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Fr. Silvije Grubišić, the Neglected Bible Translator:
Notes on Some Translation and Translational Solutions

DANIJEL BERKOVIĆ

Theology of the Baptism in the Spirit and Gifts of the Spirit
in the Thought of Martyn Lloyd Jones and His Differences,
Similarities, and Contributions in Comparison to Pentecostal
Interpretation

MATEJ SAKAČ

"Different Kinds of Gospel Result In Different Kinds
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Theosis in Discipleship: Becoming Godlike Disciples

GORAN MEDVED

LATEST THEOLOGY FROM POSTCOMMUNIST COUNTRIES

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ARTICLES
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Fr. Silvije Grubišić, the Neglected Bible Translator: Notes on Some Translation and Translational Solutions

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Abstract

The contemporary study of the history of Croatian Bible translation largely focuses on several excellent Bible translators to whom we are greatly indebted in our Bible translation heritage. However, this sometimes happens at the expense of some of our neglected Croatian Bible translators, whose work and valuable contributions are barely, or just incidentally, written or known about. One such figure is Fr. Silvije Grubišić, who is not only a valuable but also an important factor in Croatian Bible translation work. Little is known, or otherwise sporadically mentioned, about Grubišić's translation of the Old Testament, while critical, linguistic, and textual analyses of his translation are simply unheard of. This article attempts to point to the outstanding value of Fr. Silvije Grubišić's Bible translation work. His translation of the Old Testament is very peculiar, atypical, and undoubtedly original. It is, therefore, good to emphasize those peculiarities and perform a partial textual analysis, thus contributing to the keeping and preservation of the rich Croatian Bible translation heritage.

Keywords: Grubišić, Bible translation, Bible translator, heritage, atypical.

1. Croatian Bible Translation

The history of Croatian Bible translation heritage is so rich that we should be somewhat embarrassed concerning how relatively little work we have done in careful and academic research and disclosures of this Bible translation wealth. With its historical, lingual, and linguistic treasury, especially in the dialectal history of translation and all its language varieties, Croatian Bible translation is, without any false modesty, at the very top of the European history of Bible translation traditions. Only a handful of European nations can boast of such Bible translations in the history of their dialectal idioms and their varieties as Croatian Bible translation can. Since the heritage of Croatian Bible translations is so plentiful, it would be wise to share a brief remark regarding the difference between lingual and linguistic terms, which refer to notions such as language, supradialect, and dialect. For example, until recently, the Kajkavian and Chakavian were considered dialects or supradialects in the Croatian language corpus, where supradialect is the higher category. However, in the last few years, Croatian Kajkavian and Croatian Chakavian have been recognized internationally as languages and are no longer supradialects.¹

Speaking about Fr. Silvije Grubišić as a Croatian Bible translator and his Bible translations, we should, at least in outline, mention Bible translation in general. Bible translation is a complex and challenging task that contains methodological, linguistic, stylistic, and religious matters. It resembles a pendulum with three points of reference. In the translation process, this pendulum keeps “swinging” between three reference points – the source text, the translator, and the reader, hoping to create harmony among them. Concerning this, Božo Lujčić aptly concludes that when Bible translations and translating are discussed, “The result is different types of translation: closer or farther from the original text, closer or farther from the reader” (Lujčić 2018, 58).

- 1 Croatian Kajkavian and Chakavian, as supradialects, have been recognized by the ISO (International Organisation for Standardization) as languages – Kajkavian in 2015 (ISO 639-3 kjv) and Chakavian in 2020 (ISO 639 ckm). Croatian dialectal idiom as a form of language encompasses Kajkavian, Chakavian, Ikavian and Burgenland (Croatian) while varieties of these dialectal idioms additionally depend on geographical micro and macro locations. For comparison, the Kaykavian translations of the Psalms by Antun Vranić and Ignac Kristijanović point to nuances in their translation, most probably in relation to the translators’ microlocations. Regarding Bible translations in Croatian language, a very short and selective overview would include, e.g., the translation of biblical prophets (*Vsih Prorokov stumačenje*, 16th c.), the translation of Bartol Kašić (17th c.), *The Poljica Bible* (18th c.), the translation of Petar Katančić (the first Bible published in Croatian, 19th c.) and the translation of Ivan Matija Škarić (second Bible published in Croatian, 19th c.). In Croatian Bible translation it is especially noteworthy to mention Luka Bračanin (16th c., Chakavian), Ivan N. Bugardelli (18th c., *The Poljica Bible*), Antun Vranić (19th c., Kajkavian), Ignac Kristijanović (19th c., Kajkavian), Ivan Matija Škarić (19th c., Ikavian), etc.

From the perspective of method and language, there are different categories of Bible translations. According to their method, some translations are called *word-for-word* translations (philological or literal), and some we call *free translations* (or paraphrases). Also, there are *adaptations*, informal “translations” that are descriptive and whose primary goal is communication. However, these latter texts are in danger of being oversimplified in translation to the point of missing all the complexity in the crucial elements of the biblical original.²

From the perspective of the original biblical language, a translation can be considered *standard*, which means that it linguistically relies on the received standard language of the translator. However, more and more of the so-called contemporary translations aim to adapt to the reading audience and, occasionally, to the conversational language, which, of course, does not have to be identical to the standard language. Also, some translations try to enrich the sacral authenticity of the Bible as the Word of God through *archaisms* (most often in verb formation) or *biblicisms* (most often on the level of nouns) and even embellish the translated text.³

1.1. Who is Silvije Grubišić?

Fr. Silvije Silvestar Grubišić was a Herzegovian Franciscan, born on April 8, 1910, in the poor Herzegovian town of Sovići (in Bobanova Draga, between Grude and Posušje). He spent most of his life serving in Croatian missions in North America and among American Croats. He died in West Allis, Wisconsin, on May 12, 1985.

After finishing Primary School in Sovići, he graduated from a classical gymnasium in Široki Brijeg (1932). He joined the Franciscan order while still in a gymnasium (1929) and was ordained as a priest on June 16, 1935, in Mostar. He served as a Friar in Široki Brijeg until 1937, when Croatian Missions in North America asked for help in their ministry among American Croats. So, as a 28-year-old, Grubišić moved to North America (in 1938), where he spent the rest of his life in different American cities.⁴

2 In Croatian Bible translation, a free translation is the one called *Novi zavjet živim riječima: Knjiga o Kristu* (Zagreb: Duhovna stvarnost, 1981). It should be noted that it is a “second hand” translation, because it is a translation from the English “original”(!). This Croatian version neither directly nor indirectly relies on the original Greek text.

3 In the verbal variant of archaisms in the Croatian language, this could be the aorist tense (in English most often translated by simple past tense) or *pluperfect* tense, such as, “And men designated by name stood up, and took care of the prisoners” (2 Chr 28:15). In archaic nouns, e.g., “Ne žeže se svijeća da se stavi pod varićak” (Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel) (Matt 5:15). Here the expressions both in noun (*varićak*–bushel) and verb (*žeže*–light) category are highly valuable as parts of linguistic heritage, but in a communicative sense present quite a challenge to the modern Bible reader.

4 In his pastoral ministry among Croatian emigrants in USA and Canada he served in parishes

Upon coming to the United States of America in 1938, Grubišić was appointed parson in the Croatian St. Mary's Assumption Parish in Steelton, Pennsylvania. He served there for three years (until 1940). Next, he moved to Chicago and later to New York. He also served in many other American Croatian parishes in Milwaukee, Ambridge, and Florida and spent a year serving in Canada (1969–1970). In 1954, Grubišić led a small delegation of Croatian priests to the United States of America to see American President Eisenhower. The reason for the meeting with the President was to deliver a memorandum in which many (143) Croatian priests who lived and served outside Croatia asked the Yugoslavian authorities to stop persecuting believers.⁵

Grubišić's Bible translation work and endeavor began in 1973 in Chicago and continued until 1984, a year before his death in West Allis, Wisconsin, in 1985. Unfortunately, his translation work or possible analysis of his translation in his homeland does not draw much attention.⁶ At the same time, his commitment to Bible translation was a cause of much writing in the United States of America, not only in their Croatian publications but in the American press.⁷

In his doctoral work (*Pastoral-theological and Catechetical Contribution of Bonaventura Duda to the Croatian Theology*, 2013), Antun Volenik mentions Silvije Grubišić and his contribution to Bible translation in several places. Describing travels and pilgrimages of Bonaventura Duda, Volenik also mentions his visit to the United States of America in 1965 and his meeting with Fr. Grubišić:

In New York, he meets the Herzegovian Friar Silvije Grubišić, who served there as a parson. By then, he had already translated the Bible into Croatian "as a proper amateur, but of a high style" (Klarić, 9). A part of that translation, namely the Pentateuch, was later chosen by Duda as the template in the translation of the Zagreb Bible because of "the vigor of the language and because it, as such, represented a contribution to the contact of the Croatian Bible with the Anglo-American speaking and biblical-theological area" (Volenik 2013, 46–47).

in different towns, e.g., Milwaukee (1949–1950), Ambridge (1950–1956), Chicago (1956–1957), Steelton (1957–1960) and New York (1964–1969). He was also the guardian of a Franciscan Monastery in Chicago (1955–1957, 1961–1964 and 1973–1975).

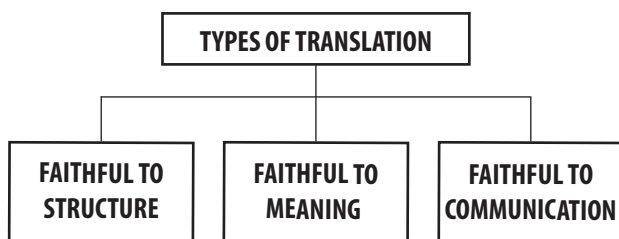
- 5 Alongside his great personal commitment to the Bible and Bible translation, Grubišić was also preoccupied with the subject of the origin of Croats. Prompted by some writings and research, this interest led him to visit Afghanistan, with the intention of researching Croat roots.
- 6 As far as this author knows, there are no expert texts or analyses that deal with the linguistic and stylistic criticism of Fr. Grubišić, his translational solutions based on the original text, his manner of translation, etc. in Croatia.
- 7 Chicago *Danica* on November 22, 1972, February 4 and April 24, 1974, and December 3, 1975. Then in other Croatian newspapers in the United States: *Naša Nada* (Gary, Indiana) July 3, 1974 and June 4, 1975, *Hrvatski Glas* (Winnipeg) in Canada on March 18, 1973, Los Angeles *Twin Circle* on March 20, 1977, and *Chicago Tribune* published several articles about Grubišić.

Volenik further mentions some Bible translations and translators, Silvije Grubišić among them, who played a crucial role in the preparation and creation of the so-called Zagreb Bible: “Immediately before Zagreb Bible was published in 1967, we saw a publication of the translation by Ljudevit Rupčić which, together with translations done by Silvije Grubišić and Gracijan Raspudić, demand a special review since they will serve as templates for parts of the Zagreb Bible” (Volenik 2013, 159).

Grubišić was indeed self-taught in the Hebrew language, as he testifies (Grubišić 1979, 183). Still, Marko Mišerda, describing Grubišić as a self-taught biblicist and Bible translator, concludes: “It is interesting that Grubišić did not go through specialist Bible schools, but his enterprise overcame all difficulties” (Mišerda 1985, 99).

1.2. *Types of Translation*

Instead of traditional categories and *categorizations* of Bible translations (philological, literal word for word, paraphrases, adaptation, etc.), it would be clearer to divide Bible translations according to *types of translation* as suggested by Heidemarie Salevsky (Luić 2018). She argues that, in addition to traditional categori-



zations of Bible translations, we should accept a different model, which would use *types of translation* instead of *categories of translation*, namely three different *types* of Bible translation – concerning structure, meaning, and communication. It would look something like this, depending on which aspect the translation emphasizes (Luić 2018, 59):

The ideal type of translation would be one that completely encompasses all three aspects. However, such typological representation of translations should not at all mean that one type excludes the other or that these types cannot overlap. Most frequent misunderstandings and disputes arise when, directly or indirectly, one attaches exclusivity to a specific biblical (type of) translation.

1.3. Biblical Translation of Silvije Grubišić

How does Silvije Grubišić's translation stand in relation to the represented translation types? Which aspect do the particularities of his translation point to? Are his peculiar translational and lexical solutions the reason why Fr. Silvije Grubišić's name is rarely, if ever, mentioned in popular media and expert circles of Croatian Bible translations and translators? For example, in the general introduction to the Bible (published by Kršćanska sadašnjost), in the description of the Book of Job, editors wrote: "We have used the manuscript translation of Silvije Grubišić here and there."⁸

Grubišić's translation of the Old Testament, some of his linguistic and translational solutions, and his complete approach to Bible translation most certainly deserve more attention than a casual note would imply. There are no indicators of exclusivity or universality in Grubišić's translation. However, we can readily observe that his translation is remarkable in many respects. Among many Croatian Bible translations, it stands out as creative and unconventional in some elements but undoubtedly "faithful to communication." Specificities of Grubišić's translation are primarily seen in his vocabulary and lexicon. The language of his translation is very immediate and vivid, intensely direct, and sometimes bordering on ruthless cynicism. In his translation, Grubišić not infrequently uses dysphemism (*drop dead, butchered, dung, hussy*, and the like) or colloquial terms (*pillowcase, bed, mischief, robber, mean, do-gooder, the poor, topple*, and the like).

The translation does not contain unnecessary biblicisms, which makes it different from most other Croatian Bible translations. This fact alone makes the text come alive and closer to the average reader in a unique way, although it sometimes sticks out through inspirational, occasionally even provocative solutions, so direct that they border on colloquial mercilessness, causticity, and dysphemism. In all this, Grubišić tenaciously follows and conforms to the source text, as evident in some of his exceptionally valuable footnotes. Grubišić's translation is not only vividly rendered, as might be done by another skillful linguist, but primarily well thought-through and exhaustively researched, not only from a linguistic and textual angle but also from a historical and religious context of the Bible. This is especially evident in Grubišić's footnotes.

2. Vivid Translation

What made Fr. Grubišić embark on this monumental task and begin translating the Old Testament? In Grubišić's own words, he set about this work prompted by the following ruminations:

8 Kršćanska sadašnjost translation (KS, 1976, 1983, p. 1203).

I could not fathom such frequent publications of the New Testament without the Old. It seemed like cutting down a healthy and sound tree in bloom. Even if planted in the best soil, can the cut-off part ripen and yield the best fruit? That is when I got my hands on the Hebrew Bible. With all its scientific apparatus, it contains a bit more than 1400 pages. I got myself several grammar books and dictionaries. The ministry I was later posted to do required that I spend most of my time in my room. I had to occupy myself with something. Therefore, I set about translating the Old Testament. First, I started with the Book of Job. It is considered to be the hardest. If I persevere to the end, I say, the others will be easier (Grubišić 1979, 183).

We have already said something about the vocabulary and lexicon of Grubišić's translation – it is not only vivid and unconventional but perhaps to some readers even inappropriate and improper, as seen in words such as *rogues*, *good-for-nothings*, *scoundrels*, *forest robbers*, *do-gooder*, *stiffs*, *butchered*, *dung*, *drop dead*, “*sumetina*” (*augmentative for forest*), “*jametina*” (*augmentative for pit*), and similar. Grubišić's vocabulary is exceptionally close to the source text, which, when it was made, did not “suffer” from biblicisms in any form. The translator here dared to become close to the reader on the level of vocabulary and context, as we have already pointed out.⁹ In his translation, Grubišić crosses the lines of the sometimes trivial or clichéd biblical style.

However, it should be said that Croatian Bible translations keep sailing between Scylla and Charybdis: between faithfulness to the original, protecting the exalted and godly nature of the text on one side, and communicativeness and contextuality of the modern reader on the other. Whether we call it a balancing act or a compromise, it is the inevitable reality of Bible translation and interpretation.

Grubišić's translation seeks to bridge the mentioned compromises or “balancing acts.” In that regard, we could say that the translation is successful in many elements. His lexicon, language, and style are, in many aspects, closer to the reader than most “predictable” translations and translational solutions.

For a better and more precise insight into all the distinctive features and values of Grubišić's translations, let us consider several texts that showcase his translational solutions and skills. In his translation of the Psalms, we find many poignant examples of such solutions. Furthermore, much of his translational lexicon and vocabulary rigorously relies on the original Hebrew text, as we shall try to show in some of his translational solutions.

9 Some examples of the biblical places and Grubišić's picturesque solutions in translation: *do-gooder* (Ps 37:37), *scoundrels* (Judg 9:4; Ps 73:12), *drop dead* (Ps 55:16; 104:29), *stiffs of the butchered* *scattered like dung over the fields* (Jer 9:21), *(big) forest* (Hos 2:14), *like forest robbers* (Ps 56:7), *(big) pit* (Ps 16:10), *good-for-nothings* (Deut 13:14; 1 Sam 2:12; 30:22; 1 Kgs 21:10; 2 Kgs 17:15; 2 Chr 13:7; Job 22:15; Sir 15:7; 16:21; Isa 44:9).

2.1. *My Liver Jumps (Ps 16)*

In the source text, the psalmist's abdominal organs, primarily kidneys, and liver participate in his joy (16:7, 9).¹⁰ For reasons of style and comprehension, most translators here, as in some other places, instead of *kidneys*, as it is said in the original, translate this word as the *heart*. Šarić here states: "I always have the Lord before me. He is at my right hand, and that is why I never stumble. My heart rejoices, and my spirit (*liver*) is glad, and my body rests in safety" (16:8-9). Consistent with the original and his translational uniformity, without stylistic subtlety, Grubišić translates these lines as follows: "I constantly hold the Lord before me, and from his right hand, I will certainly not depart. Therefore my heart rejoices, my liver jumps for joy, my body rests comfortably" (16:8-9).

Kidney or liver could, and should, be translated as conscience. Such is Alter's translation (2007, 46), "I shall bless the Lord Who gave me counsel through the nights that my conscience would lash me." In the original biblical text, the kidney (kidneys) represent a paradigm and metaphor for the center of man's conscience. This is well illustrated in a text from the prophet Jeremiah where the people are described as those who are doing well (have taken root, bear fruit) but care little for their God. The translations of Kršćanska sadašnjost and Ivan Evandelist Šarić here state, "You have planted them, and they have taken root; they grow and bear fruit. But you are only close to their lips, but far from their hearts" (רחוק מכליותיהם) (Jer 12:2).¹¹

In many places, the *heart*, even when the original does not say heart, is a deft and subtle stylistic solution. Abdominal organs in the original biblical text far surpass only one organ, the heart, and this should be manifest in the translation.

2.2. *Look at the Do-Gooder (Ps 37)*

"Progress and prosperity are guaranteed for the one who is honest and upright" (Ps 37:37), Kršćanska sadašnjost translates: "Look at the upright and look at the blameless: the peacemaker has posterity." Šarić renders this very similarly, "Look at the honest and look at the upright because he who is a peacemaker has a future!" (Ps 37:37). Grubišić's translation is ingenious and lucid: "Look at the do-gooder,

10 How much could have an Israelite of the Old Testament time known about the psychosomatic connections of the abdominal organs (liver, kidneys) with the emotional and psychosomatic states of a person? How much could have Judaism and Israelites of that time known about the medicinal insights and knowledge in that area? And all that taking into account the prohibition of human body desecration in any form.

11 Jewish Publication Society here translates: "Thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins."

look at the straight shooter! A blameless man has a future.”¹² In many places in the original, one must bear in mind a certain synonymy of the following notions: ישר (*honest, upright*) and חם (*whole, of integrity*). Many Croatian translations render this as *upright* and *blameless*, which are biblicisms of a sort. Grubišić persistently avoids biblicisms, choosing colloquial expressions, such as we find here in the *do-gooder* and the *straight shooter*. In every case, Grubišić tries to stay faithful to the meaning and structure, but he prioritizes faithfulness to communication.

2.3. Drop Dead (Ps 55)

The originality and the fierceness of Grubišić’s translational solution are especially highlighted in Psalm 55. Using melodramatic vocabulary, the translator here portrays the situation as somewhat grotesque. The narrative of the psalm focuses on the fact that the psalmist has been abandoned by his best friends, who have turned into enemies and are now trying to kill him: “You, my companion and I, my companion, my bosom friend!... You, whose company I was so fond of, with whom I have walked around in God’s house side by side! May you drop dead! May you fall into Sheol alive!” (55:16).

Using elements of imprecatory psalms, the psalmist wishes these to die. For his biblical text, Grubišić uses a very rough, somewhat raw, and uncouth term – (*may they*) *drop dead*. Why does Grubišić use this dysphemism here?¹³ When we consider the Hebrew original of this verse, we find יַשְׁמִימֵם (*yaššimāwet*), which is a compound of נָשָׂא (“outsmart”) and מוֹת (“death”).¹⁴ However, it is not entirely clear why Grubišić uses such a dysphemism (*drop dead*).

