Touchstone

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Evangelical Freedom

Reviews

Please note the Call for Proposals and Articles found on the inner pages of the coloured Insert.

EDITORIAL

The focus of this issue of *Touchstone* is evangelical freedom. This has been a theme in Christian theology from the New Testament to the present. Many have written on how Christ frees one from fear, guilt, sin, and imperial ideologies, while granting freedom to love and serve God and others, and to inculturate the gospel. The freedom that Christ brings is now a theme in Christian theologies around the globe. Its concrete meaning has to be articulated anew in every context and age.

Evangelical freedom has been an important characteristic of the life of the United Church. Its formation was an exercise in evangelical freedom, and it has demonstrated this freedom, sometimes in striking ways, at key points in its history. But the term "evangelical freedom" is not heard much in the United Church at present. This is unfortunate, because the United Church's history cannot be understood theologically without it. Retrieving this multifaceted concept could help the United Church have a theologically richer understanding of its history and some of the issues in which it is involved, such as its commitment to being an intercultural church.

To this end, this issue begins with an article by Bill Richards focusing on the social background against which Paul developed his notion of freedom and its presence throughout his letters. Cynthia Rigby provides an article studying how Reformers Ulrich Zwingli, Martin Luther, and John Calvin understood Christian freedom. Neil Young gives us a reflection from the experience of parish ministry. Nicholas Olkavich and I provide more theoretical views from a Roman Catholic and a United Church perspective. Betsy Anderson's profile of Elinor Harwood Leard can be read as a case study of one woman's struggle to exercise her evangelical freedom in a church where some were reluctant to recognize it. Tony Thompson's "From the Heart" discusses this topic from the perspective of a minister entering into retirement.

As guest editor, I would like to dedicate this issue to Douglas John Hall and Rhoda Palfrey Hall. Evangelical freedom, the freedom given to us in Jesus Christ, has been a major theme of Douglas John Hall's theology and a presupposition of his contextual approach. As he notes in the "Acknowledgements" to one of his many books, his work, "is in reality the work of two authors,"[1] Rhoda being the other. The theology they produced together exemplifies the freedom that this issue discusses.

Don Schweitzer (Guest Editor)

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[1] Douglas John Hall, *Thinking the Faith: Christian Theology in a North American Context* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1989), 15.

BOUGHT WITH A PRICE: SLAVERY & FREEDOM IN THE PAULINE CIRCLE

By Bill Richards

A Bill of Sale

Among the thousands of ancient documents discovered in Egypt early in the 20th century archaeologists found the following "Bill of Sale."[1]

> In the 27th year of the reign of Ptolemy . . . in the month Xandicus, at "the fortress" in Ammon . . . Nicanor son of Xenocles, Cnidian . . . has sold to Zenon son of Agreophon, Caunian . . . a Babylonian girl named Sphragis ["Jewel"] about 7 years of age for 50 drachmae.
> Guarantor: [. . . os] son of Ananias, Persian . . . Tobian [cavalry] veteran.
> [Negotiator]: Polemon son of Straton, Macedonian . . . Tobian cavalry veteran.
> Witnesses: Timopolis, son of Botes, Milesian; Heraclitus, son of Philippus, Athenian; Zenon, son of Timarchus, Colophonian; Demostratus, son of Dionysius, Aspendian. (All four witnesses being civil servants in the Chancellor Apollonius's office.)

From the Egyptian Greek king named at the beginning, Ptolemy (II), the document comes from mid-2nd century BCE.[2] The sale, however, took place in Palestine, along the frontier with the rival Syrian Greeks. Most of the other 11 people named in the document are unknown, including little 7-year-old "Jewel,"[3] the commodity being bought and sold here—except, by chance, for Zenon, the purchaser, and Apollonius, senior cabinet minister,[4] whose estate agent Zenon was. We

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[1] *Select Papyri* 31; similar documents can be found in Jo-Ann Shelton, *As the Romans Did: A Sourcebook in Roman Social History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 168.

[2] More specifically, the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, 259 BCE, February (month of Xandicus); "the fortress" (*birta*, loanword from Aramaic) in Ammon (modern Amman, Jordan).

[3] *Spragis*: Greek for "Signet", "Token" —or, to use an old-fashioned English personal name, "Jewel."

