poet Aimé Césaire and the Kenyan theologian John S. Mbiti. These authors enabled Bediako to formulate an African Christian identity "based on Africa's precolonial past and Christianity's patristic (pre-Christendom) past" (p. 14). For Bediako, authentic African Christian identity lies in Africa's pre-colonial history.

Chapter 2 discusses Bediako's notable idea: translatability. The incarnation of Christ is paradigmatic for the translatability of the gospel in any given culture. Hence, translatability affirms the universality of the gospel. Unlike Islam, the Christian faith spread via translation by distinguishing between the message and the messenger. One example of translatability is the use of the name of an existing god in a given African culture to "[identify] that name with God in Jesus Christ" (p. 34). Bediako also stressed that the Bible has impacted Africa since it has provided "answers to Africans' questions" (p. 36). Some African theologians, however, rejected Bediako's understanding of translation, as it appears to downplay the agency of Africans and the neutrality of translation.

Chapter 3 presents Bediako's notable idea: "Christianity as a Non-Western Religion." Bediako sought to connect modern African Christianity with the early African Christian past, bypassing Western theologians. Both African traditional religions and the Christian gospel constitute African Christian identity.

Bediako's examination of the historical African Christianity enabled him to contend that African Christian theology is not foreign to Africa. Bediako also attempted to construct African Christian theology without the taint of Enlightenment-influenced thought. Enlightenment philosophy is harmful and unhelpful to Africans. Instead, Bediako contends, African primal religion should be considered as fundamental. In so doing, Africans can avoid enlightenment theology that has not benefited the Western Church. In addition to this, Bediako asserts that African primal religions have served to prepare the way for the gospel.

Chapter 4 explicates the significance of Scripture in reading and interpreting cultures. Bediako affirms that African Traditional Religions were instrumental as *preparatio evangelica*, but he also insists that some aspects of a given culture contradict

the gospel. For Bediako, "Scripture is both text and context," whereby the reader is invited to "participate in the meaning of the Scriptural events" (p. 65). Bediako posits that "God is still speaking," but this time, he is speaking in vernacular languages. The availability of Scripture in African vernaculars has enabled Africans to spread the gospel and contribute to the growth of the church in Africa. Scripture translation also assisted in weakening the grip of Western cultural and theological hegemony.

Chapter 5 explores Bediako's cogent argument that theology is dynamic and always contextual. The struggle between gospel and culture, Scripture in African languages and African Traditional Religions, as *preparatio evangelica* for the Christian faith have enabled Africans to produce contextual theology. This approach can be paradigmatic for producing contextual theology. Bediako, for instance, was more concerned with ancestor Christology than Nicene or Chalcedonian Christology.

Chapter 6 narrates Bediako's observation of Christendom's incapability to engage other religions because of its deleterious action against religious pluralism. Bediako contends that Africa could provide an alternative to remake Christian theology and be conversant with other religions. For Bediako, the task of remaking theology by Africans should not adhere to global Christianity (which is a reference to Christendom and its ideals) and postcolonial methodology. Rather, the effort needs to attend to indigenous and precolonial theological formulations. The remaking of theology enables us to preserve the integrity of the Christian faith and make it a non-western religion that is not dictated by the ideals of the Enlightenment. The endeavor to remake Christian theology will also assist us in answering contemporary questions.

Chapter 7 presents the motif of politics in Bediako's works. Hartman—in agreement with Sara Fretheim—contends that Bediako's political theology is under-explored. Bediako wrestled through various political themes in his writings. Some of the major political themes in Bediako's works include religious pluralism, Islam as an African religion, desacralization of politics, democracy and liberation theology as the byproduct of Christianity.

In the concluding chapter, Hartman highlights three fundamental problems in Western Christianity. First, Western theology is too syncretistic and has no place for religious pluralism. Second, Western theology's dependence on Enlightenment ideals has diminished the importance of the transcendent in everyday life. Third, Western theology "lacks the explicit embrace of the primal imagination" (p. 134). Hence,

Western theology has lost its spirituality. In order to address these problems, Bediako suggested that Westerners need to acknowledge their "cultural blinders," avoid Enlightenment ideals and utilize primal imagination in their theological task.

In this invaluable book, Hartman has done a great service in introducing Bediako and his theological formulations. Bediako's theological thought, especially his vehement rejection of the influence of the Enlightenment on theology, and Africa's contribution to the discourse on religious pluralism are significant to the global Church, particularly the Western church. Hartman repeatedly highlights Bediako's emphatic argument that theology is not done in a vacuum, and as such, Bediako has made a clarion call to western theologians that they should be cognizant of the presuppositions they bring to the theological task.