2.4. My Brain Became Leavened (Ps 73)

Psalm 73 is, in many ways, exceptional and deserving of our attention. Especially, and because, Grubišić, in his translational inventiveness, adds additional emotional charge to this psalm. Brueggemann believes that Psalm 73 holds a “central place in the Psalter” (2007, 204). Artur Weiser comes to similar conclusions and says that Psalm 73 “holds the most prominent place among the mature fruit of the struggle and the pain the Old Testament faith had to endure. That is a strong

12 These two terms (חם *tam*) and (ישר *yašar*) semantically and etymologically denote “to be upright” in the sense of “having integrity and moral wholeness of a person.”

13 Other Croatian translations state here, “May death pounce on them” (Kršćanska sadašnjost); “May death surprise them” (Šarić); “May death grab them” (Daničić); “May death reach them” (Šarić, 1942 edition); “May death overshadow them and may they go to the Underworld alive” (Burgenland Croatian). Some English translations render this, “Let death surprise them” (Franz Delitzsch).

14 Or יַשְׁמִימֵם (*yišimôt*). Vocalization around this term is unclear and uncertain.

testimony of the human soul's struggle and could be compared to the Book of Job" (1962, 507).

Several psalms follow the *orientation/disorientation/reorientation* pattern. So, the psalmist is initially secure in his faith and trust in God and firmly *oriented*. Then, confused by wrongdoings and threats, distressed and disappointed in God and his (in)justice, he finds himself in a state of complete *disorientation*. He cannot understand the injustice God seems to allow: "I tried to understand all this, but it troubled me deeply" (Ps 73:16). This process culminates in the psalmist's meditation and introspection when in the renewed presence of God ("till I entered the sanctuary of God," cf. Ps 73:17), he observes the final destiny of evildoers and the wicked ("I understood their final destiny," 73:17b). Psalmist has now been *reoriented*.¹⁵

Psalm 73 is typical of precisely these psalms, in which we notice the pattern of *orientation-disorientation-reorientation*. These psalms abound in very immediate vocabulary and lexis. Forms and formulas of poetic idyll are often avoided. Such intensive wording of the original asks for a reciprocal response from the translator. For instance, while in Psalm 73:12 a great majority of translators speak of thieves and deceivers, or *sinner*s amassing wealth, Grubišić uses the language and vocabulary of the people and calls them *scoundrels*: "*scoundrels* increase their wealth" (73:12).

In the next verse, the psalmist asks: "Have I, then, in vain kept my heart pure" (73:13; Krščanska sadašnjost and Šarić), while Grubišić here, more intensely, and with a dose of cynicism, translates, "So (I) have kept my heart pure for nothing."

And while the psalmist looks at *the prosperity of the wicked* (Grubišić: *of the scoundrels*), not understanding all these injustices, he becomes caught off guard, confused, and disoriented. He simply cannot understand all that is going on around him (73:21). His mind cannot fathom all these wrongdoings, so he concludes, "my soul was distressed" (Krščanska sadašnjost) (73:21).¹⁶ And yet again, we are then surprised by Grubišić's original, unexpected, and unusual translation of this verse which reads, "When my brain became leavened, and my emotions became hidden, I became a madman without understanding." The original here compares and uses metaphors from the cottage industry. Such vocabulary points to yeast and fermentation (חמץ) in bread-making.¹⁷

15 According to the more or less accepted categorizations of the Psalter, a great majority of Psalms fall in the category of lamentations. However, it should be said that most psalms are in fact "mixed" in relation to this categorization. The psalmist very often and in many psalms oscillates significantly between deep lament and emotional euphoria, posing an additional challenge to the psalmodic researcher.

16 In Šarić, we find, "Bitterness was eating my heart" (Ps 73:21).

17 Heb. יתחמץ לבבי וכליותי אשתתן.

3. Grubišić's Footnotes

Besides everything that has already been said about Grubišić's translational solutions, it is essential to say something about the exceptional value of his footnotes. These notes are not only very informative and concise but brilliantly educational and, in some details, acutely illustrative.

3.1. Psalm 1:1 What Luck

Grubišić's vividness can be seen both in his translational solutions and footnotes. Stylistically, he is characterized by a *conversational style*. So, for example, Ps 1 in Grubišić's translation says: "What luck for the man who does not come to the counsel of the wicked, does not participate in the assembly of sinners nor sits in the meeting of the ungodly." All other translations render this as "Blessed is the man." It is impressive how skillfully and knowingly Grubišić uses his footnotes. Merely by reading these concise translator's notes, the reader will be schooled and educated. For example, in a footnote about the mentioned Psalm, Grubišić discusses different approaches and aspects of biblical translation and some concrete translational solutions from the cited text in the Psalter. In this footnote, we are once again met with his picturesque and somewhat lively conversational style and expression:

1:1 It is conspicuous to differ from other translators. The readers will at least ask themselves: Why this? – Translation from one language to another, as with many other things, depends on the taste. One translator can be more appreciative of the faithfulness to the source text, while another can be more enthused by the expressions of the language he is translating from. Personally, we hold that staying faithful is more important, especially if the original thought can be stylistically well expressed through faithful translation. So, good. The first word of the first psalm is translated as: *Blessed!* We find the same thing in other languages, although Hebrew uses a noun: *ašre*. We think that *ašre* is well expressed in Croatian if translated as a noun, as we have done. At the same time, the translation is faithful to the original. We will also try to proceed according to this rule in other places. That is what we do in the second verse. Instead of the customary expression: *does not follow the counsel*, we translate *asah* as *holding council*. According to the dictionary, that is one of its meanings, and it is more in the spirit of the Hebrew language, whose characteristic is the tangibility of expression. Language experts justify translating *derek* as assembly instead of the old *way*.

With relatively few words, Grubišić in this footnote provides a concise language analysis and translational aspects and variants. Also, he does not leave unexplained terms that he uses in his translation, which are perhaps not entirely clear, as will be seen in the coming example from Psalm 2. In his notes, Grubišić

will explain why he sometimes uses terms that are most probably unfamiliar or unclear to a broader reading audience.

3.2. Psalm 2:3 “Gužve”¹⁸

The episode we find in Psalm 2 portrays different situations that Israel, this small nation overwhelmed by many superpowers of that time that wanted to enslave and eradicate them, found itself in. The psalmist points to the power of their God, so he sees their rebellions as folly: “Why do the nations rebel and the peoples plot foolish plans? Earthly rulers gather together, and princes deliberate among themselves against the Lord and his Anointed.” On the other hand, the Israelites decide: “Let us tear off their shackles (*moser*, מוסר) and throw off their yoke” (Ps 2:2-3).

Grubišić here renders: “Why do earthly kings entrench themselves, and princes plot against the Lord and his anointed? Let us break their *cords*, shake off their yoke!” Grubišić expertly and meticulously expounds on the term *cords* and provides instruction for the reader:

2:3 *Chains*, shackles, and cuffs are words that presume some variety of metal or irons. However, at the time this psalm was written, in 10th c. BC, iron was most probably still a rarity. It was the Philistines who had a monopoly over iron in Palestine. Therefore *mosarot* must denote *cords*. Furthermore, they were easy to acquire: they were made of branches. Chastetree wood, willow wood, vines, and white vines were perfect for *cords*.

This kind of footnote will concisely and vividly teach the reader about the biblical text and the context of the time.¹⁹

3.3. 1 Samuel 10:11 and Pentecostals

Grubišić’s footnote on the text in 1 Samuel 10:11, describing an unusual event from King Saul’s life, proves even more inspirational. The King encounters a group of prophets in a “prophetic ecstasy.”²⁰ Meeting this charismatic group, Saul himself begins to prophesy, so the text says: “All who knew him from before and have now seen him in a prophetic ecstasy among prophets, asked one another: ‘What happened to the son of Kish? Is he also among the prophets?’” Grubišić uses the

18 Croatian word “gužve” cannot be translated into English as one word, but descriptively, and it means “cords made of soft branches” (translator’s note).

19 Today in our rural areas (especially of eastern Croatia) only a few older residents would know and explain the meaning of *gužve*. *Gužve* were, and at some places still are, a thick braided rope or braided reeds used for closing the gates, by throwing the *gužve* over the doors of the gate.

20 Taking into account the grammatical form of the original, it was good to use *ecstasy* in this translation. To be specific, here we see an occurrence of the Hebrew verb נָבֵא (*to prophesy*), but in the passive form of *niphal participle*, which, of course, denotes a state, and not an action.

footnote under 10:5 to describe the mission and the task the prophets of Saul's time were to perform and says:

Here we encounter for the first time a significant phenomenon in the life of Old Testament believers: the appearance of the *nabiim* prophets... it is said that the first group was started by Samuel himself to confront the indolent priesthood. Its task was to proclaim the will of God. When proclaiming it, the prophets often fell into a religious ecstasy similar to today's Pentecostals.

Things can hardly get any more illustrative or vivid. Here, again, Grubišić remains faithful to communication (*faithful to communication*), gives particular care to structure, and especially lexicon (*faithful to structure*), and finally, very carefully attempts to bridge the Old Testament world with our modern world, history, and culture. This can be seen in his footnote on the text of 1 Samuel 10:11.

Conclusion

In biblical translation, in the conception of translations according to their type (*faithful to structure, faithful to the meaning, and faithful to communication*), Grubišić's translation is more than exemplary in terms of satisfying the conditions of communication and meaning. In contrast, in terms of structure, it mostly follows other translations.

He certainly dove into translation and translating of the Bible, honoring and accepting the mentioned approach about three types of biblical translations. We have indicated and demonstrated that he desired to stay faithful to the original. Methodologically, though, he sometimes veered toward the word-for-word translation. However, this was not done mechanically because his translational vocabulary and lexicon clearly show that Grubišić wants to remain faithful to communication and not only the original.

For a more reliable idea, evaluation, and authentic fabric of Grubišić's translation and everything that he lived through and experienced in the history of the Bible, as well as the historical background, the interested reader should, by all means, read his travelogue *Pripovijest o Bibliji: S puta po biblijskim zemljama* (1979). Grubišić embarked on his month-long journey to the Holy Land in May 1966. In this travelogue and the way he wrote it, a careful reader will not miss connections to his translation of the Old Testament.

Fr. Silvije Grubišić most certainly deserves more academic and general attention in the treatment of his translations and translational solutions. The creativity of his translation genius, albeit somewhat unconventional, is indisputably exceptionally communicative for the reader and intriguing and inspiring for the expert analysis.

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Danijel Berković

**Fra Silvije Grubišić, zanemareni biblijski prevoditelj:
bilješke o nekim prijevodnim i prevoditeljskim rješenjima**

Sažetak

Suvremeno proučavanje povijesti hrvatskoga biblijskog prevoditeljstva umnogome se usredotočuje na nekoliko vrsnih biblijskih prevoditelja koji su nas umnogome zadužili u biblijsko-prevoditeljskoj baštini. No, ponekad je to i nauštrb nekih naših hrvatskih biblijskih prevoditelja koji su zanemareni, a o njihovu se djelu i vrlo vrijednom doprinosu vrlo malo, ili tek usputno, govori, piše ili zna. Jedan od takvih je i fra Silvije Grubišić, jedan ne samo vrijedan, nego i važan čimbenik u hrvatskom biblijsko-prevoditeljskom djelu. O Grubišićevu prijevodu Staroga zavjeta vrlo je malo, a ponekad i samo uzgred spomenuto. O kritičkim, jezičnim i tekstualnim analizama toga prijevoda nema ni govora. Ovim se člankom nastoji ukazati na iznimnu vrijednost biblijskoga prevoditeljskog djela fra Silvija Grubišića. Grubišićev je prijevod Staroga zavjeta vrlo osebujan, atipičan, zasigurno originalan. Valja stoga istaknuti te posebnosti, djelomice ih i tekstualno analizirati te tako doprinijeti da se čuva i očuva bogata hrvatska biblijsko-prevoditeljska baština.

Theology of the Baptism in the Spirit and Gifts of the Spirit in the Thought of Martyn Lloyd-Jones and His Differences, Similarities, and Contributions in Comparison to Pentecostal Interpretation

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Abstract

The article explores the theology of the baptism in the Spirit in the context of Martyn Lloyd-Jones' position and the Assemblies of God Pentecostal movement. Besides including the short historical and contextual overview of the theology of the baptism in the Spirit in the Pentecostal movement and Lloyd-Jones, the article also provides insight into their primary emphases. Both sides claim that the baptism in the Spirit is an experience separate from the new birth. Assemblies of God believe it is crucial to point out that baptism in the Spirit opens up possibilities of new experiences, sanctification, and speaking in tongues. Lloyd-Jones mostly agrees with this, with the exception that baptism in the Spirit is the same as the sealing we see in the Epistle to the Ephesians, where he sees the sealing with the initial sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as the firm assurance of what we already have (sonship) and a strong experience of God's love, which is the motivation for powerful preaching and witnessing. According to Lloyd-Jones, his interpretation of the gift of speaking in tongues does differ from the understanding of Assemblies of God. Tongues are not necessarily the initial sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and their use is not under a person's control but under the control of the Spirit's sovereign work. The article explains these differences and similarities and calls for dialogue and consideration of Lloyd-Jones' thought in his contribution to the Pentecostal theology of the baptism in the Spirit.

Keywords: Pentecostalism, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Assemblies of God, baptism in the Spirit, glossolalia, Holy Spirit

Introduction

In this article, we will be considering the person of Martyn Lloyd-Jones, his theology of baptism in the Holy Spirit, and Pentecostalism and accepted interpretation of the baptism in the Spirit in the tradition of Assemblies of God movement. Of course, such consideration implies a short insight into Pentecostals' general history and theology. Still, it also implies documents of the Assemblies of God about the doctrinal position on the issue of Spirit baptism.

We will try to cast light upon his contribution to the Pentecostal movement by consulting the primary literature of Martyn Lloyd-Jones and his theology on this topic. Although Martyn Lloyd-Jones belongs to a different Christian tradition (Reformed), his theology of the baptism in the Spirit will reveal how his views are similar and separate from the Pentecostal understanding of Spirit baptism. It is believed that Lloyd-Jones is a bridge between Reformed theology and evangelical Christians who are open to the second experience of the Spirit.¹ This article will attempt to prove that by studying Lloyd-Jones and the Pentecostal practice and Pentecostal theology and the theology of Lloyd-Jones.

In Pentecostalism, there is a phenomenon of understanding the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a unique experience that does not have to happen ever again. Also, there is a compulsory emphasis on speaking in tongues as proof of baptism, which often leaves us deprived of seeking other gifts. Through this, one can often see the phenomenon of focusing on automatic speaking in tongues, which is said to be able to appear at any time. We will also try to prove that the Doctor (as he used to be called, so we will use the same title in this article) was, in fact, the closest to the Pentecostal understanding of the baptism in the Spirit, with some exceptions. The goal is to show the deeper connection which could, in the future, influence Pentecostals and all those who are open toward the second (or repeated) experience of the Spirit and want to benefit from Lloyd-Jones' teachings.

1. Short Biography of Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Although many books have been written about Lloyd-Jones (1899–1986), not least of which the two-volume biography, *The Life of Martyn Lloyd-Jones* by Ian H. Murray, who was his assistant at Westminster Chapel for several years, as well

1 The Second Experience of the Spirit is a synonym for the theological term "baptism in the Holy Spirit."

as his long-term friend and approved biographer, his life was, in short, a historical phenomenon. Lloyd-Jones was born in Cardiff (Wales) and grew up in Llangeithou. His father was a grocer, and he had two brothers. The place where he grew up was where Daniel Rowland, the Welsh Methodist Calvinist, served, but it was also the site of the Welsh revival from the beginning of the 20th century. Although he had to move to London, Lloyd-Jones did not at first go into service, although he eventually, in his early youth, came to the Christian faith (Kay 2013, 275–276).

His adult life was characterized by his education at the famous hospital, St. Bartholomew, where he began work as the assistant to the Royal Physician, Sir Thomas Horder. Lloyd-Jones became a doctor but later refused to accept several honorary doctorates, believing that his MD title from the London University was enough. In the meantime, he married Bethan Phillips, a medical student. At 25, he left his career as a physician and became a diagnostician and pastor (doctor of souls) in Sandfields, Wales, where he witnessed a significant change in people's lives. His approach was never degrading but afforded dignity to those who mostly belonged to the working class (Catherwood 2015, 23–26).

As his popularity spread, in 1935, he began his work at the InterVarsity Fellowship of Students (IFES), whose president he became in 1939. He encouraged evangelical students, teaching them how to think to hold on to their evangelical faith despite their professions. In addition, he urged both the highly educated and the industry workers, teaching them Christian principles and calling. Lloyd-Jones grew up surrounded by the Welsh revival from the beginning of the 20th century. Because of this Welsh heritage, his life was forever marked with the desire for a revival. Watching him teach in Philadelphia in 1938, G. Campbell Morgan invited him to serve as a preacher at Westminster Chapel. Although they had some theological differences, it was clear they were friends who respected each other. He continued working there as a pastor until 1968 when he retired. In the meantime, for many years he was the president of the IFES and the founder of the Puritan Conference, together with Jim Packer. An important point in his life and influence was his emphasis on evangelical unity that, he believed, should have been more visible despite denominational differences. In a speech from 1966, at an event of the National Evangelical Assembly, where those present included Baptists and Anglicans, he called for evangelical Christians to become a unified, visible body. However, the leader of the panel, John Stott, refuted him and publicly expressed his disagreement, claiming that Church history stands against Lloyd-Jones in this matter, making it clear that evangelical Christians never managed to create a denomination but have been the “remainder” within the Church (both in the Old and the New Testament).² Nevertheless, the Doctor remained on good terms

2 More about this context and this truly unique subject can be read in Iain H. Murray (2000),

with Stott. However, in his opinion, evangelical Christians from doctrinally mixed denominations should gather together in a visible community of true believers (Catherwood 1985, 64–86).³ The rest of his life after 1968 and his diagnosis of illness, he remained working as the editor of his books, speaking at conferences and traveling to preach in different schools and churches (Kay 2013, 276).

2. Pentecostalism and the Assemblies of God

Pentecostalism was a part of the evangelical renewal movement that took place at the beginning of the 20th century. It was based on the belief in an experience known in the Scriptures as the “baptism in the Holy Spirit.” It is significant to note that Pentecostal Christians’ roots are mainly in Methodism, the Keswick movement, and the charismatic movements of the 19th century. The most significant initial “experience of Pentecostalism” occurred on Azusa Street in Los Angeles, where Christians were baptized in the Holy Spirit in their meeting, i.e., it was manifested (as in previous cases with Charles Fox Parham) in speaking in foreign tongues. The emphasis was on the fact that the initial sign of the baptism in the Holy Spirit was speaking in tongues. One of the groups (there were three, including the Unitarian group and the Baptist-Pentecostal) was the Assemblies of God, who emphasized two things, which are conversion and baptism in the Spirit confirmed by speaking in tongues (most had this in common).

Assemblies of God are a Pentecostal denomination (movement) that originated in 1914 in the United States. Initially, the founders came from different denominational backgrounds (Congregational and Presbyterian). Eventually, they agreed

Evangelicalism Divided: A Record of Crucial Change in the Years 1950 to 2000, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, and in the approved biography by the same author, Iain H. Murray (1990), *David Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The Fight of Faith, 1939-1981*, Volume 2, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust. More on this topic with different views can be found in different biographies of J. I. Packer, John Stott and others. The mentioned books offer more associated literature. Also, see article by Justin Taylor (2016), 50 Years Ago Today: The Split Between John Stott and Martyn Lloyd-Jones, available at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/evangelical-history/50-years-ago-today-the-split-between-john-stott-and-martyn-lloyd-jones/>.

- 3 Evangelical Christianity in Great Britain in the 1960s was at the height of ideas for work in evangelization, Christian education and creation of Christian unity. National Assembly of Evangelicals was the group of evangelical leaders who longed for church unity. Together they planned and discussed topics such as evangelization and religious education. Division occurred when Lloyd-Jones in 1966 publicly talked about the disunity and scatteredness of evangelical Christians in theologically mixed denominations (liberal and conservative factions). For more, see David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1989), *Knowing the Times: Addresses Delivered on Various Occasions 1942-1977*, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust and Justin Taylor’s (2016) article, 50 Years Ago Today: The Split Between John Stott and Martyn Lloyd-Jones, available at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/evangelical-history/50-years-ago-today-the-split-between-john-stott-and-martyn-lloyd-jones/>.

on the fundamental truths of Christianity, and in their documents, they explicitly declared their belief in the Holy Trinity, accepting Arminian theology. Assemblies of God hold to a full immersion baptism and the Lord's Supper. In terms of sanctification, they believe in the progressive growth of Christians. This denomination is also very missional in its orientation (Britannica 2018). Today, more than 70 million believers are in the Assemblies of God (Carter 2021). This number is even higher today since the Assemblies of God is one of the fastest-growing churches in the Pentecostal movement.