[4] "Chancellor," to use the British term; for Canadians: "Minister of Finance."

know more of them because several hundred other ancient business records of theirs also survived for discovery.[5]

But what of "Jewel" herself, the young slave on auction? What can we tease out of this brief text? Like the others, she is identified by her country of origin—"Babylonian;" her Greek name here therefore just a nickname. Tellingly, the two figures authenticating the sale at "the fortress" are "veterans,"[6] their assigned nationalities ("Persian," "Macedonian") indicative of the multi-ethnic nature of the mercenary armies Alexander assembled for his drive east to India some 70 years earlier. His generals (among them Ptolemy I) settled their veterans in farmlands across their separate empires. All of which suggests that "Jewel," like so many other slaves of the time, was simply part of the "loot" carried back from a raid into "hostile" territory.

And little Jewel's marketable skills? Door-keeper? Flute player? Or maybe, like other such pre-pubescent children, simply a "pet" for a wealthy household.[7] And her purchase price? Less than 17 bushels of wheat.[8]

Slave-Labour in the Roman World

The economies of the various Greek empires, and the successor Roman empire, were heavily reliant on slave-labour.[9] About a third of the human population around the 1st century CE Mediterranean were slaves, captives

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[5] For a sample of "The Zenon Archive" see John L White's *Light from Ancient Letters* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1986), 27-52.

[6] Both the Persian "guarantor" (*bebaiotes*) and the Macedonian "negotiator" (*propoletes*—supplied by analogy with Sel Pap 27) are identified as *klerouchos*—soldiers receiving on retirement an "allotment" (*kleros*) in conquered territories as reward for military service.

[7] Door-keeper (*Gospel of Mark* 14.69); flute-player (*Acts of Thomas* 5-8). For inscriptions mourning the deaths of such young "pet" slaves, male and female in Jane F. Gardner and Thomas Wiedemann, *The Roman Household: A Sourcebook* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 105-107.

[8] According to roughly contemporary documents, a bushel of wheat was selling for about 3 drachmae (*Sel Pap* 34, 285 BCE); a bushel of oil-seed (sesame) for about 6 (Sel Pap 203, 259 BCE).

[9] Though other human social systems have included slavery, Orlando Patterson argues that the degree of dependence on slave-labour makes the Greek and Roman empires the first "slave societies" in human history; A. D. Callahan et al, eds. *Slavery in Text and Interpretation Semeia* 83/84 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1998), 263-279.

of either war or debt,[10] their "worth" determined by their skill—purchase price typically a year's pay, had they been hired out for the same work. In Roman society's tightly-peaked social pyramid, most of this third of the population were owned by the wealthiest 1%.[11]

The labour that slaves provided varied—domestics, masons, carpenters, smiths, bakers, sailors, tailors, scribes, musicians, miners, child-minders, and many, many farm-workers. Life-expectancy depended on work-site—slaves working in mines would be dead within a year; farm-workers, like the livestock they tended, "laid off" to fend for themselves on reaching old age, at 40 or so.[12]

Some slaves might eventually gain their freedom, either if the owner felt a debt incurred had been sufficiently recovered, or if the slave (or friends of same) were able to raise the purchase price. Where the owner granted freedom ("manumission"), the "freed" person still was obliged to provide the former owner with "volunteer" labour. By contrast, the loyalties of a slave transferred to the new owner. Legally, a slave could not actually buy themselves, even if, somehow, they had managed to save the money. They could, however, arrange for a temple whose god, on deposit of the savings, would buy them. They then became the "slave of the god" of that temple, without obligation to the previous owner. To talk of becoming "a slave of a God," then, held real promise for those in human bondage, of a divine freedom.[13]

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[10] The estimate of 1/3 goes back to the 2nd century CE physician Galen, writing of his own city in Asia Minor.

[11] In a 1st century CE city the size of Corinth—100,000—this would suggest 33,000 slaves owned by the wealthiest 1,000—if wealthy households averaged 10 people, 330 slaves per household. In a famous 1st century CE legal case (reported by Tacitus) the lives of 400 slaves in a single household (the city official Pedanius Secundus) were at stake. Tacitus's report is reproduced in Shelton, *As the Romans Did,* 178.

[12] A Roman temple of Aesclepius on an island in the river Tiber was a hospice for abandoned slaves; Shelton, *As the Romans Did*, 188. According to Horsley, none of the slaves listed in Egyptian bills of sale are over 40 years old; A. D. Callahan et al, eds. *Slavery in Text and Interpretation Semeia* 83/84 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1998), 40.

[13] By the end of the 1st century CE, leaders in the early Jesus-movement were keenly aware of the hope which the slaves of their social world found as its members. In some letters we can hear the tension of trying to balance sympathy with limited resources—*Ignatius (Antioch) to Polycarp (Smyrna)* (4.3), ca 110 CE.