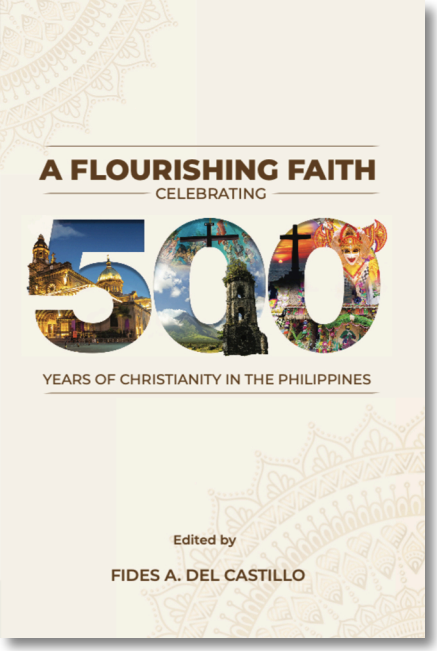
This book will be helpful both to the uninitiated and those who are digging deeper to understand one of Africa's prominent theologians whose work wrestled with the relationship of the Gospel and culture, the place of African Christians at the theological table and the role of the Scriptures in the African continent.

Abeneazer Urga

REVIEW: *A Flourishing Faith: Celebrating 500 Years of Christianity in the Philippines* Edited by Fides Del Castillo

REVIEWED BY LEONARDO O. QUIMSON JR.

Edited by Del Castillo, Fides. *A Flourishing Faith: Celebrating 500 Years of Christianity in the Philippines.* Manila: Don Bosco School of Theology. 2021. 218 pp, ASIN: B09HRPP5W8. $9.99 Kindle e-book.



Fides del Castillo's book, *A Flourishing Faith: Celebrating 500 Years of Christianity in the Philippines*, takes its inspiration from Matthew 10:8 "Freely you have received; freely give. " This collection of studies aims to illustrate the importance of faith among Filipinos in both culture and society, as well as the significance of religion and spirituality among them. By using the history of how the Christian faith implanted and flourished in the native country as the foundation of the first chapter, Del Castillo illuminated the various perspectives and insights on the Catholic Church in the Philippines. The book is divided into three parts which contain ten chapters of studies about the Filipino Christian faith.

The first part of the book is titled "Mission and Evangelization." It describes how the Christian faith spread through the evangelical efforts of missionaries in the Philippines. The second chapter of the book is titled "Rediscovering of the Christian Story." Rebecca Cacho discusses how the foundation of the Christian faith was handed down from generation to generation, or better known as the handing down of the culture and faith-based on Jesus of Nazareth. As a reminder of who the Filipinos are as part of the growth and development of the Catholic Church, Cacho retraces the best elements of the faith. As the author points out, the faithful are challenged to rediscover the riches of the faith and retell it with zeal and commitment just like the apostles did after the Pentecost. In Chapter 3, Marilou shared her insights on Lukan meals and missions. This reading is positioned within the See-Judge-Act-Evaluate-Celebrate/Ritualize theological-pastoral

spiral. By revealing Jesus from being a guest to being the host and becoming food and drink Himself at the table, her study demonstrates a narrative critical and contextual reading of the Lukan meal stories. In this COVID 19 crisis, the author calls on Christians to embody faith by doing justice for the hungry and needy. This first part of the anthology culminates on the study of Delfino Canceran OP who wrote the *Failure of Evangelization: Perspective from Cognitive Science of Religion,* in which he quotes the statement from the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines that "all faithful, especially the pastors, should recognize and admit their own "mea culpas; my faults" and failures to effectively and credibly evangelize and share the Good News of Christ."

The second part is an anthology of Filipino youth and identity and discusses the distinctiveness of Filipino believers at the same time that it discusses how the Church reaches out to young people for dialogue. In Chapter 5 Carolina Dionco discusses the concept of resilience. Defining the Filipino identity as resilient, which is revered and admired around the world, Dionco pointed the historical effect of colonialism on the Filipino identity. However, the author also discusses how religious ideas and symbols could be reclaimed and used for social justice, peace, and freedom; a liberation-centered Christian resilience. In Chapter 6, Donnie Duchin Duya and Carmelo Martinez offered their insights on mission and the youth. Various recent documents of the Church regarding young people are discussed in the article as a way for the Church to engage in dialogue with the youth of today while maintaining a sense of optimism toward them.

The third section of the book explores different experiences and stories of the Church on the move. In their study, Fides del Castillo, Clarence Darro del Castillo, and Maricris Alvarez examine spiritual well-being and its role in the social context of selected novices in the Philippines. Although religion and spirituality are difficult to define and gauge using scientific methods, the researchers hope to contribute to the psychology of religion by knowing and understanding the religious experiences of a few Catholic novices and their spiritual well-being. Furthermore, Reuel Rito Seno's discusses the role of parishes in today's society, not only as local communities of believers, but also as instruments of conversion in the Catholic Church, which is always reforming and changing for the better. Following is the chapter on the "Basic Ecclesial Communities in the Philippines: Church of the Poor and Community of Disciples" by Rito Baring, Fides Del Castillo, Raymund Habaradas and Feorillo Demetrio III. The authors discuss the emergence of the Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) as an outcome of the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) that promotes Christian vocation

and proclaims the Gospel to small communities. By living out and continuing the life and mission of Jesus Christ, they serve as the basis of the local Church.