The Pentecostal movement has quickly spread through all denominations as a movement of sanctification and the second experience of the Holy Spirit. It manifested itself similarly in different contexts and different countries, including Croatia. To understand Pentecostalism, it is vital to see that the Pentecostal experience is considered to be pointing toward Joel's prophecy about the outpouring of the Spirit on everybody and that its purpose is sanctification, recognition of the lordship of Jesus Christ and conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment (Jambrek 2007, 283–285).

2.1. The Doctrinal Position of Assemblies of God

The most widespread Pentecostal group, called the Assemblies of God, under whose wing many churches have found their place, view the event, i.e., the phenomenon of baptism in the Spirit similar to the one described earlier. Of course, the doctrinal position is justified under the positional article "Baptism in the Holy Spirit" from 2010. With that document in mind, we will detect the main points of its teachings.

Generally speaking, several distinctions need to be mentioned concerning this subject, namely that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is such that "...(1) it is theologically and experientially distinguishable from and subsequent to the new birth, (2) it is accompanied by speaking in tongues, and (3) it is distinct in purpose from the Spirit's work of regenerating the heart and life of a repentant sinner" (Baptism in the Holy Spirit 2010). Some other characteristics include that the baptism in the Spirit is seen as the event described in Acts 2 and that it is not the same as the baptism into the Body of Christ (Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27; Eph 4:5). Other terms this position mentions are: "the coming Spirit," "falls," or "comes on," then "Spirit that is poured out," "gift promised by the Father," "gift of the Spirit," "receiving of the Spirit," and finally "being filled with the Spirit." The latter does not point to the initial filling of the Spirit but constantly being and remaining filled with the Spirit (Baptism in the Holy Spirit 2010).

The Presbytery of the Assemblies of God emphasizes that baptism in the Spirit was promised in the Old Testament (referring to Ezek 36:25-27 and Joel 2:28-29). Still, it also highlights Luke's pneumatology contained in Luke's Gospel and Acts.

According to the mentioned position, baptism in the Spirit always comes after regeneration, i.e., the believer's new birth. However, the period between the two events is not always necessarily defined (Baptism in the Holy Spirit 2010).

When referring to the phenomenon of speaking in tongues in Acts 2, the positional document states that:

Three dramatic phenomena occurred: a violent wind, fire, and speaking in tongues. The wind and the fire, which in Scripture are symbols of the Holy Spirit, preceded the outpouring of the Spirit; but the phenomenon of speaking in tongues was an integral part of the disciples' experience of Spirit baptism. The impetus for speaking in tongues was the Holy Spirit. The Greek verb *apophthengomai* at the end of verse 4 occurs again in verse 14 to introduce Peter's speech to the crowd. It is an unusual and infrequently used word, and may be translated "to give inspired utterance" (Baptism in the Holy Spirit 2010).

Regarding the diversity of tongues⁴ in Acts and 1 Corinthians, it is crucial to bear in mind the following:

In Acts 2, the languages spoken by the disciples were unknown to them but were understood by others. They were human, identifiable languages. Luke says that the disciples spoke in other tongues – that is, languages not their own. However, in the other occurrences in Acts where speaking in tongues is mentioned (10:46; 19:6), there is no indication the languages were understood or identified. Paul's writings imply that Spirit-inspired languages may not always be human, but may be spiritual, heavenly, or angelic (1 Cor 13:1; 14:2, 14) as a means of communication between a believer and God (Baptism in the Holy Spirit 2010).

The conclusion is that the baptism in the Spirit is accompanied by the initial speaking in tongues, i.e., that it is empirically related to the baptism in the Spirit. Also, Scripture never mentions the baptism in the Spirit without speaking in tongues, even when it says that not everyone speaks in tongues (1 Cor 12:30). This positional document claims that 1 Corinthians is sometimes used to prove that not everyone will speak in tongues when baptized in the Holy Spirit. However, according to the paper, one should pay attention to the context because it talks about the gift of speaking at a public worship service: "... both the broad context and the immediate context relate the question to the exercise of the gift in corporate worship, as noted by the question immediately following: 'Not all interpret, do they?' According to 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, only some believers are prompted by the Holy Spirit to give an utterance in tongues in a gathering of God's people" (Baptism in the Holy Spirit 2010).

4 Ervin Budiselić (2016) talked about the subject of speaking in tongues in his article, Glossolalia: Why Christians Can Speak in Tongues in a Church Service without Interpretation, *Kairos* 10 (2): 177–201.

The following four things are important for the baptism in the Spirit: openness toward spiritual manifestations, righteous living (sanctification), power to witness, and speaking in tongues. For those who do not speak in tongues, and are therefore not baptized in the Spirit, the way to this phenomenon can be sought through prayer to God. According to the doctrinal statement: “With the baptism in the Holy Spirit come such experiences as an overflowing fullness of the Spirit (John 7:37–39; Acts 4:8), a deepened reverence for God (Acts 2:43; Heb 12:28), an intensified consecration to God and dedication to His work (Acts 2:42), and a more active love for Christ, for his Word, and for the lost (Mark 16:20)” (Baptism in the Holy Spirit 2010).

Observing these two topics, baptism in the Spirit and speaking in tongues, as well as the official confession of the majority of Pentecostals (this majority being the Assemblies of God), it can be surmised that, according to the historical period of classic spiritual experience, the doctrine did not change in a significant way, except that it perhaps established its foothold, experientially as well as doctrinally. According to the research statistics of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity in partnership with the Oral Roberts University and Empowered21, the Pentecostal movement today makes up 26% of today’s Christianity, i.e., around 664 million people in the world (Global Pentecostalism). *Christianity Today* also claims that Pentecostalism did not just spread across the globe but has also helped to deepen the faith of many Protestants to whose area it came (Randall 2021). The Pentecostal movement is no longer separate but deeply involved in the evangelical world of Protestantism. Its contribution is an offering of a deepening experience with God by emphasizing baptism in the Spirit.

3. Martyn Lloyd-Jones and the Baptism in the Spirit

Although Martyn Lloyd-Jones is often mentioned and referred to in Reformed circles, his influence is very well portrayed in the short biography *Martyn Lloyd-Jones: His Life and Relevance for the 21st Century*, written by his grandson Christopher Catherwood. While Lloyd-Jones says about himself:

I am a Calvinist; I believe in election and predestination; but I would not dream of putting it under the heading of essential. I put it under the heading of non-essential... While I myself hold very definite and strong views on the subject, I will not separate from a man who cannot accept and believe the doctrines of election and predestination, and is Arminian, as long as he tells me that we are all saved by grace, and as long as the Calvinist agrees, as he must, that God calls all men everywhere to repentance. As long as both are prepared to agree about these things I say we must not break fellowship. So I put election into the category of non-essentials (Lloyd-Jones 1989, 352).

This is very important to observe because, although Lloyd-Jones was a well-known expositor of Scripture who favorited the Puritans (who were not in favor of Calvinist theology), his position is not rigid in the sense that he sets himself apart from those who do not see things his way. Therefore, looking at Lloyd-Jones, we should not see someone who is closed off in his opinions but someone who is open regarding the most critical questions. For him, baptism in the Spirit was not essential but had its place. That it indeed had its place can be observed in his expressed regret for those who do not see the baptism in the Spirit: "... those people who say that it happens to everybody at regeneration seem to me not only to be denying the New Testament but to be definitely quenching the Spirit. Regeneration is unconscious, non-experimental; but the baptism with the Holy Spirit is essentially experimental" (Lloyd-Jones 1984, 141).

While we continue to talk about his theology of the baptism in the Spirit, we need to mention that it began in the 1950s. Two books that are crucial for his theology of the baptism in the Spirit are *Joy Unspeakable* and *Sovereign Spirit*, and they have characterized the posthumous influence of Lloyd-Jones on evangelical Christianity. In his Introduction to *Joy Unspeakable*, Christopher Catherwood describes the following situation:

By the time in the mid-1950s that he himself came to preach on Ephesians, he had changed his mind. He still rejected perfectionism – indeed continued to do so till his death – but now felt that it was evident from Scripture that the sealing of the Spirit was indisputably separate from conversion. He read many Puritans and discovered that they testified, both from Scripture and from their own experience, that the two events were not necessarily simultaneous in the Christian's life. The Christian should not just believe the truth and know it, the Puritans felt, but have a day-to-day living experience of it – what they called "experimental" truth (Lloyd-Jones 1984, 12–13).

3.1. *The Sealing of the Spirit is the Baptism of the Spirit*

For Lloyd-Jones, the experience of the first Christians was essential and unique. He believes that the Scriptures clearly show that, before these Christians had any books of the Bible, they had the experience of the Spirit. We cannot read the epistles without seeing the implication of the Spirit coming down on believers and how that same thing was held on to in the history of the Church. For him, the sealing, present in 2 Corinthians 1:22, Ephesians 1:13, and Ephesians 4:30, was the same as the baptism of the Spirit. Lloyd-Jones denies that this represents the process of sanctification but claims that it is very similar to what is seen in Ephesians 1:13, which is preceded by faith. He considers Charles Hodge and Charles Simeon and ponders their views that sealing is a more exalted status of satisfaction and assurance kept for believers (Lloyd-Jones 1984, 71, 116, 146–150). Regarding the Christian experience of the Spirit in Romans 8:16, Lloyd-Jones says the following:

I suggest that this is a part of the “baptism with the Holy Ghost,” or, if you prefer it, the “baptism of the Holy Spirit.” That is why I referred to John 7:37 to 39 and Acts 2 and so on. Indeed I go further and say that what Paul is describing is the most essential aspect of “the baptism of the Holy Ghost.” We said, when dealing with verse 15, that the “Spirit of adoption” is a part of the baptism with the Holy Ghost without having the Spirit of adoption, but we can have the Spirit of adoption without knowing this further experience. That is why I say that the most vital and essential part, the essence, of being baptized with the Holy Ghost, is that we have this particular form of assurance of our sonship of God. I do not hesitate to say also that this is the same as the “sealing” of the Spirit (Lloyd-Jones 1974, 300).

For Lloyd-Jones, having the Spirit is not the same as the experience of the descent of the Holy Spirit, whose purpose is obviously to remind us of the love of God the Father, i.e., the sonship we have in him. In other words, Lloyd-Jones emphasizes aspects of the function of baptism in the Spirit precisely in that direction, saying that it serves to bear witness regarding the sonship of God, God’s love. The sealing of the Spirit in his theology points to the verification of believers. He proves his thesis by saying that even Christ, who had the Spirit, was confirmed, i.e., verified by the Spirit, based on verses in John 6:25-27 (Lloyd-Jones 1984, 152, 155). He then goes further and says that the sealing of the Spirit is the same as the baptism in the Spirit:

In other words, I am suggesting to you that the sealing of the Spirit and the baptism with the Spirit are the same thing. These terms are synonymous but they are used, one here and one there, according to the immediate context. When it is purely a question of witness and testimony you get the term “baptism” used; but when it is put more in terms of our inheritance and the certainty that is given to us that we are the heirs of God, then the term “sealing” is used, and the term “earnest” elaborates the meaning a little further. The earnest and the sealing generally are found together for that reason (Lloyd-Jones 1984, 156–157).

While interpreting this text in Ephesians 1:13, it is difficult to discern the syntactical function of the participle *pisteusantes* in the aorist. Some translators render this as “having believed”, and others “believing”. Lloyd-Jones admits the validity of both translations. He does not make much of them precisely because the sealing is a continuation of the faith. He paraphrases Apostle Paul’s thought: “...you also having heard the message of the truth of the gospel, you have believed it, you have received it, and believing (or having believed) ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. So that it leaves the meaning exactly the same. It is presumed and taken for granted that they have believed, they were already believers when they were sealed” (Lloyd-Jones 1984, 149).

Gordon Fee disagrees with this interpretation. He argues that praise to God is a teaching for the whole community, not individuals. Ephesians 1:13 refers not to individual converts but to the general receiving of the Spirit. This, according

to Fee, does not refer to some subsequent receiving of the Spirit (Fee 1994, 670). On the other hand, D. A. Carson wrestles with the problem which the Doctor pointed out,⁵ which is, according to Lloyd-Jones, the need for an experience of the Spirit. Carson will say that this is why the Reformed community in Great Britain is divided. Since many things were published posthumously, it cannot always be thoroughly explained what Lloyd-Jones's meant.

Nevertheless, Carson keeps praising Lloyd-Jones for giving attention to this topic.⁶ Carson also argues that those who advocate for a "second experience" do not always have a handle on the critical nuances of the Greek original (Carson 1987, 159). Finally, his biographer and assistant would disagree with Lloyd-Jones, believing that his two books, *Joy Unspeakable* and *Sovereign Spirit*, will only confuse people with seeking God and baptism in the Holy Spirit. Iain Murray points out that behind all that Lloyd-Jones says, there is an excellent desire to see people serve the church more effectively, which, in his opinion, was Lloyd-Jones' primary goal (1990, 488–491). What should be pointed out is that the Doctor strongly emphasized that the sealing of the Spirit (baptism in the Spirit) should be asked for (prayed for, waited upon), i.e., one should know what one is asking of God, and while doing it, one should not exchange the blessings for the one who gives blessings – God himself (Lloyd-Jones 1978, 294–297).

3.2. Assurance of God's Love, Strengthening, and Reality of God's Presence

In his theology of the baptism in the Spirit, Lloyd-Jones touched on many aspects, most of which are described in his book, *Joy Unspeakable*, including sanctification, receiving of the Spirit, Church, Pentecost, and revival. Nevertheless, in all those subjects, he put a great deal of emphasis on the sealing, i.e., baptism in the Spirit, but also on its purpose of convincing us of God's love in our hearts. Here Lloyd-Jones refers to Romans 5:5. He believes that baptism in the Spirit does not only include the sense of sealing or deposit but the sense of the feeling of God's love. For God's love, Lloyd-Jones looks parallelly at Romans 5:5, Ephesians 1:13, and 1 Peter 1:8. Since he considers the baptism in the Spirit to be experiential, he also thinks that it cannot be missed, that it is authentic: "... you can be a Christian, you can be a member of the body of Christ, you can be a part of this organism, without having received this baptism of power, without knowing this highest form of assurance, without having this overwhelming experience of the love of

5 From an informal conversation with Dr. D. A. Carson during TGC SEE Conference in Osijek, October 30, 2022. I have found out that Elizabeth Catherwood told Carson, regarding his book *Showing the Spirit*, that he (Carson) really understood her father, referring to his theology of the baptism in the Spirit.

6 It should be emphasized that Carson recognizes the importance of tackling this subject by both those outside the Charismatic movement and those within it.

God shed abroad in your heart so that you rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory” (Lloyd-Jones 1984, 180–181, 264).

For the Doctor, the love of God is assurance; it is “God’s love poured into our hearts,” the catalyst of courage and conviction in witnessing and preaching. Therefore, in Acts 1 and 2, the things are the same – baptism in the Spirit enables the power or strength to testify (Lloyd-Jones 1984, 260). John Piper aptly summarizes that the baptism in the Spirit, according to Lloyd-Jones, is, in fact, a matter of power and God’s presence which a person has never experienced before, and that it represents a superb form of assurance (1991). The Doctor’s stand on the question of power and the gifts of the Spirit is unambiguous; namely, he believes that the power is also manifested through the gifts of the Spirit:

In our consideration of this subject of baptism with the Holy Spirit, we have come to the point where we are considering the matter of spiritual gifts. The baptism with the Holy Spirit, as we have seen, is essentially designed for witness. Our Lord told the disciples, “Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49), and then he tells them that they would be “witnesses unto him.” As they were they were not yet fit to be witnesses. Let us never forget that these words were uttered to the disciples who had been with our Lord during the three years of his ministry. They had heard his sermons, they had seen his miracles, they had seen him crucified on the cross, they had seen him dead and buried, and they had seen him after he had risen literally in the body from the grave. These were the men who had been with him in the upper room at Jerusalem after his resurrection and to whom he had expounded the Scriptures, and yet it is to these men he says that they must tarry at Jerusalem until they are endued with power from on high. The special purpose, the specific purpose of the baptism with the Holy Spirit is to enable us to witness, to bear testimony, and one of the ways in which that happens is through the giving of spiritual gifts (Lloyd-Jones 1985, 120).

Ian H. Murray’s biography shows that Lloyd-Jones has always been a man of the Word. However, today many are surprised that he believed in the baptism in the Spirit as the second or subsequent experience a Christian should seek (Murray 1990). He was in no way a cessationist.⁷ On the contrary, he believed that the early Church’s experiences apply to us today. His emphasis on this experience and the desire to see the Church renewed was always there in him. As a preacher hailing from Wales, the country that witnessed a revival at the beginning of the 20th century, he always longed to see the revival and the Church strengthened in its preaching through the power and strength of the divine person of the Holy Spirit (Piper 1991).

For the Doctor, a revival was the same as the baptism in the Spirit. For him, a revival is when several people are baptized at the same time in one area. Also, Mar-

7 Cessationism is a doctrine according to which the gifts of the Spirit, such as prophecy, speaking in tongues and healing, have essentially ceased, or disappeared with the Apostolic age.

tyn Lloyd-Jones often emphasized that sanctification is always an indirect work of the Spirit in the baptism of the Spirit. By this, he meant that it does not have a direct connection to our sanctification, as it has to do with equipping believers with the power to witness and experience God's love. A believer baptized in the Holy Spirit will have a greater desire for loving God and being sanctified. Lloyd-Jones goes further and says that empowerment of the Spirit, i.e., being filled with the Spirit, can repeatedly happen, like in Acts 4, if it is needed for strength or new fulfillment of Christians (Lloyd-Jones 1984, 51, 65–80, 144, 245).

Two of his contemporaries, John Stott and James Dunn, advocated a different view of baptism in the Spirit. In his book, *The Baptism and Fullness of the Holy Spirit* (1965), John Stott points out that baptism in the Spirit is baptism in the Body of Christ. On the other hand, James Dunn, in his *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (1970), emphasizes forgiveness, acceptance, purification, and saving that happens at that moment. Lloyd-Jones thought they were quenching the Spirit, something he repeatedly claimed in *Joy Unspeakable*. He could not agree, so his responses answer approaches made in his time. Based on this, one can conclude that this kind of thinking could only have been found in people who were open toward the work of the Spirit, but mostly in Pentecostals with whom he was resonating already in his own time (Kay 2013, 275–294). It is impossible to conceive of the Christian ministry without this gift:

Let me emphasize this. This filling is an absolute necessity for true service. Even our Lord Himself did not enter upon His ministry until the Holy Spirit had descended upon Him. He even told the disciples, whom He had been training for three years, who had been with Him in the inner circle, who had seen His miracles and heard all His words, who had seen Him dead and buried and risen again, even these exceptional men with their exceptional opportunities, He told to stay where they were, not to start upon their ministry, not to attempt to witness to Him, until they had received the power which the Holy Spirit would give them (Lloyd-Jones 2003, 241).

3.3. *The Gift of Speaking in Tongues*

Since the Doctor was against those who said that baptism in the Spirit was only the inclusion in the Body of Christ or identical to the baptism in the Body, his approach to speaking in tongues is such that he condemns those who oppose this gift and call it Satanic, and consider it is no longer applicable to us today:

I am amazed at some of the things I have read recently on the subject – certain Christian people have issued booklets and pamphlets, and in one of these the writer did not hesitate to say that “all speaking in tongues today is of the devil.” How a man ventures to make such a statement I simply cannot understand. I would not dare to do so. No, we must be very careful in all we say and we must be open in this matter. The Apostle tells us, “Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues” (1 Cor 14:39). We

have already dealt with the argument that says this belonged only to the early church. If you once go along that line you will soon find that the New Testament has practically nothing to say to you at all, you will have to say that it was all for the early Church. But clearly, it is not – it is for us (Lloyd-Jones 1985, 143–144).

Besides being aware of the opposition, Lloyd-Jones does not acknowledge the Pentecostal position. He does not want his writing (i.e., preaching) to be just for those who know nothing about the subject but also for those who have these gifts but do not use them properly, by which he means those who hold the position that one can speak in tongues whenever one wishes to. Here he refers to Pentecostalism and all others who seek this gift. For Lloyd-Jones, the negative phenomenon of speaking in tongues can be the spiritist phenomenon from spirit summoning seances and also a psychological phenomenon. In the end, the biblical form of speaking in tongues can be an authentic sign of a believer. Observing the European Pentecostal Conference in Stockholm in 1939, Lloyd-Jones agreed with the conclusion that not everyone who is baptized in the Holy Spirit must speak in tongues. However, the Doctor could not accept the fact that the Pentecostal movement instructed everyone who has been baptized in the Holy Spirit that they have to speak in tongues (Lloyd-Jones 1985, 142–143, 145):

Now what is the teaching in Scripture with regard to speaking in tongues? In the first place, speaking in tongues is not the invariable accompaniment of the baptism of the Spirit. I put it like that because there is a teaching which has been current for a number of years and still is today, which says that speaking in tongues is always the initial evidence of the baptism with the Spirit. It therefore goes on to say that unless you have spoken in tongues you have not been baptized with the Holy Spirit. Now that, I suggest, is entirely wrong. In 1 Corinthians 12:30, the Apostle asks, “Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues?” Again in 1 Corinthians 14:5 he says, “I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied.” And when he says that he would that they all spake in tongues, he is clearly saying that they all did not. That, it seems to me, should be sufficient in and of itself (Lloyd-Jones 1985, 144).