Flogging, sadism, brutality—all were harsh realities of little Jewel's life in 3rd century BCE Egypt, and of Paul and friends' in and around the 1st century CE Aegean.[14] Such cruelties should remind (post)modern readers that it is no "mere metaphor" when ancient writers invoke the language of "slavery" and "freedom"—for the words carry such burden of human toil and suffering, yearning and hopefulness, as to stagger imagination.

But what did Paul and his friends mean when they talked of slavery and freedom?

The Language of Slavery & Freedom in the Pauline Circle

The most frequent word relating to slavery (and freedom) in the Pauline corpus is the noun-adjective *doulos-doule-doulon* for the person (male, female, child) who is a "slave."[15] *Douleia* is the legal status— "slavery." Two frequent related verbs are: *douleuein,* to "slave (away)" at a task for someone; and the causative *douloun*, to "enslave." Less frequently, two other verbs appear: *kata-douloun*, an intensified causative—for "breaking" a slave (as one would break a horse); and *doul-agogein*—for "training" a slave.[16]

Conversely, the noun-adjective *eleutheros,-a,-on* describes the person (male, female, child) born "free"—as distinct from an *ap-eleutheros,-a,-on* , a former slave now "freed" (apart from the continuing social obligations). *Eleutheria* is the legal status—"freedom;" and the causative verb *eleutheroun* is to "set free."[17]

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[14] See also entries for "Spanish Silver Mines," "A Flour Mill", "Cruel Laws," in Shelton, *As the Romans Did,* 175-179.

[15] 32 times in the Pauline corpus: 21 times in the 7 texts generally considered from Paul's own circle; 11 in post-Pauline texts. *Sun-doulos* ("fellow slave") also appears, twice, in post-Pauline texts.

[16] In this paper I will not be examining two other roots related to slavery in the 1st century CE—*oikeios/oiketes* ("man-servant"/"house-maid," which only appears twice in Paul: *Gal* 6.10; *Rom* 14.4), and *pais/paidiskes* ("boy"/"girl"). There is an ambiguity about the latter, applicable to either slaves or children. My own sense is that in Paul, as in Philo and Josephus, the term usually refers to children. See Benjamin Wright's essay in Callahan et al, *Slavery in Text and Interpretation,* 83-111.

[17] For full statistics see Robert Morgenthaler, *Statistik des Neutestamentlichen Wortshatzes* (Frankfurt an Main: Gotthelf, 1958); for particular references see Aland-Werner *Computer Concordance to the Novum Testamentum Graece* (New York: De Gruyter, 1996). *Doul*-root words

Before launching into the Pauline correspondence, I should acknowledge three points of method that may run counter to recent treatments of Paul on slavery (and freedom). First, to read Paul himself we *must* set aside what *Acts* tells us about Paul,[18] particularly its portrait of the articulate figure with ready access to people of power, moving about their world on planned "missionary forays" from a home-base in Antioch. That may have been the privileged "citizen Paul" that the author of *Luke-Acts* needed;[19] it is *not* the Paul of his own letters, whose travels simply take him wherever he can find (hard) work and a (bare) living.[20]

Second, as much as "householder-hosts" have fascinated students of early Christianity late in the 20th century—and the "house-churches" these figures supposedly accommodated—there is "multiple attestation" of a very different constituency.[21] Slaves were not only very interested in whatever this new religion might become; they were also its leaders.[22]

Finally, though we have only rough estimates of the degree of literacy in the 1st century CE—perhaps 10%—the ability to read and write was a *marketable* skill. And so, scribes, like carpenters, bakers, weavers, child-minders, and sex-workers, were no "elite"—they too were bought and sold as slaves.[23] Very occasionally, however, in the artifacts they produced, we can hear slaves themselves speaking—"Agasius made

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appear more than twice as often in the Pauline Corpus (*Romans-Hebrews*) as "Free"-root words: 65/28.

[18] See John Knox *Chapters in a Life of Paul* (London: A&C Black, 1954).

[19] Early 2nd century CE.

[20] The Paul of the letters may make his own choices but, as Marx says, not always in circumstances of his own choosing.

[21] From texts both inside and outside early Christianity: *Shepherd of Hermas*, *Pliny to Trajan*, *Ignatius to Polycarp*.