Finally, the editor shares her insights and reflections on God's presence and Christian mission. Del Castillo emphasized the Holy Father Pope Francis' homily at the Mass for the 500th anniversary of Christianity in the Philippines in March 2021, in which he noted that the Church acknowledges the witness of Christian faith Filipinos offer by their discreet and hardworking presence while urging them to persevere more in the work of evangelization.

I highly recommend and encourage Christians and those interested in mission studies to read this book. Specifically, the catechists, religious educators, and members of the academic community will benefit from the studies. This book is an important addition to the missionary resource and beneficial to missiological and educational activities.

Leonardo O. Quimson Jr.
University of Santo Tomas, Manila, Philippines

REVIEW: *Faith in the Wilderness: Words of Exhortation from the Chinese Church*
Edited by Hannah Nation and Simon Liu

REVIEWED BY
AMINTA
ARRINGTON

Edited by Nation, Hannah and Liu, Simon. *Faith in the Wilderness: Words of Exhortation from the Chinese Church*. Bellingham, WA: Kirkdale Press, 2022. Pp. 192,
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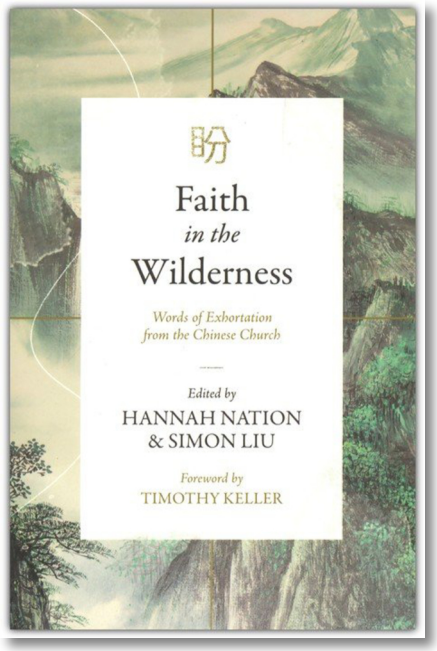

We have entered the era of World Christianity. This means, among other implications, that Christians around the world have the opportunity to listen to one another in a way not previously known. It is in this spirit that *Faith in the Wilderness: Words of Exhortation from the Chinese Church*, edited by Hannah Nation and Simon Liu, presents itself. Divided into three sections, Meditations on Brokenness, Meditations on Redemption, and Meditations on Hope, this collection of nine sermons from urban house church pastors in China aims to draw upon the Chinese Christian experience of suffering and persecution to offer up reflections on the same to western Christians in the midst of our global pandemic.

The opening sermon considers David who, in 2 Samuel 24, sinned by conducting a census. Upon given the choice, David asks to fall into a disaster wrought by the hand of the Lord (pestilence), which David considered a much better alternative than falling under the scope of a man-made disaster (famine or foes). China has experienced its share of disasters. China was the epicenter of Covid, and before that, SARS, but its man-made disasters have proven more deadly. An estimated 15-55 million people died from famine during the Great Leap Forward (1958-1962), and another 500,000-two million died Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) from violence, famine, and persecution.

While the book's opening sermon puts the chaos of our current suffering into perspective, the book's closing sermon points toward a peaceful eschatological future. Reflecting on Revelation 15 and the sea of glass, this sermon presents the glassy sea as

a sea of hope providing a way through the chaos of our current suffering, pointing to a peaceful future. While the metaphors for the sea in Chinese culture tend to emphasize the stormy nature of seas, on the other side, the glorious sea of glass is our hope and our peace.

Between these two bookends, however, the sermons are uneven. The house church movement in China has long had its doors closed to the Chinese government—unlike the government-sanctioned Three-Self churches—and its door wide open to western teaching, theology, funding, and influence. (As a case in point, the impetus for this volume came from a convention of Chinese house church pastors in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in early 2020 with Tim Keller as a keynote speaker.) This complex positioning is noticeable in the book itself. In particular, the sermons in the first section—Meditations on Brokenness—stressed penal substitutionary atonement, the reality of hell, and a guilt-justice paradigm of righteousness, making the volume at times read more like mid-last-century American fundamentalism than an engagement with Chinese realities.

In sum, while containing some thoughtful meditations, those wanting a dialogue of Christian theology with Confucian or Daoist thought—both still strong in contemporary China—will need to look elsewhere. *Faith in the Wilderness* is less a work engaging Chinese culture, and more a work of global Reformation theology.

Aminta Arrington