This is the context in which we need to see Lloyd-Jones. His position stands opposite to the familiar Pentecostal position that all can speak in tongues and that tongues are always the initial proof of baptism in the Spirit. We have already explained the signs that indicate the result of baptism in the Spirit. They do not always indicate glossolalia or speaking in tongues, but point to the strength, the testimony of God’s love, and the assurance in him.

The next principle Lloyd-Jones grapples with is the well-known claim that everyone can initiate speaking in tongues independently. He does not say to who this refers, but we can assume he is thinking of the charismatic circles of his time. Here, Lloyd-Jones cannot agree with this, and arguing against it, he appeals to the miracles in Acts, which are always sudden, uncontrolled, unorganized by man, and always authentic. Lloyd-Jones believes that miracles, the same as tongues, cannot

be an experiment, i.e., we cannot practice them. They happen by surprise, suddenly, and are always authentic. They are quite different from what we described earlier in the article. Then, appealing to 1 Corinthians 14:27-32, he claims that speaking in tongues was not irrational but a completely conscious experience. Finally, Lloyd-Jones affirms and encourages (1985, 151–158), but also explains this experience as conscious and mystical:

He is glorifying God, worshipping him, and magnifying him. He knows he is doing that, but he cannot identify the actual words that he is using. The whole thing is a mystery. . . This is not man's natural faculties being heightened; this is a gift, something new, something which is given. And so the Apostle says that what happens when a man speaks in tongues is that the Spirit is controlling him, by-passing his understanding for the time being. Instead of it coming through the understanding to the tongue, it goes directly through the man's spirit to the tongue (Lloyd-Jones 1985, 150–151).

The way Lloyd-Jones describes this event, and other gifts too, in his work, *The Sovereign Spirit*, is to encourage believers to seek that same gift without denying the reality of other gifts that come through the Spirit (1985, 158). He promotes, quotes, explains, and gives room for an authentic work of the Spirit through gifts, such as the gift of tongues.

Conclusion

Although many claim the Doctor as their own, Reformed Christians and groups on one side and Pentecostal and similar groups on the other, Lloyd-Jones was his person. He never put much emphasis on his denominational affiliation except to identify himself as a Christian. He spoke in different churches, some more and some less open to the work of the Spirit. What is specific about him is that he called himself a biblical and not systematic Calvinist. By this, he meant that all his theology originated in the Scriptures. Catherwood says that although we must not agree with all his conclusions, we must agree with his method, which is that Scripture is always the basis for everything, and this pertains to the baptism in the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit as well. His view of the *Sola Scriptura* principle is in the ultimate sense proof of his method regarding the already mentioned topic. This makes him a biblical Calvinist – and not a systematic Calvinist (Catherwood 2015, 38–39).

Although Lloyd-Jones' influence was significant even during his lifetime, especially in the context of the British Pentecostal movement and his friendship with people like Billy Richards and the Doctor's heir, R. T. Kendall, it is essential to mention that this contribution is not limited to his context, but that it has its foothold in many other parts of the world, such as Brazil and its context of the rise of evangelical Christianity, where Reformed Pentecostals gather and identify

with Lloyd-Jones' teaching (Eekhoff Zylstra 2019). Therefore, it is important to conclude that Lloyd-Jones' influence is not a locked or closed system relevant only to the past of British Pentecostalism or distant South America.

What Lloyd-Jones offers to the classical Pentecostalism of today (mentioned as a whole when we discussed the nature of Spirit baptism, gift of the tongues, and doctrinal practice) is an amendment to the understanding of the nature of the baptism in the Spirit, gift of the tongues and other gifts. Of course, standard Pentecostals would not agree on everything with the Doctor. Still, I believe there is room for a dialogue with Pentecostalism where one can go even deeper into the exegesis and exposition of the text explained by Lloyd-Jones. Although Pentecostalism emphasizes baptism in the Spirit and Spirit-filled life, Lloyd-Jones takes things much further, emphasizing the power of preaching while God's assurance and love bear witness in one's heart. For Lloyd-Jones, baptism in the Spirit is a need of every generation, and it can repeatedly happen, as in Acts 4. With his theological contribution, Lloyd-Jones can motivate Pentecostalism to further consider and think through the biblical correctness and foundation of the Pentecostal position and dialogue with other Christians. Pentecostalism could benefit from a different view of understanding the nature of repeated baptism in the Spirit, especially regarding tongues. Here, Lloyd-Jones agrees with Pentecostalism because he believes baptism in the Spirit represents the subsequent experience that can come upon a Christian after he has believed.

However, what distinguished Lloyd-Jones from others was precisely his belief that one can be filled (baptized) in the Spirit more than once during one's lifetime and the way he understood the gift of tongues and its function. It is well known that Pentecostalism generally, albeit not universally, has its typical way of understanding the baptism in the Spirit and the gift of tongues that the believer can use anytime and anywhere.⁸ Here we already see a difference in interpreting the gift of the tongues as such because Lloyd-Jones disagrees with this, based on proof from Acts and 1 Corinthians. Here I would concur with the Doctor because the evidence goes directly against the practice that tongues can be spoken anywhere and can be had by anyone. I believe that this puts pressure on Pentecostal believers and can produce inauthentic experiences. One needs to be even more open toward all gifts, and as Lloyd-Jones says, one needs to be open to the Spirit and his sovereign work.

This article aims to invite a dialogue; to call for a different way of thinking about the interpretation of the baptism in the Holy Spirit and gifts of the Holy Spirit based on Scripture. As Catherwood points out, we cannot grasp Lloyd-Jones out-

8 This is the author's observation based on his experience in the Evangelical Pentecostal Church in the Republic of Croatia and the example of many missionaries who emphasized the same thing through their teachings, and who were sent by the Assemblies of God mission organization.

side that principle. Nevertheless, Pentecostals can benefit from him by entering dialogue and considering the nature of his writing – that it serves to strengthen the Church. This can be bolstered by researching his biographical work – his life and his service. He was a man of the Word, one of the most famous evangelical preachers of the 20th century.

Nevertheless, Lloyd-Jones confirmed something that many today (such as John MacArthur, the late R. C. Sproul, and others) are skeptical about – that openness toward the Spirit in the context of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is compatible with Reformed theology. As such, it strengthens and balances the Christian testimony, where on one side we have the Spirit and on the other the Word – for Church to be strengthened in its witness and mission. Through this, his contribution to Pentecostalism remains an enriching one – through the balance of the Spirit and the Word.

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Matej Sakač

Teologija krštenja Duhom i darova Duha u misli Martyna Lloyd-Jonesa te njegove razlike, sličnosti i doprinosi u usporedbi s pentekostnim tumačenjem

Sažetak

Članak se bavi teologijom krštenja Duhom Svetim u kontekstu pozicije Martyna Lloyd-Jonesa i pentekostnog pokreta Assemblies of God. Osim što članak obrađuje kratki povijesni i kontekstualni pregled teologije krštenja Duhom kod pentekostnog pokreta i Lloyd-Jonesa, također nam daje na uvid i njihove primarne naglaske. Obje skupine tvrde da je krštenje Duhom odvojeno iskustvo od novog rođenja, gdje Assemblies of God smatra da je bitno naglasiti da ono što se postiže krštenjem Duhom jest otvorenost za nova iskustva, posvećenje te govorenje u jezicima. Lloyd-Jones se slaže s tim, ali uz iznimku da je krštenje Duhom jednako pečaćenju vidljivom u Poslanici Efežanima, smatrajući pečaćenje inicijalnim znakom krštenja Duhom kao snažno osvjedočenje onog što već imamo (sinovstvo) te snažno iskustvo Božje ljubavi koje je pokretač za snažno propovijedanje i svjedočenje. Prema Lloyd-Jonesu njegovo tumačenje dara govorenja u jezicima jest različito od poimanja Assemblies of God. Jezici nisu nužno inicijalni znak krštenja Duhom, a njihova upotreba nije u kontroli čovjeka, već u vlasti suverenog djelovanja Duha. Članak pojašnjava ove razlike i sličnosti te poziva na dijalog i razmatranje misli Lloyd-Jonesa u njegovu doprinosu pentekostnoj teologiji krštenja Duhom.

“Different Kinds of Gospel Result In Different Kinds of Discipleship”

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The Disciple Dilemma

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Abstract

Due to troublesome symptoms emerging and accelerating in American Protestant and Evangelical communities, this article discusses how the Gospel and how discipleship manifests in the American church today. Using Bill Hull's suggestions about six variations of "Gospel Models," the first section of this article briefly describes each model and shows in which ways each model impacts discipleship. In the second section, using The Hartford database of US Megachurches, the article analyzes how a subset of the churches in the database define their mission. The conclusion is that discipleship is rare as the primary mission for American churches in terms of actual wording if there is any standing in the words at all. The article concludes that troublesome symptoms emerging and accelerating in American Protestant and Evangelical communities are organizational, caused by the underlying tensions between the Kingdom-focused Gospel of Christ, and the historical traditions and societal morphing underfoot in Western Christianity. Because the trends are organizational, they are, by definition, a leadership issue rather than attributing deficiencies to defective individual followers of Christ. Only leadership has the authority and influence to change an organization, excluding anarchy.

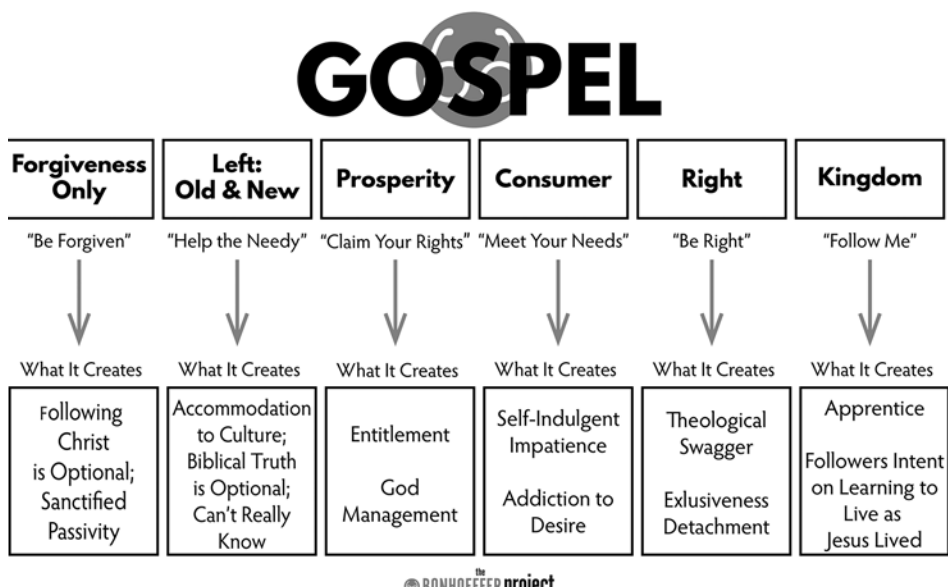
Keywords: *discipleship, gospel, gospel models, Bill Hull, leadership, culture change*

Introduction

How does the Gospel, and how does discipleship manifest in the American church today? What are the interrelationships between the two terms, and what are the consequences of deficiencies of either one? These questions are important because the presence or absence of discipleship in churches or how discipleship will be misunderstood and practiced, greatly (but not exclusively) depends on the way how Christians or churches define the Gospel message.

Troublesome symptoms are emerging and accelerating in American Protestant and Evangelical communities. If American churches are to grapple with these difficulties, we must first consider the connection, or the lack of connection between widely held American interpretations of the words “Gospel” (εὐαγγέλιον *euaggelion*) and “disciple” (μαθητής *mathētēs*). This is not to suggest some eisegetical amalgam of the two very specific words should be pondered, but rather, to assert that the Gospel exists to enable and induce an engaged and ongoing life as a disciple of Christ. And to assert partial renditions of the gospel reverse or devolve this relationship.

A thoughtful summary of this devolution can be found in the work of Bill Hull, a widely regarded American author, and speaker in Biblical discipleship. Hull (2021) suggests six variations of “Gospel Models” (hereinafter “GM”) in his organization “The Bonhoeffer Project” as shown here. Hull’s GM is not simply gospel descriptors. They shape discipleship. Why? The core tenet of a GM drives the behavioral outcomes in the lower boxes.¹



¹ Source: <https://thebonhoefferproject.com/presentation-graphics/gospel-chart>.

We intend to briefly critique the first five of the six GMs as biblically inadequate—just as Hull already has - finally coming to dwell on the sixth model - “Kingdom/Follow Me,” which is Hull’s endorsed version of a proper biblical Gospel/disciple relationship. Accordingly, in two separate sections our task will be to demonstrate that:

1. Hull’s categorizations are supportable in American Christianity’s social trends, and they are each biblically inadequate.
2. Jesus’s great commission to “go” as disciples and to “make” disciples as Christ taught it in Matthew 28 and his life are conspicuously absent as the primacy of most American churches sampled in *The Disciple Dilemma* book research (Allen 2022, 229). It should be further noted that our research was confined to published mission statements for sampled churches.²

1. How Do Gospel Models Shape Discipleship?

Is discipleship distinct from, or is it the same as the gospel Christ bequeathed us? We answer this quickly, and we hope, simply: Yes – distinct and conjoined. Yes, the Gospel is precisely what Christ embedded in the lives of his disciples (cf. Luke 14:27-33; John 6:37-40). Yes, the Gospel is a life-long shaping and transformational journey – a metamorphosis of the individual. Therefore, the Gospel of Jesus cannot be reduced simplistically to a single moment in time’s choice or action (Rom 12:1-3). Lastly, yes, the Gospel, if understood, induces discipleship all the years ahead in the life of a Christian, a “disciple in progress” seeking to make others desire to be followers of Christ.

We shall not toy with “If/Then are we saved?” questions. We affirm that without the Gospel of Jesus Christ’s foreordained, elective, and propitiative work on the cross, and his resurrection, there simply is no case for discipleship. We likewise suggest that without a life of biblical discipleship, which is a Christ follower in ongoing transformation, in dying to self, taking up their cross, and intentionally pursuing Christ and his identity for them – prospects dim for long-term viability, humanely speaking (John 6:66). Herein lies the crux of the American disciple dilemma.

With minimal added comment we accept and affirm Hull’s assertion that his first five Western gospel models (GM’s) are exegetically unsupportable, yet prominent in many American churches – effectively a default way of thinking for such disciples. Other scholars have offered similar views using different terms to sum-

2 The mere presence (or absence) of “words” does not, of course, prove or disprove the true discipleship intent of a given organization. Yet we leave it to the reader to consider whether such a crucial mission omission, in such proportions across multiple Christian communities, coupled with trends and findings suggests something to be amiss.

marize Western evangelicalism's partial gospels. Dallas Willard (2009) suggests three dysfunctional gospel groups: "Forgiven," "Liberated" and "Churchmanship." Victor Chan (2017) suggests the best labels of the partial gospels are "Eternal Life" focused, "Sin/Repentance" focused; "Prosperity" focused, or "Purpose-Driven" in focus. We stay with Hull's labels as the reference point of this inquiry.

In decades past homogeneity in a denomination was the norm – the Methodists tended to lean deeply toward societal efforts, the Baptists sought to conquer an unevangelized world for Christ, while the Presbyterians sought to get everyone thinking rightly about soteriology. The Pentecostals pointed to the experiential Spirit events as the pinnacle of the Gospel, while the interdenominational sought the middle ground of compromise and theological tolerance as the right way. Eventually, the mainlines – mostly the Methodists, Lutherans, and Presbyterians began to shed a high view of Scripture as the Baptists began to raise drawbridges to isolate from an evil outside world (Keller 2021). It used to be more or less cleanly carved up that way in the denominations. Things are less consistent today viewed simply by theological brands. And there are a lot more brands. Rarely are there monolithic views in any one Christian community. This is not an improvement however, and brings us back to what Hull has categorized.

1.1. Forgiveness Only Gospel

The "Forgiveness Only" Gospel intends that salvation is the outcome for the believer – and everything else is secondary. This GM is particularly satisfying to the radical individualism of the American Christian because it quantifies a "do-this-get-that" transactional outcome. One checks a box, gets saved, and goes back to whatever they were doing before salvation came up. The 1974 Lausanne Conference's emphasis on evangelism was fuel for such a Forgiveness focus – to get them saved. Today "Forgiveness" discipling objectives zero in on get-saved as the ultimacy of John 3:16, or on the human actions for personal salvation to be effective. This forgiveness emphasis in Western Christianity dates back at least to the early 1800s (Fitzgerald 2017, 3–6). Hull argues that such a focus bankrupts the fuller call of Christ for the new believer – any notion of following Christ is "optional" under this paradigm.

In other words, once I am saved all else is discretionary but not necessary. In short, this model, perhaps unintentionally, orphans new believers to discover for themselves the true intentions of Christ in the ongoing life of a believer. Why? Because the people who introduced them to Christ have to move on to the next prospect. This GM of "Forgiveness" was once the near-exclusive landscape of Evangelical Western churches. The results seen in the trends of the evangelical church demonstrate this GM to be problematic (Stark 2008; Barna Research 2018; Pew Research Center 2019).

1.2. "Left" and "Right" Gospel

The terms "Left" and "Right" in American life are used to shorthand sociological stances on a range of cultural issues, typically the Left taking the liberalized view of economic, moral, and political topics, whilst the Right hews, typically to the conservative, or historically traditional view. We group these two Hull designations into one paragraph since the core issues are essentially identical, with diverse conclusions as the Right/Left outcomes.

Politically oriented "Left" and "Right" disciples may inhabit the same church or denomination, but they advocate for certain political or social doctrines as the greatest Gospel outcome, sometimes just dropping the Gospel part and going with the intended outcome. Both Left and Right are power structures, seeking conformity to moral fatwahas above any faith convictions. This colocation of Left and Right advocates in one location is not a demonstration of unity. Much of the Left/Right dissonance is generational today, as children reject parent-advocated views on what each thinks God deems good and right and true.

But it's not all generational. One need look no further than the ongoing deconstruction across denominations. The United Methodist Church, the Episcopalians, Presbyterian USA, or the roiling Southern Baptist squabbles demonstrate that inside many local churches, a gospel identity of the "Left" and the "Right" is rending the unity of the local community of Christ. This divide means that a follower of Christ is either operating from "our" views of social justice, causal thinking, or political and social constructs – or the non-conformist is confused, stupid, or evil.³

1.3. Prosperity Gospel

"Prosperity" seekers, Hull says, have come for the entitlements of wealth, fame, or power as compensation for their ancestor's tribulations, or for reparations from perceived social inequities which the Messiah would surely want rectified. The prosperity gospel is more about the bonuses offered than the biblical discipleship demanded.

In such a gospel, one handles God as one might manipulate a boss, to be sure he recognizes my plight and my worth and my situation – and compensates me accordingly. I perform this way and God rewards that way, accordingly. Such a gospel is ripe to program victimhood into the uninformed disciple, since a steady diet of words reinforces a transactional mindset. "If you send your money to us in the church, then God returns funds in multiples to you!"

3 For additional context see D. A. Carson (2013), *The Intolerance of Tolerance*, Grand Rapids & Cambridge: Eerdmans. See also Isaiah 5:20-23; Matthew 6:43; 10:32; Mark 7:1-9.

Prosperity may also be sold as promises of health or power or fame. The result is the same – a sclerotic discipleship that puts my walk with Christ on a barter system with God.⁴

1.4. Consumer Gospel

“Consumers” are described by Hull as “self-indulgent” religious people. Disciples in this way perceive the church as a club, or perhaps merely as a service offering for their family. It fits the modern American. It is an inward focus, seeking venues, service offerings, and entertainment that maximize my enjoyment (Mitchell 2016). Discipleship in this context is about utilitarian satisfaction. Alignment with a specific community of believers, committed to setting aside personal agendas and laying down their lives is lost in the rush to catch better music, better celebrity speakers, better facilities, better children’s and adult groups, and so on. And the consumer always has options if they want to walk away.