[22] Whether or not they had a "home" to provide weekly meetings, there was always some field at dawn: see Justin's account of 2nd century CE Christian worship in his *Apology to Antonius Pius.*

[23] One of the more famous literate slaves of the 1st century CE was Epictetus (55-135 CE), of Phrygia, whose master allowed him to go to Rome to study philosophy. He apparently gained the status of *ap-eleutheros* ("freed") in his early teens. Among the philosophers Domitian banished from Rome in the 90s CE, he lived the rest of his life in Epirus, north-west Greece.

this"; "Tertius wrote this."[24] And so, though masters may have dictated texts surviving from antiquity, it was usually slaves who actually wrote these texts, letter by letter, on clay, wood, papyrus, or parchment.[25] This fact, therefore, should temper some of our (post)modern skepticism about discovering the personal experience of slaves in antiquity. If we have the ears for it, we yet may hear, between the lines, slaves themselves speaking out of their toil, their suffering, their yearning, and their hope.

The Development of the Language of Slavery & Freedom in the Pauline Circle

The earliest use of slave-language in the Pauline corpus comes in *1 Thessalonians*. In its opening thanksgiving (1.2-10), the senders express gratitude for how the "brothers and sisters" turned from idols to "slave away" for a God living and true. As in any well-crafted epistolary thanksgiving, this reference to "slaving away" anticipates advice shortly offered for a concern the Thessalonian friends themselves have named (in a previous letter)—how to keep going, when some of the original company have died before their looked-for Jesus's return; the divine rule he announced had seemed near.[26] Grief has overwhelmed them and they've let everything go—including showing up for work. Consequently, after the initial reference to the "faith in *action*" they've seen their friends exercise in the past, the writers recall how much *they* themselves had to toil away at their own trade when they were living in Thessaloniki.[27] Slave-talk here is thus an integral part of counsel to those who mourn: the God to whom they once so gratefully turned, has gathered an unbreakable circle,[28] and is still the one with first claim on their energies, whether in shared grief or mutual consolation.

Slave language comes up next in the "memoranda" of *1 Corinthians*. Responding to "Sex and Marriage" questions (chapters 5-7), Paul (and Sosthenes)[29] remind these "saints" that no (Christian) brother

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[24] "Agasius": inscription at the base of "The Borghese Warrior," copy of a statue from the Louvre, in the Museum of Antiquities, University of Saskatchewan; "Tertius," *Romans* 16.22.

[25] Tullius Tiro (~100-5 BCE) was the Roman senator Cicero's slave-scribe. Even after "manumission" at age 50, he continued the association with Cicero, publishing Cicero's papers on the latter's execution in 43 BCE.

[26] A topic finally addressed directly at *1 Thess* 4.13.

[27] *kopos kai mochthos,* "toil and drudgery."

[28] Developed further in *1 Thess* 4.9-18.

[29] Sosthenes may, in fact, be the scribe who wrote the memoranda Paul is dictating; from the closing sentences, it may have been Stephen and the

or sister should think themselves "enslaved" to an unbelieving partner (7.15)—specifically, if the partner wants a divorce, grant it—"God called you (both) to peace." The writers then draw an analogy between slave- and marital-status,[30] that reduces to "leave-well-enough-alone" (7.21-23): if a slave (married) when called into this new fellowship, don't make trouble; but, if freedom (divorce) becomes a possibility, take it—the one who was a slave (married) has, in fact, been "freed" (un-married?) by the Lord; conversely, the free person has become Christ's slave (partner). The analogy concludes with a reference to manumission: "Bought with a price; don't become slaves again"—it is God/the Lord/Christ who now owns slave and free, married and single.[31] The next memo, on "Diet and Dining" (chapters 8-11), also relies on the slave-free analogy. Paul advises a harder line here: do *not* accept dinner invitations where the menu is known to include temple-trade food—meat from animals, grain, fruit, drink, offered for sacrifice before re-appearing on the temple's associated banquet-hall buffet.[32] Paul knows there is a social cost to turning down such meet-and-greet dinner invitations. But it's an issue of self-discipline that goes beyond whatever status might be achieved on the banquet-table circuit. I might be "free" of all people (9.1), he says, but I have also "enslaved" myself to all people—specifically, to those fellow Christians who, should they see me dining out on such dubious fare, would be "lost" to faith (9.19). I "train" myself; I "break" my body (9.27). After a digression on Moses in the wilderness, Paul returns to the point: "free" though I might be to climb the Corinthian social ladder, it cannot be at the cost of a (poorer) Christian`s crisis of conscience (10.29).

Slavery and freedom come up in a third memo, "Spiritual Gifts" (12-15). The ability to speak "angelic language" seems to enjoy a certain privilege in Corinth over other skills "the Spirit" inspires when Christians

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slaves Fortunatus ("Lucky") and Achaicus ("the Greek") who originally brought the Corinthians' letter of concerns to Paul and Sosthenes, and returned with these memos to Corinth.