These five gospel models mentioned above may be singular, or they may cohabit with other gospel models in the life of any one believer, in the culture of a local church, or even in a denomination. One may as easily be a Left-Prosperity Christian as a Forgiveness-Right or Consumerist disciple. Hull suggests that one, or a combination of some of these five models if advocated by a church, or held by a disciple, bodes poorly for spiritual development. Why? Each of these five models struggles when contrasted with Christ’s clear words regarding “next” for the ongoing transforming life of a Christ follower (Matt 16:24; Luke 9:23; 14:27; John 21:22).

There is a stark and compelling gospel criteria of Jesus Christ for his people, challenging anyone who has been captivated by anything short of, or partially embracing the Gospel. In passage after passage, we read Jesus’s expectations – that to be a disciple is to be invited to meet him, to evaluate him, to count the cost of coming after him, to surrender to him, to be coming (ἐρχομαι *erchomai*) in what Francis Schaeffer (1971, 173) calls “moment-by-moment” pursuit of Christ in death to self, and in being a bondservant, in a life that is no longer my own. Consequently, Hull concludes that these first five gospel models are not the gospel. Rather, they are hollowed-out gospel caricatures apart from the transformational work of Christ in the life of a disciple.

1.5. Gospel of the Kingdom

“Kingdom” is Hull’s final category. In Kingdom, Hull conveys his idea of a richer and more biblically contextual gospel model. Yet it too carries inherent weak-

4 See also Luke 12:15-20 and John 4:13-14.

nesses in the West: "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matt 6:31-33) [NASB].

Using the passage in Matthew 6, Hull's sixth GM is defined as a Kingdom model: "followers intent on learning to live as Jesus lived." As a single statement, there is much to appreciate in this GM. Hull describes the sixth model as a follower, shed of myopia and baggage of the prior five GMs, so it is far more exegetically sound than the prior GMs.

The word Kingdom in Western Christianity is widely ambiguous. For some Christians it is a final arrival point: I am saved, and eventually I show up at the Kingdom door. In that regard, get saved, you're now admitted, do a few good turns now and then, and get back to your regular life. For others, it is a daily serving commitment to Christ as King and Lord. The Gospel is more than this. The Gospel, for the believer, is a recognition, a surrender, and a change in identity. A single sentence encapsulating even a rudimentary grasp of the Gospel can get long! But let's try. When the Gospel is understood as Christ's coming to earth as fully God and fully man, the Only-God who died for us, and specifically me, who now invites me, calls me to follow him, surrendering to his Lordship, becoming both *doulos*⁵ and adopted one, serving moment-by-moment in all the days ahead in agape relationships with all people – then we start to have a meager grasp of the Gospel. And then we encounter the incredible opportunity to be a disciple, and life going forward as a disciple... because the Gospel is the engine of discipleship.

To sub-optimize the Gospel into any other model or mode fatally caricatures discipleship. And the trends in modern Western discipling we summarize at the title 1.6 become a spiritual pandemic.

1.5.1. Challenges of Talking About the Gospel of the Kingdom

Yet through the distorting pressures of American jargon and culture a Kingdom-centric GM also wobbles. In other words, the term "Kingdom," in the American Christian culture has become jargon. Jargon in America is an oft-used word that has lost fundamentally all original intent and meaning by users. For instance, Kingdom as a term can be misinterpreted as an earthly glory and power philosophy, such that the job of Christ's Kingdom people is to conquer, vanquish,

5 The Greek word *doulos* stands for a bondservant, for someone who gives himself up wholly to another's will. This is important to notice because as Murray J. Harris (1999, 18) says: "In twentieth-century Christianity we have replaced the expression 'total surrender' with the word 'commitment' and 'slave' with 'servant'. But there is an important difference. A servant gives service to someone, but a slave belongs to someone. We commit ourselves to do something, but when we surrender ourselves to someone, we give ourselves up."

and compile holdings. Similarly, many American Christians would claim they are part of God's Kingdom, and no further implications exist for a disciple as a saved Kingdom member.

Or, Kingdom thinking in America can be isolationist – just pull up the draw-bridge and live inside the walls of the Kingdom, safe from contamination. For example, the monastics felt that living as Jesus lived meant isolating oneself from the world's influence, inside his Kingdom walls. Just leave it all behind. Interestingly, many Protestant churches today produce, perhaps unwittingly, isolated individuals in a Kingdom mindset. Once they are part of the Kingdom, signified in membership with a church, their discipling tossed to them, and the kind of ongoing discipling Jesus demonstrated, is conspicuously absent. The true Kingdom followers Christ described were not to operate that way.

The fuller call of Christ to develop as disciples together is not merely intended to be accomplished in large groups or communities, but also as two or three, working closely together (Mark 6:7; Luke 9:1-5, 10:1; Deut 19:15). That biblical attribute of alongside one another, and together is largely absent today in the West, eclipsed by larger groups – church gatherings, by relatively large “small” groups, memberships, activities and so on. It is not that these are unimportant in the Gospel of Christ. But they are not the model Christ described for the life of one of his followers.

Many American churches today operate with a Kingdom of Monolithic sufficiency – in other words, do this thing and your Kingdom status is secure. One example of this single-point solution is theological. If you learn, endorse, and are articulate in this kind of theological thinking, then you're a Kingdom disciple, and all is well. It is not to say that theology training is wrong or bad – merely that theology alone is insufficient discipleship. Discipleship cannot be reduced to orthodoxy, it must include a lived-out orthopraxy.

As we shall see in Section Two, many churches consider discipleship to be defined by their agenda of knowledge, experience, causes, or power. In these contexts, a Kingdom GM becomes a puppet of whatever emphasis.

We do not wish to generate arguments around theology and doctrine here – but we do hope to make the point that the Hull statement “followers intent on learning to live as Jesus lived” fails in one simple sense: Kingdom, in Christian-speak, is often a term of jargon in America. It has less and less defined as groups claim it as their brand, regardless of biblical integrity. Instead, we must look to the whole of Scripture to define the whole of a disciple. No single slogan suffices. The Gospel Jesus gave us requires 66 books of Scripture to lay out his GM. The true *euaggelion*.

1.6. Consequences or Impact of Distorted Gospel Models on USA Churches

What are the trends among disciples in the West given the deployment of these so-called gospel models? If one or more of these GMs were sufficient, shouldn't we see the kind of disciple cultural impact and multiplication realized in the post-resurrection New Testament?

At this point, we want to list a few pertinent trends documented by major research houses on the state of the American church and ask ourselves, "Do these gospel models address these questions of impact and multiplication in these trends?"

From the Pew Research Center (2008):

- Eternal life is not exclusive to Christianity, according to six out of ten Christians.
- Absolute truth does not exist for 40 percent of Christians.
- Talking about faith is "not my job" for 35 percent of Christians.

Demographics are not favorable among American Christians:

- 59 percent of millennials drop out of the church, and having kids does not bring them back (Barna Group 2014).
- From 1990 to 2016, "Nones" (no religious affiliation) quadrupled from 4 percent to 17 percent (Pew Research Center 2014; Pew Research Center 2019; Smylie 2016).
- "Nones" are 17 percent of the boomer generation (born 1946-1964), but for millennials (born 1981-1994) the rate more than doubles to 36 percent (Lipka 2015).
- US church membership is down 17 percent from 1999 to 2016. Protestant headcount trends are down 8 percent from 2007 to 2019, and accelerating downward. And for the Roman Catholic Church, for every person who comes in, six leave (Jones 2019).
- Beginning with the Gen Xr's (born 1965-1976) most church groups have begun to shrink, a new trend compared to the two hundred preceding years (Kelley 1996, 1).

And a few citations from other respected research and survey houses:

- 92 percent of Christians do not believe sharing faith is important (Stark 2008).
- 65 percent of Christians say living out faith is better than talking about it (Barna Research 2018).
- The average tithe today is 2.5 percent and declining. It was 3.3 percent during the Great Depression (NP Source).

What if a system, using that term, was designed to produce maturing disciples in the context of knowledge, lifestyle, capacity, and willingness to share the greatest of all news ever – the resurrection – but did not? And what if this system, designed to multiply these disciples, was in fact in steep decline in a church or the Church? These two rhetorical questions produce an obvious answer. Something is amiss.

Models of exemplary Western discipling – a so-called “Biblical” gospel model exist in the West too. For example, the work of Pastor Francis Chan’s “We Are Church” house church movement⁶ is specifically aimed at deeply intimate and developmental gatherings of a very few to serve Christ and the community as the Bible instructs. The culture of discipling triplets at Latimer Church in Beaconsfield UK⁷ under the leadership of Discipleship Pastor Tash Edwards likewise exemplifies the call to develop as an individual disciple, thence as pairs and small teams together, into the local and greater world to serve and make disciples that will go and make more disciples.

Let’s ask this question: If Christ gave his Church a specific mission in Matthew 28, are we staying focused on our mission? And if Christ gave us his discipleship model, why the trends described here? We now turn to the church mission statement database used in *The Disciple Dilemma* (Allen 2022), to better understand the consequences of these GMs and how many American churches talk about their mission.

2. Absence of Discipleship from the Mission Statements

The Hartford database of US Megachurches (Hartford Institute for Religion Research) is an electronic catalog of (most) US churches that claim to have more than 2,000 (Hence, “Mega-church”) attending via physical or online presence on any given Sunday. These megachurches have outsized leverage in Western Christian culture. The reason is that Megas in America only account for ~1 percent of the ~300,000 Protestant churches physically in operation, yet they draw over 25 percent of physical attendance on any given Sunday. Including virtual attendance in the count ups the market share concentration ratio of the Megas even more.

The criteria used in the Hartford database:

- 2,000 or more persons in attendance weekly, counting all worship locations.
- A charismatic, authoritative senior minister
- A very active 7-day week congregational community

6 See: We Are Church, available at <https://www.wearechurch.com/>, accessed on May 10, 2023.

7 See: Welcome to Venture Church, available at <https://venturechurch.org.uk/>, accessed on May 10, 2023.

- A multitude of diverse social and outreach ministries
- An intentional small group system or other structures of intimacy and accountability
- The innovative and often contemporary worship format
- and a complex differentiated organizational structure

There are 1,664 Protestant Mega churches listed in the database. Several other prominent Megas are not included simply because they have chosen to stay off such lists. Hartford's work suggests they have approximately 60 percent of the Megas identified in their database, which suggests Megas in actual organizational count equal approximately 3,000 churches – or about 1 percent of total US Protestant churches.

For our research, we extracted the mission statements from 500 of the 1,664 Hartford churches listed. In some cases where no mission statement existed, we would substitute their Purpose, Vision, or Calling statements. We then produced a word cloud to extract certain keywords from those statements: Disciple, Disciples, Discipleship, Discipling, Follower, and Followers. Where one or more of those keywords were present, we listed the church as "Intending" to focus on a Gospel of discipleship. The remainder of the churches were categorized as "Unknown" regarding their perspectives on discipling.

To repeat, this word cloud review does not attempt to suggest the mere existence of words makes or breaks a culture of discipleship. But it does give us a sense of how much, or how little regard toward an intentional declaration exists in the core statements affirming a church's culture toward discipling. Yet intentions unstated rarely produce their intended results. A culture must be shaped by its mission lest it ceases its service to a mission. To borrow a phrase from one of the business community's organizational scholars "Culture eats strategy for breakfast."⁸

What follows is a summary of the research finding from our database survey of 500 megachurches in terms of keywords around discipleship in their mission statements. Here are the ten most popular "word cloud" phrases in the 500 church mission statements we reviewed:

1. Preaching Jesus Christ to all the world (22 percent)
2. Being followers of Jesus (17 percent)
3. Being a community of God's people (13 percent)
4. Helping people believe (13 percent)
5. Showing love (11 percent)
6. A fellowship of like-minded people (10 percent)
7. Going on mission trips for the gospel (10 percent)

8 Peter Drucker in his speech to Ford Motor Company.

8. Receiving the Holy Spirit (6 percent)
9. Teaching people about Christianity (4 percent)
10. Being free (4 percent)

The notion of being a follower (a disciple) was mentioned in 21 percent (~112) of mission statements surveyed. Half (55) regarded justice, prospering, ministries, outreach, theology, global missions, and reconciliation as their primary mission, expecting disciples to result from these activities. Only two churches out of five hundred declared discipleship as their mission.

It would be interesting to sample the remaining megachurch mission statements in the Hartford database and to expand the research into sub-mega church populations as well. Yet the relatively rich sample size we have reviewed here suggests that discipleship is rare as the primary mission for American churches if it has any standing in the words at all.

Conclusion

The point of this paper is that leadership is responsible for followership. And in the arena of discipleship, contemporary leadership is not necessarily “at fault,” but is now responsible to Christ and his people for beginning a journey from an enfeebled Western discipleship. That being said, in the opening paragraphs, troublesome symptoms are emerging and accelerating in American Protestant and Evangelical communities. These trends are organizational, caused by the underlying tensions between the Kingdom-focused Gospel of Christ, and the historical traditions and societal morphing underfoot in Western Christianity.⁹ Because the trends are organizational, they are, by definition, a leadership issue rather than attributing deficiencies to defective individual followers of Christ. Only leadership has the authority and influence to change an organization, excluding anarchy.

To grapple with these difficulties, leaders must evaluate the connection, or the lack of connection between widely held American interpretations of the words “Gospel” (εὐαγγέλιον *euangelion*) and “disciple” (μαθητής *mathētēs*). The traditional pressure on leaders in the Western Church is to compete, to build headcounts, capital facilities, and celebrity venues to attract ever more members. In a phrase, these attributes are entrepreneurial churches. Some of these motivations are noble: to try to help people come to know Christ. Some, however, unashamedly, exist to simply be powerful, popular, or prosperous.

9 Even though this article is focused on the churches the American Protestant and Evangelical communities, due to great influence of USA Christianity on Croatia, we presume that similar symptoms, problems and trends in terms of the Gospel message and its impact on discipleship could be identified in Croatian Protestant and Evangelical communities. However, to be able to claim something like that, the research on Croatian context should be conducted.

These entrepreneurial pressures, in turn, distract leadership and reinforce the tendencies of Hull's five defective GM descriptions – inducing more non-biblical thinking, and ever-more fragile disciples. Even where the sixth Gospel Model, called "Kingdom" is directly cited in church missions we find the data support a Western tendency to make experiences, prosperity, or knowledge the centerpiece of discipling. This is rather than a community of *doulos* serving their King by building relationships with people of all nationalities and ministering in his name.

Hull's sixth model of the six GMs – Kingdom – generally encompasses what Christ expected of his disciples: Come and see, evaluate, surrender, learn, team, go and progress yourself and others to encounter and follow the risen Christ, because he is King and you are his bondservant. This for the rest of your life, dying to self, a *doulos*, daily going, daily making a way in making disciples.

The situation we describe here is not a predicted crisis coming for the Church. But it is a chronic general dysfunction in its discipleship. Leadership, pursuing entrepreneurship rather than discipleship, perilously deconstructs discipleship. Absent a reformation in mission, culture, and leadership in the Western Church, the symptoms cited above point to increasingly non-biblical discipleship. This bodes ill for the Church, because provocatively, discipleship is the cause of churches, not the other way around.

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Dennis Allen i Raymond Monroe

„Različite vrste evanđelja proizvode različite vrste učenja“

Sažetak

Potaknut zabrinjavajućim simptomima koji se sve češće javljaju u protestantskim i evanđeoskim zajednicama Sjedinjenih Američkih Država, ovaj članak raspravlja o tome kako se evanđelje i učenje očituju u američkoj crkvi današnjice. Koristeći prijedloge Billa Hulls o šest varijacija „modela evanđelja“, prvi dio ovoga članka ukratko opisuje svaki model i pokazuje kako svaki model utječe na učenje. U drugome dijelu, koristeći kao temelj Hartfordovu podatkovnu bazu megacrkava Sjedinjenih Američkih Država, članak analizira kako podskup crkava u podatkovnoj bazi definira svoju misiju. Zaključak je da je učenje rijetko navedeno kao primarna misija američkih crkava, barem što se tiče riječi upotrijebljenih u misijskim izjavama, ako je uopće zastupljeno. Članak zaključuje da su zabrinjavajući simptomi koji se sve češće javljaju u protestantskim i evanđeoskim zajednicama Sjedinjenih Američkih Država organizacijske naravi, uzrokovani temeljnim tenzijama između Kristova evanđelja koje je fokusirano na kraljevstvo te povijesnih tradicija i društvenih promjena koje su na djelu u zapadnom kršćanstvu. Budući da su trendovi organizacijski, oni su po definiciji pitanje vodstva, a ne stvar pripisivanja nedostataka pojedinačnim nesavršenim Kristovim sljedbenicima. Samo vodstvo ima autoritet i utjecaj promijeniti organizaciju, izuzev u slučaju anarhije.

Theosis in Discipleship: Becoming Godlike Disciples

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Abstract

If we establish that the meaning of theosis is to become like God through the process of becoming like Christ, and if the goal of discipleship is to become like Christ, then it becomes evident that these two concepts are closely related. The article briefly explains the concepts of discipleship and theosis, and the most common evangelical discipleship setting (one-on-one or small group). Then it suggests four modules for teaching theosis in a discipleship setting: created to be Godlike, Godlikeness lost, restoring Godlikeness, and becoming fully Godlike. This model brings together theosis and discipleship which provides a new and helpful approach for raising Christlike/Godlike disciples.

Keywords: *theosis, discipleship, evangelicals, Christlikeness, Godlikeness*

Introduction

Discipleship and theosis are two of my theological interests. I am currently a member of a team that is studying discipleship in the context of Croatian evangelical churches, and I am currently writing a thesis on theosis in Pauline writings. While engaged in these two themes, I have noticed a strong connection between the two. On the one hand, according to Paul, God is transforming disciples according to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18), who is the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15). On the other hand, the goal of discipleship is to become like Christ (eg. Luke 6:40). Therefore, while being transformed into the image of

Christ, disciples become progressively like God. Because of this close connection, this article explores the possibility of using theosis for discipleship, to make God-like disciples. Evangelicals mostly practice discipleship in a one-on-one or a small group format, where more mature disciples teach less mature disciples. Teaching theosis in such meetings can serve as a blueprint for setting a framework in which to practice discipleship. The article lays out a suggestion on how to use theosis in a discipleship setting.

This article does not engage in the doctrine of theosis as formed by the Eastern Orthodox theologians, but rather focuses on the concept of theosis as found in the Bible, and in the early church fathers, and adapted to the understanding of evangelical Christians.¹ To understand the Orthodox doctrine of theosis one has to learn the concepts such as the essence of God (the attributes of God which cannot be shared with humans), the energies of God (the attributes that God shares through grace with the believers), the uncreated light of God (God's uncreated luminance that enhances theosis in those who encounter it), etc. This article will use a simple understanding of theosis as the restoration of the image and likeness of God in Christians, and a simple definition of theosis as believers becoming progressively Godlike, which helps make the connection to discipleship. Finally, since the author comes from an evangelical background, the view of theosis and discipleship will be presented from an evangelical perspective.²

1. Defining Discipleship

Much has been written, discussed, and practiced regarding such an important Christian life topic as discipleship, and most Christians have some idea of what it means. However, if asked to give a precise definition of the concept of discipleship in the New Testament, or the concept of discipleship in contemporary evangelical Christianity, there would be a variety of answers.³ In my mind, the concept of discipleship in the New Testament immediately evokes thoughts of Jesus and his disciples; how he called them, how he spent time with them, how he taught them, how he built them up, and what he asked of them (brought them from non-disciples to mature disciples). On the other hand, the concept of discipleship in contemporary evangelical Christianity brings to mind one-on-one dis-

1 For more about the doctrine of theosis, see: Goran Medved (2019.), Theosis (Deification) as a Biblical and Historical Doctrine, *Kairos: Evangelical Journal of Theology* 13 (1): 7–38.

2 For more about theosis from an evangelical perspective, see: Goran Medved (2019.), Theosis (Deification) as a New Testament and Evangelical Doctrine, *Kairos: Evangelical Journal of Theology* 13 (2): 159–182.

3 For a brief discussion about what is a disciple, see: Jeremy Bohall (2019.), Making Disciples in Croatia, *Kairos: Evangelical Journal of Theology* 13 (2): 187–191.

cipleship, where a more mature Christian is meeting with a less mature Christian to go through a discipleship program set out in a discipleship manual, or a small group of Christians regularly meeting together to share life experiences with the Lord and hold one another accountable to following Christ.⁴ A fellow theologian who studied discipleship brought to my attention that it could be a much broader concept in the sense that everything that a church does ought to be a function of discipleship (including Sunday service, midweek service, etc.).⁵ However, I will focus on the more narrow understanding of discipleship, which is one-on-one or small group meetings for discipling Christians.

Another way that evangelical Christians perceive discipleship is through the Great Commandment given by Christ himself: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19-20a). In my judgment, most evangelicals understand this in a way that a person becomes a disciple when she or he is baptized, which is then followed by a lifelong process of discipleship. Baptism is a one-time event and a visible sign that a person has repented, believed in Christ and decided to follow him, while discipleship is a lifelong commitment to learning and practicing the commands and teachings of Christ. In the process of discipleship, a person is progressively transformed to be more like Christ. Onyinah (2017, 1) states, “The mandate of the Great Commission, making people disciples, is the process of making someone become like Christ.” On that same note, Lancaster (2006, 50–51) observes the following: “In Judaism in the days of the apostles, the job of a disciple was well understood. A disciple’s job was to become like his or her teacher. So it is written for us in the Gospel of Luke, ‘Every [disciple], after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher’ (6:40). At its simplest, discipleship is the art of imitation. It is the art of walking after a teacher.” Hence, even though we might be tempted to think about discipleship in terms of “doing,” discipleship is primarily about “becoming.” In this paper, I will continue with the premise that discipleship is a process of learning and obeying the teachings and commands of Jesus by which Christians become more and more like Christ.

2. Defining Theosis

A fairly simple way to define theosis is to state that it is a process through which Christians become progressively Godlike. The first definition of theosis was given

4 One could argue that in the case of Jesus and his disciples, a similar format was established, where a perfectly mature disciple (Jesus Christ), successfully raised disciples from non-disciples to mature disciples (the Twelve minus Judas).

5 Jeremy Bohall, conversation on discipleship, Zagreb, Croatia, 3 January 2023.

in the sixth century by a theologian whom we call Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite: “Deification [θέωσις] is the attaining of likeness to God and union with him so far as is possible” (Russell 2004, 1). Human beings were the only creatures made in the image and likeness of God, but because of the rebellion against God, Godlikeness was seriously corrupted in three major ways – brokenness in the relationship of humans to God, in the relationship between humans, and the relationship between humans and creation. God had a plan of restoration and brought the nation of Israel into existence, and chose to bring the Messiah to this world through them. When God became human in the form of Jesus Christ (the Messiah), hope came to this world that humans could become Godlike again. Because of the death and resurrection of Christ, humans which believe in Christ and are baptized in Christ, are cleansed of all sin, inhabited by the Holy Spirit, and start the process of the restoration of likeness to God. Jesus teaches that we should be perfect as our heavenly father is perfect (Matt 5:48). Peter teaches that we are partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4). John teaches that through Christ we possess eternal divine life in this age. He states, “whoever believes in the Son has eternal life” (Jn 3:36), and “whoever has the Son has life” (1 John 5:12). Therefore, in John, the divine life is operating in the believers now, which implies the process of theosis.

Paul teaches that we are being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (Rom 8:29) and that we are being transformed into the image of Christ (2 Cor 3:18), who is the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15). Therefore, in Paul, being changed into the image of Christ, equals being changed into the image of God. Being Christlike is to be Godlike. This is theosis by the way of Christosis or Christification. Blackwell (2010, 253) asserts that “... christosis serves as a better description because believers are formed into Christ’s image in death and life through a participatory triune divine encounter.” Cho (2019, 55) states, “The Christification of a believer’s humanity refers not only to their moral likeness to Christ but also to the real transformation of one’s entire humanity as far as possible for a creature-man in degree, not in kind.” Therefore, if the goal of discipleship is to be like Christ in everything, that goal can be reached through theosis. Theosis could be used as a blueprint for discipleship, particularly for studying the Bible and applying theotic truths in our lives to become like Christ, who is God. In the following section, I will briefly lay out a discipleship model for Bible study using the concept of theosis.

2.1. Module One: Created to be Godlike

We start with theosis in Genesis by learning that we are made in the image and likeness of God. God wanted to share his life, character, and rule, so he created human beings. First, he created us to be like him ontologically, in certain aspects and to a certain degree, and that is why we possess consciousness, intelligence,

creativity, morality, etc. Second, he created us to be relational beings like him, the triune God, so that we would live in a relationship with him, with other humans, and with the creation. Third, he created us to be like him functionally, because he is the supreme ruler, so he made us be servant rulers who spread the blessings of the righteous rule to others. This module would therefore mostly deal with the doctrine of *Imago Dei*.

2.2. Module Two: Godlikeness Lost

We continue with the first part of Genesis (chapters 3-11) to show how humankind fell away from God and lost the original Godlikeness which was instilled in them. Starting from the sin in the Garden of Eden to becoming mortal, to becoming so evil that every thought in the human mind was evil (Gen 6:5). Even after the flood wiped out the evil human race, even after the righteous Noah and the beginning of new humanity, evil remained as the ruling power in human hearts. These biblical truths can be used for discussion about the state of human nature today, and the state of the world today, with so many problems stemming from corrupt human nature that they simply cannot be solved by any human means. Besides the first part of Genesis, many other biblical stories indicate the sin and evil which replaced Godlikeness in human nature. Pauline exposition in Romans 1:18-32 is another text which vividly describes the downward spiral of the human race which rejected God and ended up utterly evil. This module would therefore mostly deal with the doctrine of the Fall of humankind.

2.3. Module Three: Restoring Godlikeness

God had a plan for rescuing humanity. He started by creating a nation of Israel to bring the Messiah into this world through their lineage. In the story of Israel, we see that obedience to God always brought blessings to people, while disobedience brought curses. However, the essential problem of the sinfulness of human nature remained unsolved and continued to create many other problems, even among God's chosen people and their rulers.

When Messiah came into the world, he showed what perfect union with God and perfect likeness to God looked like. His death and resurrection enabled others, through baptism in his name, to put to death the old nature and receive a new heart, enter into union with God, and engage in the process of restoration of Godlikeness. He enabled people to restore their relationship with God and to be one with him again. He enabled people to restore relationships with one another, forgiving one another as God forgave them, doing good to one another, bringing blessings to one another, and building up a new community of God's people to show what Godlikeness looks like. And he enabled people to be servant rulers like

him, who rule righteously over every area of life, and over the Earth which was originally given to them to rule, to show what Godlikeness looks like.

According to Paul, God is bringing about restoration by transforming believers into Christlikeness (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18), which is the same as Godlikeness. Gorman (2009, Kindle location 1625) states that “...Paul’s soteriology is best described as theosis, or transformation into the image of the *kenotic, cruciform* God revealed in the faithful and loving cross of Christ...[emphases mine].” If we take Gorman’s definition of theosis in Paul, becoming like Christ, and therefore like God, means to think and behave kenotically like Christ (practice self-emptying) and to accept the way of the cross (practice self-sacrificing) for the sake of others. In his volume on evangelical theology, Bird (2013, 511) states, “Christian discipleship is cruciformity, being conformed to the pattern of the cross, dying to self in service to God. That is what it means to take up your cross and follow Jesus daily (Luke 9:23) and to be crucified to the world (Gal 6:14).” Kapic (2017, 237) argues that the cross is not only a symbol of what Christ has done but also “a key symbol of Christian discipleship in which believers are called to imitate Jesus’s self-denying love (e.g., Mk 8:34; Jn 15:12-13; Eph. 5:1-2; Phil. 2:1-18; 1 Pt. 2:21; 1 Jn 3:16).” In other words, discipleship would mean to continue emptying ourselves of sinful desires and ambitions so that we can be filled with the desires and plans of God to accomplish his purposes for our lives, for his church, and the world. Discipleship would also mean to continue being self-sacrificing to be able to help others and serve others as Jesus did. This module, therefore, would mostly deal with the doctrines of justification, and even more so, sanctification.

2.4. Module Four: Fully Godlike

To those who are in the process of the spiritual transformation of becoming like Christ, and therefore like God, a promise is given of final transformation: when Christ returns, their bodies will be changed according to his glorious body. They will receive immortality and imperishability, otherwise exclusive attributes of God. Paul writes, “For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality” (1 Cor 15:52b-53), and “He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself” (Phil 3:21). Disciples will become fully Godlike. Christ will finish what he started with them. They will be glorified. When this happens, the whole creation, which had also been corrupted because of the fall of humankind, will be restored (Rom 8:21).

Paul states that we are “heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ if we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him” (Rom 8:17). However, in

some contemporary evangelical circles, the New Testament texts on suffering and the sermons on the significance of suffering have been replaced with sermons on domineering life circumstances and being successful in worldly endeavors. Suffering is avoided as much as possible, while domination is pursued in all circumstances. This leads to false discipleship because it does not follow the proper teaching of the New Testament, but a desire to have things under control. Suffering with Christ is the way to glorification with Christ. Disciples follow the way of the Master. This module would therefore mostly deal with the doctrine of glorification.

Conclusion

Raising disciples of Christ is a crucial theme for evangelical Christianity. This article briefly describes how the concept of theosis could be used in discipleship, to make Godlike disciples. If we think of theosis as a process in which disciples become progressively Godlike, and of discipleship as a process in which disciples become progressively Christlike, the two are inextricably linked. We were created to be Godlike and saved to become Christlike. Module one teaches the truth that humans were created to be Godlike and therefore disciples engage in the doctrine of *Imago Dei*. In module two, which teaches how Godlikeness was lost, the disciples engage in the doctrine of the fall of humankind. Module three teaches about the restoration of Godlikeness in humans, enabled by Jesus Christ, and the disciples engage in the doctrines of justification and especially sanctification. Module four teaches about how humans become fully Godlike at eschaton and therefore the disciples engage in the doctrine of glorification. Using this model would bring together theosis and discipleship, and could provide a new and helpful approach for raising Christlike/Godlike disciples in evangelical circles.

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Goran Medved

Teoza u učenishvu: postajanje bogolichnim uchenicima

Sazetak

Ustanovimo li da je značenje teoze postati nalik Bogu procesom postajanja poput Krista te ako je cilj učenishva postati slichnima Kristu, bjelodano je da su ta dva koncepta blisko povezana. Članak ukratko pojašnjava koncepte učenishva i teoze, kao i najčešće evanđeosko okruženje odvijanja učenishva (sastanci udvoje ili u maloj grupi). Članak potom predlaže četiri modula za poučavanje teoze u okviru učenishva: stvoreni da budemo bogoliki, izgubljena bogolikost, obnovljena bogolikost i postajanje sasvim bogolichnima. Ovaj model združuje teozu i učenishvo čime pruža nov i koristan pristup podizanju kristolikh/bogolikh učenika.

APPENDIX

ЎЎБЕНДИХ

Damir Špoljarić

From the Biblical Theological Institute in Zagreb to the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Osijek: A Look Back (1972–2022)

In addition to preaching and performing miracles, Jesus Christ also taught his audiences. Why did he do this? Wasn't preaching enough? Teaching prepares the mind so that the heart becomes ready to accept God's messages under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, teaching, knowledge, and understanding are strategically crucial in God's economy of time because theology is a valuable discipline. In this short essay, I aim to outline the stages of development – the functional paradigm of the Evangelical Theological Seminary from its inception to the present day.

Before the decision to start formal biblical and theological education was made in 1969, the Presbytery of the Pentecostal Church of Christ (KPC) in the former Yugoslavia annually organized and held weekly seminars for pastors and preachers. Additionally, during this time, manuals of theology and Christian pedagogy were printed to assist in pastoral work. For me, the years spanning from 1985 and 2003 were particularly impactful, as they contributed greatly to my life, learning, and spiritual growth.

First Paradigm and Beginnings: BTI Zagreb (1972–1976)¹

Back in 1966, the Main Presbytery of the Pentecostal Church of Christ in SFR Yugoslavia, comprising Ludvig Üllen, Andrija Anđelić, Dragutin Volf, Jožef Hajdinjak and Andrija Sabo, decided to establish a theological school that would educate and prepare pastors and other spiritual workers in Zagreb and named it Biblical Theological Institute. Upon his return from postgraduate studies in the United States, Peter Kuzmič was appointed director of the Institute by the Main Presbytery. The BTI's ceremonial inauguration took place during a worship ser-

1 In his article "Deset godina BTI-a" M. Sc. Peter MacKenzie (alias Peter Časni) accurately described this period. *The Pentecostal News* published this article in its supplement Izvori in number 12 from 1982, to commemorate ten years of the Biblical Theological Institute.

vice on October 2, 1972, at the KPC in Zagreb, Ilica 200. Special guests were Dr. Gordon Fee and Dr. Charles Greenaway from the Assemblies of God (AoG).

In the beginning, a group of 25 students from various churches formed the first generation of classes. The classes were held in the basement premises of KPC in Zagreb. However, on April 8, 1973, the classes were relocated to the Institute's premises at 76 Kosirnikova Street in Zagreb. The first graduation ceremony took place on September 13, 1975, at KPC premises at Ilica 200, in Zagreb. The keynote speaker was Philip Hogan, the director of the AoG mission from the United States.

Due to various challenges such as a lack of resources, teaching staff, suitable spaces, and the fact that small church unions could not financially support resident students, a new operating paradigm had to be established.

Second Paradigm: Education by Extension Centers (1976–1984)

A unique theological study known as TEE (Theological Education by Extension) was launched in various educational centers across Belgrade, Zagreb, Osijek, Novi Sad, Subotica, Vinkovci, and other locations on November 1, 1976. This initiative aimed to provide theological education to people in their local communities, without disrupting their connection to the church and at a lower cost. It provided an excellent opportunity for church members to gain relevant theological knowledge. Numerous professors, such as, Aleksandar Birviš, Branko Lovrec, Stjepan Orčić, Petar Časni, John Stetz, Gerald Shenk, and many others visited students in their communities. Students were not limited to young believers but also included long-term preachers and pastors such as Jan Pap from Pivnice, Duško Ružić from Bačka Palanka, Josip Moguš from Đakovo and Mira Volf from Novi Sad. The initiative also fostered sincere and fruitful brotherly cooperation among churches of different denominations, e.g., between Stevo Dereta from the Baptist Union and Andrija Sabo from KPC in Osijek, as well as Veljko Bogdanović from the Church of God in Vinkovci and Viktor Sabo from Subotica.

On February 25, 1983, the Biblical Theological Institute relocated its headquarters from Zagreb to Osijek, at 32 Dimitrije Tucović Street, now known as Cvjetkova Street. Despite the move, the institute continued to provide education at the KPC premises in Osijek. In an article published in *Izvori*, Petar Časni (1982) explained the education's purpose: "We aim to train individuals who possess intellectual prowess, but who are also filled with the Spirit, capable of leading God's people in ever greater undertakings of faith!" I recall my initial interaction with Peter Kuzmič during those times when I contacted him in 1983 from Osijek "Pothodnik" regarding my enrollment in part-time theology studies.

Third Paradigm: Spread and Growth of the Evangelical Theological Seminary (1984–1991)

As students began to move to Osijek, closer to urban places containing the Churches of the Reformation Heritage, the process of internationalization and inter-denominationalization began as well. The school readily accepted students from abroad and other Christian denominations. Some students willingly gave up highly paid jobs and enrolled in regular studies, such as Toma Magda, Milan Špoljarić, Stanko Jambrek, and others. They were preparing themselves with the utmost gravity and dedication for spiritual service. These students also engaged in pastoral work in neighboring communities during the weekends, aside from their studies.

In the late 80s, following political changes in Eastern Europe, foreign students were allowed to attend the school. Students from former Soviet Union countries, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, and also Africa and Asia were welcomed. The school administration managed student visas, accommodations, and arranged for English and Croatian classes as necessary.

As a result of changes in the teaching programs, the Biblical Theological Institute underwent a name change to become the Evangelical Theological Seminary on October 21, 1989. The year after, in 1990, a brand-new college building was constructed, equipped with various classrooms and offices for professors, an amphitheater, a kitchen with a dining area, a boiler room, a workshop, and student accommodation.

Fourth Paradigm: War and Post-War Years (1991–1999)

Classes were temporarily moved to Slovenia from October 1, 1990, to September 1, 1992, due to the beginning of the Homeland War and the Faculty's proximity to the battlefield. The village of Ženavlje in Prekomurje became the new location, specifically the church premises of the Pentecostal and Evangelical (Lutheran) parish in Hodoš. Later, upon returning to Osijek, the faculty began offering post-graduate studies in Theology and launched the Multimedia Center *Izvori Vjere*, which involved creating audio and visual recordings and Christian radio programs.

Supplementary studies in Christian Pedagogy took place at the Institute for Christian Pedagogy and Culture in 1994. The Institute for Christian Psychotherapy was founded in 1996, with the psychological counseling center *Karis* and the Institute for Life, Peace, and Justice. The same year, academic cooperation with the Oxford Center for Mission Studies from Great Britain began.

As of January 1, 1998, the faculty gained full membership to CARNET and access to its resources. Later that year, on September 1, they completed the process of academic affiliation with the University of Leeds in Great Britain, which opened the possibility of postgraduate theological studies.

Over the years, the Faculty has actively engaged in humanitarian efforts across Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Kosovo. Additionally, they have made significant contributions to the field of theology by publishing textbooks and manuals, as well as books aimed at supporting the spiritual development of students and believers in Christian communities. The Faculty has always attempted to serve the evangelical churches and other Churches of the Reformation Heritage in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, using its resources.

Fifth Paradigm: Progress Despite Crises (2000–2022)

The Institute for Christian Music and the Institute for Protestant Studies began operating on September 10, 2000. Following an academic evaluation and recommendation by the National Council for Higher Education, the Ministry of Science and Technology of the Republic of Croatia granted permission to implement university-level undergraduate and graduate programs in theological studies. The contract officially establishing “Visoko evanđeosko teološko učilište” (VETU – Evangelical Theological Seminary) in Osijek as the successor of the Biblical Theological Institute from Zagreb, i.e., the Evangelical Theological Seminary from Osijek, was signed on September 23, 2003. The Ministry of Science and Technology issued a Decision in September of the same year, adding VETU to the Register of Higher Education Institutions under serial number 0271.

On May 31, 2004, the Faculty of Theology of the University of Ljubljana signed an agreement with VETU for collaboration in educational, scientific research, and other activities. VETU was subsequently registered as a scientific organization by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia on June 4, 2004, and installed in the Registry of Institutions at the Commercial Court in Osijek on January 7, 2005.

On June 10, 2006, VETU moved into a new building that included a library, reading room, classrooms, offices, cabinets, and practicums. Starting October 1, 2006, per the Bologna reform, VETU launched a three-year undergraduate program, a two-year graduate program, and a postgraduate (doctoral) study in Theology, following the Bologna reform.

During the year 2007, cooperation agreements were established with the Bible Institute situated in Zagreb and Elim Evangelical Theological Seminary (EETS) from Timisoara, Romania, in the area of theological education. Furthermore, this

period witnessed the founding of three new institutes – the Pastoral Institute, ISKUS (Institute for the Study of Christian Teaching and Worldview), and OSIMS (Osijek Institute for Missionary Studies). Lastly, the initiation of Erasmus projects stands out as a notable achievement during this time.

During this period of intensive globalization, democratization, rapid communication, urbanization, and migration, five critical areas of concern demand attention:

1. Ecclesial crises that often impact VETU as well
2. Adjustments to changing laws in the Republic of Croatia, the forming of new teaching and other staff, and operational funding challenges for higher education institutions, among others
3. Global changes and the search for effective approaches to theological education
4. The COVID-19 pandemic and its far-reaching consequences for communication, mobility, and classes
5. Demographic transitions, such as the departure of young people from Churches of the Reformation Heritage toward new labor markets.

Conclusion

Since 1972, BTI/ETS/VETU has served as a strategic center for the education and practical training of future pastors and other spiritual workers. Despite facing obstacles such as religious freedom restrictions and other challenges in the countries of this part of Europe, VETU has expanded educational horizons and developed formative preparations for spiritual service, thus performing an essential task in spreading the Good News.

This biblical and theological school creatively and dynamically succeeded in combining the spiritual growth of its students, and their biblical and theological education with practical service in their respective social and national environments. Peter Kuzmič's unwavering leadership and vision have been very important in the school's growth and development over the past 50 years, contributing to it in a lasting and unforgettable manner.

We express our gratitude to God for the dedication and contributions of the many teachers, associates, and volunteers from both local and international communities who have wholeheartedly worked toward the growth and development of this esteemed higher education institution over the years. The alumni of this institution are now serving in various churches, denominations, and Christian organizations across Europe and the world, as pastors, religious teachers, professors, and workers in Christian media, humanitarian, and other social fields.

Regardless of new challenges, transitions, and changes, we will remain steadfast in our prayers to the Lord and seek wisdom “that comes down from above” to recognize the spiritual movements that will foster new paradigms of theological education in this institution. We firmly believe that this is God’s work, and despite the necessary adjustments and changes, this institution has a bright future ahead. Hence, we say, *Soli Deo Gloria!*

BOOK REVIEWS

BOOK BELIEFS

Michael Niebauer

Virtuous Persuasion: A Theology of Christian Mission. Studies in Historical and Systematic Theology

Bellingham: Lexham Academic, 2022, 290 pp.

The author of the book *Virtuous Persuasion*, Dr. Michael Niebauer, is an experienced church planter currently serving as a pastor of an Anglican Incarnation Church in Pasadena. He has a Ph.D. from Duquesne University in systematic theology, with a particular emphasis on Christian ethics and missiology, and he is teaching at Trinity School for Ministry.