[30] Blithely, and perhaps unfortunately.

[31] The advice ends with a concession: if the husband has fallen asleep (died), the widow is "free," to marry if she wants to, as long as it's "in the Lord." Taking Paul at his word (which I am inclined to do), this does *not* mean the widow has to marry a fellow-Christian. As someone who is, first of all, "Christ's slave," she can exercise her re-married state, Paul implies, whether the new partner is Christian or not.

[32] For more details see Peter Gooch, *Dangerous Food: 1 Corinthians 8-10 in its Context* Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1993).

gather. Paul invokes the principle of *one* Spirit, breathing in and through the *one* body that the recipients, through baptism, have become. Washed in the same pool, drinking from a common cup, Jew/Greek, "slave/free" —you became *one* body at initiation. Why make distinctions now?

Reading *2 Corinthians*, it seems the arguments used in *1 Corinthians* created more problems than they solved. The tone of the first piece (1-7) has shifted: subdued, only tentatively hopeful of reconciliation after a distasteful demand the writers "document" themselves (3.1). Paul (and Timothy) point to the "text," they say, the former friends in Corinth should find "in their own hearts"—out of all the life lived together "what the Spirit has written there" should be the only document needed. After a digression (Moses in the wilderness again), a reminder: "the Lord is Spirit, and the Lord's Spirit is freedom" (3.17)—which, the writers explain, makes themselves, in proclaiming Jesus "Master", their (former) friends' "slaves" (4.5).

Early in this tentative piece, its writers refer to a much sterner letter Paul had to write—*2 Corinthians* 10-13. About a third way into *that* piece Paul chastises the "brothers and sisters" over the bullying leadership they seem willing to endure—"fools" who "enslave" you, take you for a ride, slap you in the face (11.20). That may be the leadership you want, Paul says; it's not what *we* offer—since we are, in fact, your "slaves".[33]

If in *2 Corinthians* Paul and Timothy addressed the question at issue cryptically, *Galatians* is more explicit, showing the most frequent use of the language of slavery and freedom. Like *2 Corinthians* 10-13, *Galatians* is a "Letter of Rebuke". Unlike other Pauline letters, however, *Galatians* is a *circular*,[34] designed to make the rounds of Jesus-follower assemblies across the Anatolian plateau.[35]

The letter opens with Paul clarifying his allegiances—no other human being can claim his energy or efforts; he is *Christ's* slave (1.10). Yes, years ago, certain phony brothers and sisters (*pseud-adelfoi*) from Jerusalem did sneak into their mixed-race circle, "to spy on the *freedom* we enjoyed," proposing to *"enslave* us" by requiring a Greek colleague Titus be circumcised (2.4). Not a chance!

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[33] i.e., the offer subsequently made in *2 Cor* 1-7, already discussed.

[34] Like the *Letter of James* and the opening letters of *2 Maccabees.*

[35] "a land of villages and of a peasantry often sought as recruits for Roman armies," Tim Cornell & John Matthews, *Atlas of the Roman World* (Sheffield: Equinox, 1987), 151.

After other biographical details, Paul repeats the principle already cited to the Corinthians: in baptism we became *one* in Christ, drinking from a common cup, clothed with the same garment (Christ himself). Jew/Greek, slave/free, male-and-female—these distinctions no longer make sense, for "you are all one in Christ Jesus" (3.28).

Because the issue for the *Galatians* seems to have been how Abraham marked his sons as heirs of God's blessing (*male* initiate circumcision), Paul walks through a sustained exploration of what this period of Hebrew history might mean for non-Hebrews like the Galatians. At the time of Abraham, he begins, we *all* were like underage heirs (whether we had *Torah* or not), with no more rights in the household than slaves—a kind of immaturity that left us "enslaved" to the "rudimentary elements of this world-order" (*stoicheia tou kosmou*). But with God sending a son, born of a (free) woman, born of *Torah*, he *bought* us our freedom. Now, come of age, we are "no longer slaves," but heirs together of Abraham's blessing. Knowing who God is, then—"or better, being known by God"—Paul asks rhetorically, why would we "slave away" for things not gods? Those poor, pathetic rudimentary elements (4.7-9)?