Niebauer's monograph points out that contemporary missiology wrestles with three problems: the questions of *distinction* (which acts belong to the mission, if the mission is to be differentiated from other Christian acts), *agency* (what is the relationship between the agency of missionary and the agency of the recipient toward God's mission) and *persuasion* (is the missionary allowed to persuade people to convert and where is the line between persuasion and coercion). He believes we can find answers to these questions if we root our missiology in moral theology, especially in the virtue theory (pp. 2–3). The book has two parts. The author addresses three of the most prominent mission models in the first part. He dedicates a chapter to each of them and valorizes them concerning questions of distinction, agency, and persuasion.

The first model, *missio Dei*, emerged with Karl Barth's emphasis on "the intrinsic missionary nature of the church" and was later predominantly developed by David Bosch. The mission for him was not so much an activity of the church as an attribute of God and a "movement of God toward the world" in which the church can participate. Still, at the same time, it is not limited to its activities. In a certain sense, *missio Dei* served as a corrective to an excessive emphasis of Western Christianity upon personal conversion and a paternalistic mixture of Western cultural values with the gospel (pp. 14–17). Nevertheless, although this model is not monolithic, in its purest form, it leads to the problem of distinction. The problem emerges because of a particular reading of Barth's theology (p. 18), which diminishes human agency with its implicit universalism, because of which the church does not accomplish but merely witnesses to Christ's presence and work.

This emphasis asks of the missionary merely to witness what Christ has already accomplished in the lives of recipients because he has already achieved the salvation of all humanity (p. 21). From a disciplinary perspective, this prevents us from differentiating between good and bad missionary acts and ethically valorizing missional practices (p. 27) and lacks rhetorical power because it offers little to

missional practice (p. 38). It also diminishes the recipient's agency because salvation is already accomplished, and God will, in the end, override a human will and save the person against her will, which turns God into a tyrant of sorts (p. 23).

The mission as a growth model commenced with Donald McGavran in the middle of the 20th century. It is trendy among evangelical churches in the West. McGavran has developed a church growth model focused on converting whole social groups. That meant it was necessary to maximize the potential of reaching unbelievers by concentrating on the development of monoethnic congregations to create a more receptive context for the gospel (pp. 42–43). His principles were later developed by Alan Hirsch, who introduced them into his church planting movement. He considered numeric growth to be the mission's goal, that it is possible to predict it, and that the social sciences are its most effective predictor (pp. 47–48). This understanding of mission is indeed the child of its time, as is evident from the fact that we need to utilize social sciences to unlock the mission code in the Bible. Also, supporters of this model consider these to be morally neutral, which Niebauer refutes using the work of the ethicist Alasdair MacIntyre and others. He also emphasizes that such social stratification in favor of church growth leads to the emergence of churches that “reinforce the *status quo*,” “downplay specific embedded cultural sins,” and, after all, lead to the conclusion that the most effective way to grow a church is not evangelism but reaching Christians that are dissatisfied with their present churches (pp. 50–55). They also hold to the ethically problematic belief that people should be manipulated into converting (pp. 60–64), which diminishes the recipient's agency. Yet, it also reduces the agency of the missionary, who is only expected to implement a particular paradigm. The author wonders about the need for dependence on the Holy Spirit, through whom the missionary can participate in God's mission and know that God will use his agency even when results are not visible (pp. 67–68).

The third model, mission as dialogue, emerged as a synergic emphasis of the Roman Catholic Church after the Vatican II and the protestant World Council of Churches. This model emphasizes the common humanity of all humans, which is certainly valid. Still, it also stresses that not only Christianity but all religions participate in realizing the Kingdom of God. Because of this, “competition through evangelization is rejected in favor of cooperation through dialogue” (pp. 71–78) and it is believed that the Christian sense of soteriological superiority is a direct derivative of Western colonialism. The model also assumes that persuasion is inherently manipulative and reinterprets conversion to “mean the growth of the individual through dialogue, and not as a change of religious affiliation.” Conversion also starts with a self-conversion of the missionary toward his beneficial transformation, leading him to realize that “Christianity may be in need of correction” as well (pp. 79–85). The author shows that this mission model ironically does not achieve its own goals and does not resist the critical evaluation of Scriptures

and moral theology. Namely, although its defenders restrain from making evaluative judgments of other religions, they merely redirect them in another direction since they only enter into dialogue with members of other faiths that hold to the same tolerant values of western liberal democracies. The model is also “a persuasive calling to limit persuasion” (pp. 85–89), radically differing from the Scriptures, where the apostles persuaded people to believe in the uniqueness of Christ and their need for conversion, the pluralism of the 1st-century culture notwithstanding (p. 92). The author then considers persuasion from a historical perspective, as with the Enlightenment, a new period of reflection on reasoning began so that moral issues are left to the will of the individual, and persuasion came to be seen as an imposition of one’s own will upon others. Despite that, people influence others in various unconscious ways, while those who do this consciously are opening themselves to the possibility of being persuaded. Niebauer adds that we can see this when the missionaries sometimes become critical of their own domicile culture (pp. 97–105).

The second part of the book develops Niebauer’s theology of mission, which he defines, “*Christian mission is best construed as specific activities (proclamation and gathering) that develop virtue in its practitioners, moving them toward their ultimate goal of partaking in the glory of God*” (pp. 109–110, italics in the original).

Chapter four, *Mission as Virtuous Practice*, established Niebauer’s model of mission first upon Scripture as God’s Word, utilizing patristic “mimetic exegesis” for the words, acts, and character of the apostles to serve as a model of exemplary conduct for missionaries today (pp. 112–114). The author then turns to Thomas Aquinas’s moral theology and Alasdair MacIntyre’s ethics. Aquinas’s distinction between the Creator and the creation resolves the problem of agency. Since God can “act in created things without displacing” them, there is no conflict between simultaneous God’s and human agency (p. 122). It also means that God did not create because of some need for creation but exclusively “because of the love of His own goodness.” Moreover, this goodness of God becomes the ultimate goal of human beings: the beatific vision of God whom people know and love (p. 123). Aquinas also believed that people need to progress toward this momentarily unattainable ultimate goal, which they strive to admire while making intentional, moral acts and creating habits that incline them toward it. These habits he calls virtues, and they enable us to make better decisions toward the ultimate goal (pp. 124–127). He differentiates between cardinal and theological virtues. Humans can develop the first without the infusion of God’s grace, but only Christians have theological virtues (faith, hope, and love), and God’s grace perfects their cardinal virtues. Aquinas states that “human beings are ordered by their very nature toward a supernatural end, the beatific vision, that can only be obtained through God’s grace.” The grace of God both originates and empowers human activities,

which affirms “the real exercise of agency by individuals while maintaining their reliance and dependence on God” (pp. 128–130).

The church’s mission results from Trinitarian missions, so the Son sends the church in the same way that the Father has sent him, and the church should therefore reflect the Trinitarian unity. God can send missionaries to work as God’s collaborators in mission, while their achievements are credited to God. Since God sends on the mission, he also determines its ultimate goal, so the missionaries are called to develop “virtues toward their final end.” Since the mission’s *telos* is God’s glory, this liberates the practitioner from the need to manipulate, and now they can focus on doing missional acts that promote virtue (pp. 132–136). The author uses in this context MacIntyre’s definition of virtuous practices, and this relates to those practices that are complex (“cannot be easily mastered”), coherent (“a discernable and unique activity with a beginning point and endpoint”), and possess “internally realized goods,” that is, goods that are not achievable by any other practice (pp. 138–139). The point of contact between these practices and virtues is that “the practitioner must develop and exercise the virtues... in order to master each practice.” Niebauer sets aside two practices, namely proclamation, and gathering, as both “contain unique internal goods that can only be obtained through their performance.” Moreover, these practices obtain internal goods even when external goods are missing, which is in line with the book of Acts, where apostles continued with these practices even in the contexts of persecution and negligible numerical success (pp. 141–144). At the end of the chapter, the author gives examples of how these practices develop particular virtues (pp. 147–154).

Chapters five and six elaborate on these two missional practices. Niebauer claims that proclamation has two goals, the ultimate *telos* of participation in God’s glory and the penultimate goal of conversion (pp. 159–160). Building on the thoughts of English Cardinal John Henry Newman, the author perceives that conversion is a profoundly personal matter. One does not convert by accepting irrefutable syllogisms but by assenting to “an accumulation of ‘antecedent probabilities’” and as a result of “the relationship established with God” (pp. 160–166). Therefore, the act of proclamation, which the author divides into several actions (prayer, preparation and communication, and the return to prayer), starts with prayer as its integral part. It is a dialogue with God in which we allow ourselves to be persuaded by God before we attempt to persuade others. Prayer opens us to his changing and molding us (pp. 168–169) and keeps us from hypocrisy (pp. 171–172). From dialogue with God, prayer then becomes a dialogue “about the self, others, and God.” In prayer, the missionary imagines his speeches and conversations with others, expecting the Holy Spirit to work and direct his cognitive faculties, sometimes even to “surprise with ideas and directives heretofore not considered.” The author refers to biblical examples of visions that missionaries received in the Book of Acts (for example, Ananias, Paul, and Peter). Through

prayer, the missionary also gains confidence and boldness that entices him to take action (pp. 173–175).

After prayer, the missionary prepares for interaction by seeking knowledge of his listeners and how to influence them, seeking the best ways to present Christian truth. Along with helping him in finding good arguments, rhetoric reveals persuasive but unethical arguments he must reject (pp. 176–179). After he has prepared, the missionary engages in persuasive communication, which has as its goal for the interlocutor to become the co-participant in salvation. He needs to adjust his message to the audience, which requires developing special skills and virtues. In all of that, the missionary needs to be aware that he is not speaking only to his listeners but also to God, to whom his speech must be acceptable since God authorizes proclamatory discourse. The results of this discourse can vary from conversion to rejection, and the missionary needs to affirm and validate the personal agency of the recipient. When conversion does occur, this is certainly not the end of mission activity since “the Christian act of assent is simultaneously an assent to a life lived in the body of Christ, the church” (pp. 180–190). After the communication has ended, the missionary goes back to prayer. Through it, he cultivates the virtue of humility and dependence on God but also cherishes “a moment of rest and delight” in God’s beauty. Moreover, this ultimate goal of proclamation prepares us to “experience God’s beauty,” creates “in us a greater capacity to experience the fullness of life in Christ,” and prompts us to continue sharing the gospel (pp. 190–193). Thus, proclamation contributes to the ultimate goal of partaking in God’s glory (p. 199).

The sociability of human beings and the biblical emphasis on the social aspect of faith make “the entrance into a community that embodies” salvation a natural goal. The gathering is essential to the task of the mission, and without it, the mission task is incomplete (pp. 200–203). The missionary needs to accomplish three things regarding gathering converts. First, he needs to establish a place to encounter the Living God since Christians are still embodied beings and need such sites. These emerge when Christians sanctify these ordinary places through ritual and liturgical acts related to baptism and the eucharist. Due care needs to be taken so that liturgy would neither be too lofty and rigid nor too trivialized – but everything needs to contribute “to the creation of symbolic distance and sacred space” (pp. 208–213). Second, he needs to establish the language, in other words, establish the converts into “a linguistic community” that is grounded upon the Holy Scriptures as “the language of the Christian faith and the *lingua franca* of the church” through public reading and explanation of Holy Scriptures, which is divine communication through which God acts. This translation of the Scriptures means he needs to “render it intelligible amidst the cultural peculiarities of their audience of new converts” so they can “inhabit the world of Scripture and successfully live within the linguistic community of the church” (pp. 214–222). Finally,

the missionary needs to establish authority in the gathering and should do it from the beginning, as he includes converts into the church's life, conveys faith to them, and delegates ministries to them in the community. The reason for this is that the authority that the missionary received from Christ is such that it continually descends on others. Establishing local church ministers is a natural consequence of this descent of authority, culminating in the formal ordination of presbyters who now receive oversight over the community.

Moreover, the praxis has shown that waiting too long to delegate this final authority hurts the mission. Such delegation of oversight ends the missionary's ministry at that location, although he should continue to nurture contact with that local church. We can witness this with the Apostle Paul, who continued to communicate with the churches he planted, encouraging, warning, and rebuking them without imposing his authority (pp. 223–236). Niebauer concludes the chapter by reminding us that gathering is a virtuous practice, which addresses the problems of distinction and agency but also reminds us that the goal of mission does not actualize in the growth of the church, but in communion with God and the increase in virtue through gathering (pp. 237–243).

The last, seventh chapter of the book counsels potential missionaries (professionals and amateurs) on how they can develop the necessary knowledge and skills and fit them into the context of living a good life. Above all, a potential missionary needs to find one who has already mastered missionary practices, and then he needs to follow this person, imitate and learn from her (pp. 244–248). Professionals and amateurs strengthen each other in their missionary work, and professionals should serve as role models and teachers to the latter (pp. 248–252). Niebauer's mission model also encourages participating in virtuous practices by which we glorify God and progress toward the ultimate goal of participation in his glory. This achieves his growth in sanctification while the missionary thinks about his mistakes and ways to improve his practice and thanks God for working through him despite his weakness (pp. 252–258). In the end, missionary life should be what philosophers call a good life, during which, through growth in virtues, a person progresses toward the ultimate goal of God and his glory. Since mission is only one of a person's practices, a particular tragedy is interwoven in a good life, a tragedy of our limitedness with space and time. Therefore we often live in conflict between two goods, which is why we need to bring the best possible decision in wisdom and prayer and then trust that we will continue to grow in virtue, although we will not achieve everything we want. It is possible because our ultimate goal is eschatological, so these tragedies will not define us because we know that they will all be swallowed up in glory to be revealed (pp. 258–264).

In his conclusion, the author gives an overview of three biblical passages that summarize the main postulates of his mission model. First, Psalm 96 shows that a virtuous practice of proclamation aims to glorify God in the very act of proclama-

tion. Second, Luke 10:17-20 shows that a missionary's joy should be in the mere fact that God has chosen to work through him. Third, Acts 7:51-60 point out the example of Stephen the Martyr, who exemplified the virtues of fortitude, hope, and love and has received the most glorious gift: the vision of Jesus at the right hand of the Father. The author invites the missionary to imitate Stephen, promising that those who aim to glorify God will themselves reflect such virtues and receive the same reward.

American theologian John Piper said that mission exists because worship doesn't. Niebauer adds to this sentiment that mission can and should be an act of worship as the missionary strives toward the ultimate goal, the beatific vision of God. This remarkable book shines the light of moral theology and ethics upon the mission in many ways. Chapters four and five are specially engraved into my conscience, as are many other book parts. I will gladly return to the book and re-read it. I recommend Niebauer's book to others who think about mission, evangelism, preaching, and witnessing. I do not doubt that it will open new horizons and stimulate fresh thinking in many, just as it has done to me.

Nevertheless, I am faced with the first critique when recommending this monograph. Reading this book itself requires the virtue of persistence because of its technical language, and to Christians not used to reading moral theology, the author should not resent if they give up. In a sense, this is not a criticism but an encouragement to the author to write a somewhat more approachable work for those mission amateurs who might be more interested in its practical application than its theoretical basis. Besides that, I think the conclusion should have been a part of the fourth chapter so that the Scriptures could serve as a foundation for presenting his mission model. The book also lacked a better fitting of Aquinas's moral theology into a protestant understanding of justification and sanctification.

Despite this mild criticism, I want to say again that Niebauer's monograph is a precious and helpful contribution to the mission and moral theology. Therefore, the book should be mandatory for every (potential) theologian, professional or amateur missionary, and pastor.

Miroslav Balint-Feudvarski

Brett McCracken

The Wisdom Pyramid: Feeding Your Soul in a Post-Truth World

Wheaton: Crossway, 2021, 188 pp.

Most of you will probably remember the Food Pyramid from your Primary or High School textbooks in subjects such as Biology. The author uses that common memory and skillfully attempts to draw our attention to the Christian pyramid of living and eating in the world of post-truth, where facts are no longer valid and feelings are crucial, and where our information “diet” is so poor that it endangers Christians’ lives and perception. The cover represents an important part of the book, as it places the Bible at the bottom of the pyramid. Above it, we find the Word, followed by the church, nature (creation), books (reading), and beauty (art), while at the tip of the pyramid, we find the internet and social media. The book deals with ways to live wisely in our modern times, offering a proper diet that can help our perception and wisdom to become clearer in a world overflowing with information and content that is hard to digest.

The book will be easier to understand if we look at its author. Namely, Brett McCracken is the Senior Editor and Director of Communications for The Gospel Coalition, as well as the author of *Uncomfortable*, *Hipster Christianity* and *Gray Matters*. He earned his M.A. at Wheaton College and the University of California in Los Angeles. He is also a film critic, editor, and writer whose articles appeared in publications such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *Huffington Post*, *CNN.com*, *Christianity Today*, and others. Brett McCracken’s writing is relevant, very much aware of today’s world, and offers an interesting perspective on culture and Christian life.

This book contributes to the picture of seeing Christian life as wise living. It is divided into two big sections. However, before we embark on discussing these sections, we should consider the introduction chapter, called *An Unwise Age*. There, the author expresses concern over our information intake from the world around us. He poses that, as Christians, we should live a healthier life, feeding ourselves with better information, precisely to be wise amidst a world that needs a cure. Our world is saturated with information on the Internet and social media. The truth has lost its validity – it has been relativized and defined more through emotions and personal feelings than through facts. Society has become lonely, sickly, and undiscerning. The author writes, “Our world has more and more information, but less and less wisdom. More data; less clarity. More stimulation; less synthesis. More distraction; less stillness. More pontificating; less pondering. More opinion; less research. More speaking; less listening. More to look at; less to see. More amusements; less joy. There is more, but we are less” (p. 11).

According to McCracken, we eat too much, we eat too fast and we only eat what suits us. Of course, the food here is a metaphor for our information intake.

We need a healthier diet to be the salt and the light – not by abandoning the world, but by learning how to live in it.

The first section of the book is called *Sources of Our Sickness*, and it contains three chapters. The first chapter, *Information Gluttony*, discusses the overwhelming intake of information that we are not able to process. We jump from one piece of information to the other, not paying real attention to any of it. We are buried under piles of social media, smart devices, and watches, which are as helpful as they are unhelpful, because they make us susceptible to anxiety and stress, and cause disorientation and fragmentation. In other words, we are all over the place. This causes us to become impotent in our real lives, while we take care of virtual reality. We are paralyzed in our commitments and decision-making because there is too much to choose from. We constantly choose the easy way out and that which is not challenging. The author goes on to conclude that “the desire to know everything only leads to grief” (p. 37).

In the second chapter, *Perpetual Novelty*, McCracken introduces us to the speedy intake of information. This chapter contains numerous facts that reveal how we function in the world of an overwhelming flow of information. The author explains why we constantly want something new, why we are forced to be up to date with everything, and how our brain cannot quickly process what we take in through reading and watching. We keep thinking that we need to be present and are quick to believe *fake news*, precisely because we do not take time to verify the information. In other words, we are wandering and lost, and just following what is offered to us, while that which is offered is fleeting, because we already must chase after what is in front of us, what is “newest”. Instead, the author writes in this chapter, we should slow down and realize that it is biblically wise to live slower.

The third chapter in this first section is called “*Look Within*” *Autonomy* because false information in effect turns us into sources of information. We only rely on ourselves, we are experts in everything (the author says that this became especially apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic), we have contradictory stances and have become disembodied beings that find their reality in virtual reality. Virtual reality has a great effect on us – it makes us ignore our bodies the way they are (here the author touches on sex change and gender identity problems) and we do not see people the way they are: “If the ‘personhood’ or the ‘real self’ is not fundamentally connected to the physical body, it can be easy to claim that mere bodies (e.g., fetuses or people on feeding tubes) are not ‘persons’ in any sense worth fighting for” (p. 57). He goes on to say, “Disconnection from the realities of the physical world makes it easier to ignore the physical body in the conception of self” (p. 59). The author concludes that we will end up having only our truth instead of researching it and accepting it with gratitude.

In the introductory chapter of the second section of the book, called *Sources of Truth for a Life of Wisdom*, the author introduces us to the concept of the pyramid

which we described at the beginning and will continue to consider in the rest of this review. McCracken here says that wisdom is not about acquiring plenty of knowledge, having all the data, or knowing all the answers, but about humbly acknowledging God and submitting to his authority. The author states that God's wisdom is wisdom that is centered on God. He is the standard in everything and the key to our progress and a life with proper discernment (p. 67). *The Wisdom Pyramid* is only a suggested way of life, and not some guru guide, and the very structure of this pyramid differs from the food pyramid in that the two foundations (the Word and the church) are irreplaceable, while the other parts of the pyramid are indicators of truth that serve to show us how to have a better and healthier knowledge. The author's goal is to show how to live a more truthful and wiser life and look for it even outside his book. The first chapter in the second section, but the fourth chapter of the book is called *The Bible*, which is the foundation for everything:

The Bible is our most important source of wisdom because it is literally the eternal God – the standard and source of all truth – revealing himself. What a miraculous thing! Yet sadly many of us are bored by it, struggling to read it habitually, if at all. Our Bibles collect dust in a dark corner of our rooms while our Facebook feeds are constantly refreshed. When most of us start our days (myself included!), we read emails and tweets before we read the words of God (p. 73).