From the metaphor contrasting immaturity with coming-of-age, Paul picks up on a particularly unhappy piece of the Abraham story: the competing wives-and-sons, Hagar-and-Ishmael / Sarah-and-Isaac. Like Philo before him, Paul reads this history "psychologically," a struggle within the human *self*.[36] Paul, however, up-dates the exegesis for any Galatians taking their cues from the Jerusalem "pillars": any from *that* Jerusalem requiring circumcision are only offering you slave-status in the household of faith. But there is a *better* Jerusalem, where Judeans and Galatians together are "born free," of the same free woman (4.30-31). And so, "for freedom Christ has set you free; don't get caught again under slavery's yoke" (5.1).[37]

The address to "all God's beloved" in *Romans,* the longest piece in the Pauline corpus, is a letter-essay introducing Paul to readers

[36] i.e., there is a Hagar-Ishmael/Sarah-Isaac "complex" within each of us—child of the slave/child of the free.

[37] An important corollary to this slavery and freedom, however, follows: called to freedom, yes; but freedom can never be the grounds "for flesh to have its way." If you want a "mark" for yourselves, Paul says, let it be in how you "slave away" in love for one another (5.13).

he does not know personally.[38] Again Paul names himself "a slave of Christ Jesus" (1.1), a self-understanding he will later commend to his readers—they too should dedicate their energies to "slaving away" for the Master (12.11), a dedication receiving approval both divine and human (14.18), concluding with a warning about those who "slave away," not for Christ, but for their own bellies—"I am not one of those!" (16.18).

A more complex invocation of slavery and freedom occurs in the middle (6-9), again in argument by analogy like that in *Corinthians* and *Galatians*. Here, Paul shows himself acutely aware that slaves' bodies (*somata*) are, unfortunately, not their own; even their bodily members (*mele*) are at someone else's beck-and-call—arms, legs, hands, feet, voices—must be ready to lift, carry, shape, run, sing—for the one who owns them. The 1st century slave knows only too well what it is to be caught having to do what they would not want to do.

Our own bodies "slaves to sin" (6.6, 17-18, 20; 8.2), its members "slaves to uncleanness" (6.19)—*mentally* I might think myself free, Paul says, but the *bodily* reality is I am captive to another's whim (7.25). Throughout this argument, however, Paul keeps turning to the converse aspect of slave experience, the yearning for release (6.6), frequently using the language of temple-manumission. The good news, he says, is that in this new fellowship we all have become "slaves of God," and no human master can any longer claim our energies or our bodies. The fruit of our labour is now God's, whose aim is a "hallowing justice" (6.22)—justice, even, for the whole of creation; it too will be freed from "slavery to decay" for a "glorious freedom" (8.2).

Paul complicates this discussion by relating it to a *Galatians* concern: the extent to which Hebrew *Torah* practices are binding for non-Hebrews. In *Romans*, Paul approaches the topic more generally, replacing the metaphor of immaturity/coming-of-age, first with the death/survivor contrast touched on in *1 Corinthians*: the (old) *Torah* was our first husband (7.3)—a husband who made us only too aware that our bodies were not our own (7.25); that bond is now dead, and so we are free. Paul also uses the right-of-inheritance reversal from the Esau-Jacob cycle as another metaphor: the greater "will slave" for the lesser (9.12)—and so, Paul argues, lesser though we are, God has chosen just us once-fearful slaves to be the rightful heirs (9.15). For Paul there is a new *Torah*,

[38] By the extensive list of names in the closing chapter (16), however, he can count on a number of people already living in the imperial capital to vouch for him—Paul sends greetings to some 26 people.

claiming his recipients and himself, "a *Torah* of the Spirit alive in Christ Jesus setting you free from a *Torah* of sin and of death" (8.2).

The "cash-value" of what Paul outlines in *Romans* becomes clearer in two final pieces of Pauline correspondence, *Philippians* and *Philemon*.

Though the shortest letter from Paul's circle, *Philemon* has been intensely scrutinized precisely because it deals so explicitly with slavery and freedom. Formally, a "letter of recommendation", it asks for hospitality for a travelling acquaintance—except that Philemon already knows the Onesimus Paul is sending him—his "lost" slave, in fact (15). By the opening and closing, the writers imply that a number of people have an interest in the case (eight besides Paul, Philemon & Onesimus), as Paul asks the slave-owner Philemon[39] to receive his "lost" slave back, "not as a slave, but as more than a slave, a brother beloved especially to me, but even more to you" (16).

As in any *real* letter, there is so much we don't know:[40] we don't know how Onesimus was "lost" to Philemon; how he's managed to turn up on Paul's prison door-step, or how he has been looking after Paul there—"like a son with a father" (10). That there has been some sort of cost to what Philemon has "lost" we know only because Paul includes a signed (and witnessed) promise to pay any debt incurred (19).[41] Nor do we know exactly what Paul is asking from Philemon. The "kindness" (14) he asks the slave-owner to show his (former) slave? —Philemon knew; Paul knew; we don't. The important thing for Paul was that Philemon do for Onesimus what he needed to do "without compulsion" —which suggests, at the very least, that faith's "freedom" for Paul changes everything between master and slave.

As in *Romans*, Paul and Timothy in *Philippians* name themselves "slaves of Christ Jesus" (1.1). Later (2.22) Paul will return to Timothy's "slaving away" for the gospel, in commending him for the leadership he may soon have to exercise on his own.

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[39] By verse 4 the letter has shifted from "we-you(pl)" talk to "I-thou."

[40] Though that, of course, has not prevented annotators across the ages (up to, and including, the 21st century) from "supplying" the reader with the missing details.

[41] Though qualifying this IOU with a reminder of a debt Philemon already owes Paul. Again we don't know what *that* debt might be—the mention of "life" being at stake might suggest a timely and healing intervention during grave illness.

Philippians contains some of the last correspondence we have from Paul, beginning with a trial-report as Paul in prison awaits the verdict: acquittal, or execution? Now understanding his own (imminent) death as intimately connected with Christ's, Paul considers the kind of "slavemaster" Jesus was—divine, yet taking on slavery's "emptied form" (2.7). Here Paul presumes the Philippian friends to know the Jesus-story well enough to follow the trace—for us later readers, the qualities counselled earlier (2.1-3) may help fill in what this "form of a slave" language implies: encouragement, exhortation, love, partnership, passion, compassion, joy, consideration, shared purpose. Even more concretely, what this divine slavery-freedom meant for Paul can be found in the "thank-you note" at the end (4.10-23)—acknowledging the Philippians' timely gift; it has meant the difference between life and death, and he is so awkwardly grateful.

Conclusion

To be marked as a slave in imperial Rome was to enter a world of no-return. One's energies, efforts, and body were now a commodity traded from owner to owner. The next might be better, or worse, than the last—depending on the market. Even if "freed," a burden of obligation to the former owner continued. The better hope was, with a little help from friends, to pull the resources together to become "a slave of the god" of a sympathetic temple. Whatever the obligations of its cult, better a slave to the divine, than to any human being.

But what if that god had himself "taken the form of a slave?" A god who knew the slave experience first-hand? Had known the lash of human masters? Had even been crucified like so many of them? And had "risen" above it? Now there was a god worth "slaving to."

We do not know whether Paul himself was ever a slave bought and sold like the little "Jewel" of our first text. But here and there within his circle we do hear little Jewels adding their greetings to Paul's. And they speak paradoxically of the freedom they have found in "slaving away" for this new God, who has known in his own body the vulnerability of a slave's life. And in the fellowship gathered round his "rising," a new world is coming to birth.

EVANGELICAL FREEDOM AND THE REFORMERS
by Cynthia L Rigby

Did you ever go to a celebration of Reformation Day and wonder why they served sausages? "Because the Reformation started in Germany, and Germans love sausages" wouldn't be a wrong answer. But there is a better one: to eat sausages on Reformation Day (October 31) is to celebrate evangelical freedom.

In order to understand this, we need a little background. Three prominent Reformers of the 16th century, Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Calvin, were among those who reacted to some of the teachings and behaviors of the Roman Catholic Church of the day because they understood them to run contrary to the message of the Gospel. They argued against the idea that the church mediates salvation to people, arguing that we are saved "by Christ alone," *not* Christ plus the church. They disagreed with the church that we are saved by grace plus law, and faith plus works, arguing that those who have been made righteous in Christ obey the law and engage works of love freely, not out of a sense of obligation or requirement. Finally, they insisted that the traditions of the church are subject to Scripture, risking their lives to get the Bible translated and into the hands of every family so that all could be empowered to read it, interpret it, and make assessments about how God relates to us. "*Sola scriptura*!" ("Scripture alone!") they taught.