The author takes some time to talk about the authority of Scripture, the work of the Holy Spirit together with God's Word, and gives us several principles for correctly handling Scripture: Scripture speaks to all of life, Scripture defines our paradigm, Scripture is always valuable as a whole, and not just some parts. Then, he states that Scripture should motivate us to worship and obey, but also says that we will not always understand everything in it. The Word is a gift we should hold in higher esteem. In the chapter called *The Church*, the author speaks about the importance of a community in the world of individualism. He believes that true wisdom is biblical wisdom, wherein we are not at the centre, but God is. Inside a community, we sharpen ourselves, embed ourselves and encounter things we might usually avoid. The church is the place where we reside, unlike virtual reality (where we are omnipresent) and the church is a place of continuity in a world that is constantly changing.

In the next chapter, *The Nature*, the author deals with what Calvin calls “the second book” of God, and that is creation, which can be harsh but also benevolent. It is created to point to God and his wisdom, and not to be wisdom in itself. Interestingly, the author writes: “Nature's glory is not an end unto itself. It's not a god to worship. It's a prism and amplifier of God's glory. It's a theater, a canvas, a cathedral, but God is always at center stage” (p. 103). We observe our position in nature, while our comparison to God's greatness humbles us before him. The author continues by emphasizing nature which he sees as a display of God's

beauty, even when it is destructive. We are part of nature, part of God's creation, but, unlike the rest of creation, we are the only ones with a conscience. He concludes that the creation is given to us by God, and, as such, must be respected and looked after.

The next subject the author takes on is *Books*, where he returns to the first foundation, Scripture, as the basis for everything else. Books help us to be "quick to listen, slow to speak" and thus enable us to be connected to others, while also building our knowledge. Unlike pictures and videos, books and words are thought-out and precise. Books offer us new perspectives. However, this is not only true of new books, but also old books which have stood the test of time and have been proven good and valid. The author says: "Reading books reminds us we are permeable creatures, by nature open to influence, and that this is how we grow" (p. 123). However, the question is, how are we to read? First, by reading old books (C. S. Lewis suggests reading one old book for every three new books). Then, by reading books that challenge our worldview (and force us to think critically), and finally, by reading what we enjoy. In all this, we should read everything through the lens of the Word.

Close to the top of the pyramid, we find the chapter called *The Beauty*, which can be felt, smelled, seen, heard, tasted, and touched. What is it about the things of this world that move our hearts? The author says that it is God. God is the standard of beauty (p. 132) and beauty bears witness to him. Beauty does not only encapsulate our mind but also our senses, our being, and our heart. Key elements of beauty are contrast and tension. The author goes on to say that beauty quiets us down, gives us rest, and finally leads and points us to worship. At the top of the pyramid, we find *The Internet and Social Media*. We cannot live outside this world, because its darkness needs to be enlightened. The Internet gives us access to knowledge, provides us with a platform to speak from, and opens access to proven and "digested" information. However, how should we behave *online*? McCracken counsels that we go with a purpose, search for quality, slow down, approach things that challenge our worldview, and share what is good. Internet should not be abandoned but redeemed (p. 154).

In the last chapter, the author will pose the following question, *What Wisdom Looks Like*? McCracken recommends that we should be discerning in our "eating habits," patient in a world of fast information, as well as humble in a world that is focused on itself. Wisdom is not focused on us, but subject to outside authority. Freedom of wisdom is not a freedom "from," but a freedom "to" (pp. 161–162). By looking to God, listening to him, and loving him, we conclude that a life of wisdom will, echoing the Reformers' call, give all glory to God. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

Critically thinking about the book, we might say that it comes at an opportune time. It is relevant and corresponds to the spirit of the times we live in. It is short, but it does not only talk about "how" to live a Christian life in today's world but

about “which glasses” we should use to see and live our Christian lives. The book answers all current problems by quoting secular authors and research, as well as Christian theologians, and leads the reader to an application through the use of Scripture. McCracken strikes a good balance between quoting secular sources and Christian writers (Evangelical and Roman Catholic), from recent and sometimes patristic history. His approach is not fundamentalist, or divisive, but a call for a different look at God’s Kingdom and his creation.

Although the book initially takes a negative stance toward the world we live in, McCracken successfully lays proper foundations for arguments about gluttony and satiety on display in today’s world. However, the question for him is not how to run away from this world, but how to stay calm and collected in it. That is our challenge today, i.e., how to stay calm and sober, or rather, how to become wise in a world where wisdom is misunderstood for a large quantity of information. McCracken will say: “Change your eating habits!” The author also changes our perspective on God’s possession which has been created and given to us, and of which we are included.

McCracken’s approach is holistic. The book has the potential to expand into a broader philosophical work about Christian life in the modern world. It must be observed that while reading the book, we are not under the impression that it was written to persuade us in a fundamentalist way. Rather, it calls us to think biblically about God’s world and see the potential he offers Christians for a life of wisdom. The book is neither “black and white” nor liberal, but liberating and inspiring because it recognizes God’s hand in everything.

Although the author has a great handle on different arguments and observations, the book could have been written using a different chapter method. Here I refer to the concept of the pyramid. The pyramid might not have been the wisest method, precisely because it is a borrowed and old concept. Of course, as we have mentioned, the purpose of McCracken’s pyramid is different (it does not contain something bad). Perhaps a different style might have provided a better approach to these themes because the pyramid is not “that popular” today. But, again, perhaps the author employed it as a grid for the chapters to systematically explain the purpose of every layer. McCracken has the potential for an even better Christian and philosophical writing style, and we can expect more of his solid works on the subject of Christian life in the postmodern world.

In conclusion, this book was written in a simple style, and it is by no means just another popular Christian book. It is a book for everyone – from academics to students, from pastors to laity, and finally – for every believer. It is a call to a better, more substantial life based on Scripture, inside the church, involved in the reaching of this world that belongs to God. Modern time is not the time when we think that wisdom has reached its pinnacle, but a time in need of true wisdom. Only by living wisely in a way that is relevant and well spent, the way this book

describes, and by giving our voices to the culture we live in through the gospel we have experienced and which we proclaim, we will contribute to God's world that requires renewal. That is why I recommend this book – because it directs us to the Book through which we discover how to think and act in God's way in a world that only has its way.

Matej Sakač

David F. Ford

The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary

Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021, 484 pp.

Commentaries are a rather interesting genre of writing. Their whole purpose is to follow the arguments and ideas of *another* book, usually a book from antiquity that is culturally and chronologically distant to modern readers, to explain it, and in some sense update it for contemporary readers. For Christian readers, and especially pastors, teachers, and scholars, biblical commentaries are a staple on the bookshelf, attesting to the primary importance of scripture. And yet, there are different kinds of commentaries or sub-genres of biblical commentary, and certainly different ways of using commentaries (for teaching and preaching, spiritual discipline, devotional reading), a point I will return to at the conclusion. While the genre distinctions are not always clear cut and there is plenty of overlap, there are nevertheless important distinctions. There are historical-critical and exegetical commentaries that are sometimes quite technical and aimed at the scholar; other commentaries that are still primarily exegetical but briefer and less technical than those of the above category so they can be more accessible and used by a wider audience; pastoral or “application” commentaries or something similar, which put added emphasis on the relevance and use of the biblical text for the contemporary world and in church communities, and devotional commentaries that are penned for the general laity. Commentaries may be further categorized along confessional lines or particular theological traditions.¹

A newer movement in commentary writing (though reflecting a much older movement) is the “theological commentary” on the biblical text, which is the sub-genre within which falls the commentary under the current review. For the uninitiated, this may seem redundant. Aren't all biblical commentaries by necessity

1 These distinctions can be seen on the helpful website bestcommentaries.com, which lists and ranks commentaries for each biblical book, and tags each commentary as “pastoral,” “technical,” or “devotional.” Other tags indicate the theological confession or approach of the writer. Most commentaries are given multiple tags demonstrating much overlap.

“theological?” Well, yes and no. In the current world of scholarship “theological commentary” is distinguished from especially critical-exegetical commentaries in two basic ways. First, critical and exegetical commentaries put their primary focus on understanding the text historically, paying special attention to the grammar and syntax in the primary language, the historical context, and the circumstances and background of the composition itself. Theological commentaries, on the other hand, put their primary focus on the theology that emerges from the final form of the text without being encumbered with the finer details of historical and textual analysis. Of course, that does not mean that many exegetical commentaries are not also “theological,” nor does it mean that theological commentaries ignore the historical context or historical-critical issues. It is rather a matter of emphasis.² The second area of distinction is that most commentaries in the “theological commentary” sub-genre are written by systematic, dogmatic, or constructive theologians rather than biblical scholars.

David Ford is just such a theologian, accomplished in his field, who has also spent twenty years immersed in the Gospel of John for the writing of this commentary (p. 433).³ The initial questions that a theologian may bring to their interpretation of the biblical text may be quite different from the initial questions of the biblical scholar. Indeed, Ford’s initial questions “why John?” and “why now?” demonstrate his concern for the contemporary relevance of the work. These questions are put forth in Ford’s introduction, which might be better called an “invitation,” where he seeks to draw the reader, “the single, beloved reader” into an encounter with the Gospel, where it is Jesus who asks ‘what are you [plural] looking for? (1:38)’ (p. 24). This “invitation” immediately prepares the reader for the type of commentary they are about to read. Ford has not written his commentary as a resource for information gathering or a place to get answers on a particular verse but rather attempts to draw the reader to the text, to hear John’s voice and ultimately encounter Jesus through John’s presentation. While the primary audience for Ford is the Christian reader, he sees it not merely as a book for Christians, but also for the world, because that is how he understands the multifaceted and profound purpose of John’s Gospel itself.

2 Theological commentaries have arisen out of the fairly recent renewal movement of “theological interpretation” or “theological hermeneutics,” a practice that attempts to recover an approach to interpretation that is not beholden to modern historical-critical methods, but rather seeks to recover a fresh theological approach to the text reflecting pre-critical practice where the main scripture interpreters were pastor-theologians. But contemporary theological interpretation does not disavow the findings of historical-critical scholarship, but judiciously makes use of it while seeking to interpret the text theologically, as the biblical text was originally meant to be read.

3 Ford surveys his works of theology in the epilogue of the commentary.

The format of the commentary is well-conceived and very manageable for the reader. Ford does not concern himself with the structure of the Gospel, but the commentary itself is structured along the established chapter divisions of the biblical text. The layout of each chapter is very consistent. The chapters begin with a few pages of introduction to summarize and set forth the main themes. Then, rather than using the typical verse-by-verse approach for comment, Ford lays out several verses within distinguishable paragraphs or sections of the text of the Gospel before commenting on each section. This is repeated for each chapter. Another formatting feature of the commentary is the inclusion of extended “side-bar” quotations outside of the flow of the main text. Here, Ford includes a wide variety of authors who have especially influenced his thinking on the subject matter, ranging from other commentators and theological writers to poets and other thinkers whom the Gospel of John has impacted. This feature allows the author to include material that otherwise would be impossible to fit into the main text and to widen the creative scope of interaction with the Gospel of John. However, the format allows readers to choose whether to read these extra quotations or skip them altogether without affecting their understanding of the author’s main discussion. An additional formatting feature is the quite frequent use of bold and italic type. Italicized text is used for the author’s points of emphasis. While this might help readers note important points, in my view italics are a bit overused, with italicized type sometimes incorporating several consecutive sentences and thus lessening the impact on the reader. Bold type is employed within the commentary sections to highlight the individual verses of the particular section being treated. On the positive side, this makes it easy to scan the chapter looking for comments on a particular verse, but on the other hand, the lack of verse numbers in the emboldened type makes it more challenging to locate the corresponding text in one’s own Bible.

However, avoiding the verse-by-verse structure allows Ford’s prose to flow more smoothly throughout without being disrupted too often by breaks in the text. This allows for a more pleasurable read and is perhaps one characteristic and advantage of writing a “theological” commentary. Whereas a critical commentary will take paragraphs or pages to deliberate on one exegetical issue, Ford generally avoids these prolonged discussions. The author is aware of exegetical and historical-critical issues,⁴ and as the commentary shows, has interacted with much of the secondary literature, but the sub-genre allows him for the most part to state his exegetical position and deliberate on the theological ramifications. On select issues Ford does note various interpretive options and, in these cases, he recognizes the validity of other opinions but does not delve into complex arguments to prove his position. Perhaps the best example of this is the question of whether

4 On historical criticism he states his aim to be “sure footed” (p. 13 fn. 6).

John knew and used the synoptic Gospels. While biblical scholarship is divided on this question, Ford states his view that John indeed knew and read the synoptic Gospels without providing a detailed argument for why he takes this position. However, this view certainly impacts how Ford views and explains many of the Johannine distinctives throughout the commentary. Alternatively, Ford is also happy in places to state alternative views on an issue without taking a hard and fast position himself, for example on John's placement of the temple cleansing, or the translation of John 20:24b, where Ford mentions a "minority translation" and leaves it for the reader to decide, simply stating that "there is wisdom in both lines of interpretation" (p. 408). It is refreshing that a commentator need not take a firm position on every issue, though Ford certainly does not overuse this tactic.

Indeed, in certain cases, Ford takes bold exegetical stands. Perhaps the one that will be most surprising or challenging to readers is his decision to follow Chrys Caragounis's translation of the key terms in John 15:1-8 (pp. 291-292). Caragounis argued in 2012 that the Greek term ἄμπελος (*ampelos*), traditionally translated as "vine," had come, by the late first century, to refer to the entire vineyard, while the term κλήμα (*klēma*), commonly translated "branch," came to mean the entire vine by the time of John's writing.⁵ Thus Ford concludes based on this recent research, that the "better translation" of John 15:5 is "I am the vineyard and you are the vines." Ford goes on to argue how this translation is a better fit contextually for the whole passage and how the OT imagery uses both "vine" and "vineyard" for Israel. Ford later considers that perhaps the author of the Gospel himself was aware of the linguistic development and left his language "deliberately ambiguous, able to generate fresh interpretations according to different intertexts and contexts" (p. 292). Ford is frequently sanguine about the possibility of such deliberate ambiguity and Johannine "double meanings."

Accordingly, Ford's hermeneutical approach is to read John's text in what he calls the "deep plain sense," which "invites the reader to search for "deeper meanings in plain words." Clearly, the nature of John's Gospel seems quite open to such "deeper meanings," including what Ford calls in John 1:1 John's "improvisation" of the "intertext of Genesis 1:1. Ford also suggests that "*John's way of reading is a model for ours*" (p. 27; italics original) so that the reader has the freedom to also "improvise" on the Johannine text (pp. 27-28). While I recognize the value of Ford's suggestion that John is teaching his readers how to read his text through the text itself, I do find it problematic to use the same term "improvisation" to describe what John does with OT texts and what the reader does with John's texts.

5 Caragounis's article cited by Ford is "Abide in Me": The New Mode of Relationship between Jesus and His Followers as a Basis for Christian Ethics (John 15), in *Rethinking the Ethics of John: Implicit Ethics in the Johannine Writings*, ed. Jan G. van der Watt and Ruben Zimmermann, Kontexte und Normen neutestamentlicher Ethik 3; WUNT 291 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 250-263.

Indeed, Ford agrees with a growing movement in biblical scholarship that recognizes that John thought of himself as writing scripture (p. 2)⁶ and that John's writing is a testimony to God's "unique act of self-revelation in history" (p. 29). I found his discussion on testimony in the context of the incarnation to be profitable: "*History cannot be rerun, it is one-off, and so its primary form of truth is testimony*" (p. 36; italics original). So, if John at least thinks he is writing inspired scripture based on testimony in continuity with the OT scriptures but improvised based on the leading of the Spirit in light of the unique revelation of Jesus, there needs to be a stronger distinction between what John is doing with the OT and what subsequent readers might do with John's Gospel.

Throughout, Ford is adept at pointing readers to valuable "intertexts" either from the Old Testament or from the Synoptic Gospels to aid their reading specific sections of John without entangling his prose with a profusion of biblical references and possible background texts. In addition, he will on occasion helpfully recommend a re-reading of a previous passage from John to understand a later passage. This is for Ford especially crucial concerning John's prologue, which he points back to often as a guide for understanding later Johannine passages.

Despite writing a work with a largely positive and inspiring outlook, Ford does not avoid taking on difficult issues. He sensitively but rightly rejects charges against John's Gospel as being anti-Semitic, reminding readers of the Gospel's frame of reference, namely that the language of hostility and conflict is the "language of family quarreling between Jews and later between Jews and Jewish Christians" (p. 185). Any later anti-Semitic uses of the Gospel are to be fully rejected and have no place within Christian theology. Needing some further clarification in my view is the discussion regarding "supersessionism" or "replacement theology" (pp. 78–81). The concern to distance John and his theology from interpretations that helped lead to "contempt for and persecution of Jews" is surely valid. However, there could have been more precision in defining such theologies and how they are different from a Christian biblical theology of fulfilment that is drawn exegetically from the text, where Jesus is presented as the true fulfilment of the trajectory of promise initiated and rooted in Israel and the OT scriptures. Ford states that "there can be no avoiding Christian distinctiveness of this grace" regarding the person of Jesus in John 1:17, but that "neither should there be any denial by Christians of the other grace, 'given through Moses,' which is a gift of God, cosmic in scope, and of continuing importance to both Jews and Christians" (p. 81). Yet more could be said as to how these two "graces" are related in John's Gospel, which

6 On John's presentation of his Gospel as scripture, see my earlier article in *Kairos*: Gregory S. Thellman, Four Stages of Revelation: The Uniting of Scripture, Jesus' Word and Spirit- Illumined Remembrance in the Fourth Gospel, *Kairos: Evangelical Journal of Theology* 11:2 (2017): 197–215.

makes explicit and exclusive claims about the need for belief in Jesus for the reception of life as Ford's discussion of John 14:6 acknowledges.

Another theological subject in John that is challenging and not unrelated to the above is that of judgment for those who reject Jesus as Messiah. While in some places Ford might be thought to tactfully sidestep the issue, in general, he recognizes the reality of rejection and ultimately judgment, grounded on the insight that authentic belief is necessary "if a relationship of love is to be mutual" (p. 99). As such, Ford stresses more the open invitation and the responsibility of the reader for personal decisions. Various readers may contest and counter certain theological assertions by Ford in this area, but these objections would lie squarely in the area of speculative theology, rather than exegetically from the text of John. I agree with Ford that the rhetorical purpose of judgment language is spurred not by the theological reflection of the mysteries of the mind of God and his determined judgment, but rather by a full-fledged desire that readers repent from their rejection of Jesus and turn toward him in repentance and faith to receive life. After all, that is John's stated purpose.

The greatest strength of this commentary is Ford's ability to nimbly and semi-poetically lead readers to that close encounter with John and to unveil for them the great themes and narrative arcs of the Gospel. Ford's writing is creative and picturesque, often describing, for example, meaning in the text as coming in successive "waves." It is also instructive and insightful, as he intriguingly describes John's Gospel as "an examination and education of human desire" (p. 10). For Ford, the overarching questions for John are the question "who is Jesus?" and "what is essential for those who follow him?" (p. 434). The single word that more than any other defines John's Gospel for Ford is that of "abundance," and that word is most powerfully applied to the Johannine emphases on "life" and "love," particularly in Jesus' relationship to his Father and in his relationship to his disciples, who are offered to share in the life and love of the triune God. That is why, in a sense, Ford goes beyond the "commentary" genre in his inclusion of musical lyrics and poetry that are connected with John's Gospel. There is a beauty in the Gospel as it is read and re-read that stimulates such responses, and theology is truly practiced as these re-readings are pondered and actively lived out over and over again in communities of faith.

How should a student of scripture make use of Ford's commentary on John? As a biblical scholar, I am supportive and enthusiastic about the growing sub-genre of "theological commentary" and Ford's is an excellent exemplar of the genre. As such, I recommend using Ford's commentary alongside and in discussion with other more exegetically oriented commentaries to preach and teach through the Gospel. It should also prove a valuable guide for theological and missiological exploration of John's Gospel, in particular in John's role in the formation of important Christian doctrine and its universal scope that points toward world mission.

Finally, Ford will make a skilled and encouraging theological companion for any believer in an intensive reading or daily devotional reading through the Gospel of John, written so that its readers may believe, or continue to believe “that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing...have life in his name” (John 20:31 ESV).

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