I. Zwingli, Sausages, and *Sola Scriptura!*

A pastor from Zurich, Switzerland named Ulrich Zwingli found himself testifying to the relevance of these Reformation values after he attended a Friday night sausage supper at the home of some friends. The date was March 23, 1522—the supper was held in the season of Lent, when eating meat of any kind was strictly prohibited. Although Pastor Zwingli did not actually eat the sausages, he defended those who did on the following Sunday when he preached a sermon titled, "On the Choice and Freedom of Foods" (23 March 1522). In the sermon, he supported those who defied the church's instructions for fasting during Lent. Zwingli argued, simply, that it was okay to eat the sausages because there was nothing in Scripture that instructed against doing so. Following Luther's lead, he framed his argument in terms of the freedom of the Christian: "If you will fast, do so; if you do not wish to eat meat, eat it not; but leave Christians a free choice in the matter." Zwingli mocked those who argued people were too weak to have such freedom, those who wanted to impose dietary restrictions in order to foster the masses' "fear of God." "Do you think that there is danger and injury in what God has left free?" he asked them. "If you are so concerned about others, as to what they should not

eat, why will you not note their poverty and aid it?"[1]

This story about "The Affair of the Sausages" might surprise us because, in our day and context, we don't very often associate studying the Bible with being radical or revolutionary. On the contrary, it may even be more likely that we assume people who walk around with Bibles in their hands or who talk about going to Bible studies are conservative adherents to the teachings of the institutional church. How often, in our cultural context, do we hear anyone make a connection between Bible study and freedom?

For Zwingli and the other Reformers, the connection was obvious. They realized and modeled that when Christian disciples read and interpret Scripture for themselves, they become active participants in the faith that holds them. With the help of the Spirit, students of God's Word are positioned to discern not only whether what the church is telling them to do is consistent with the Gospel, but whether and how they themselves are to change. To be free in Christ, the Reformers thought, is to be open to correction and transformation as one is being formed by God's living Word. Using a traditional phrase that captures the spirit of the Reformers' perspective on this, Christian freedom means entering energetically into the dynamic of "always being reformed according to the Word of God."

II. Luther, Liberty, and the Lordship of Christ

Scholars believe Zwingli's theology was heavily influenced by the German Reformer Martin Luther. Two years prior to the sausage supper, Luther had written an important treatise titled, "Concerning Christian Liberty" (1520). In it, he argued for two related but seemingly contradictory theses: First, that "a Christian is the most free lord of all, and subject to none," and second, that "a Christian is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to every one." Luther acknowledged that these statements seem to contradict each other, but held that living in the wake of evangelical freedom means living in the creative tension between the two.

What did Luther mean when he said that Christians are "subject to none?" Here, Luther's "none" refers to human authorities, worldly institutions, and the influences in our lives that seem to use us up and want to control us. Luther believed that we are free from the coercions and manipulations of all would-be earthly lords because we are subject to

[1] Samuel Macauley Jackson, *Huldreich Zwingli–The Reformer of German Switzerland* (Amazon Digital Services, 2013), Kindle location #8325.

only one Lord: the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ's lordship frees us from the lordship of any other, no matter how strong a claim they make on us. Centuries later, Karl Barth makes this point in the Barmen Declaration (1934). Countering the claims of Hitler's regime and the faulty logic of the German Christian church that supported Hitler, he and his Lutheran colleagues rejected the idea that there are "other lords" than Jesus Christ to which Christians are accountable.[2] Contemporary womanist theologian Jacqueline Grant makes this point another way when she points out that, when a black woman claims Jesus as "Lord" she is saying, simultaneously, that "the white slaveholder isn't."[3]

Luther had in mind that Christians are freed by their allegiance to Jesus Christ not only from earthly claims to lordship, but also from the "principalities and powers" with which we contend in our daily lives. Famously, Luther threw inkwells across the room at Satan as a way to chase him away, remembering that Satan had no real power over him. This idea is reflected in the great hymn written by Luther, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," which includes in the lyrics the assertion that Christians "do not tremble" when encountered by Satan, whom Luther calls, "the Prince darkness, grim." Instead, they remember that Jesus Christ "will win the battle."[4] Freedom for Luther is a given: we just have to keep remembering who the only true Lord is and living accordingly. People of faith since Luther have applied this point to influences in our lives that they have identified as "demonic." Whenever anything in our lives takes over our attention and energies, it is time to throw an inkwell and remember that Jesus Christ is Lord.

It is precisely because they have no earthly lords to whom they are beholden, Luther explains, that Christians can be the "servants of all" with no loss to their freedom. The Christian motivation for serving neighbors is not to earn merit or to fulfill obligation, but to express the love that flows from faith. Luther explains:

> Thus from faith flow forth love and joy in the Lord, and from love a cheerful, willing, free spirit, disposed to serve our neighbor voluntarily, without taking any

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[2] For a complete text of the Barmen Declaration, see: *http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/barmen.htm*

[3] Jacquelyn Grant, *White Woman's Christ and Black Woman's Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response*, vol. 64, *American Academy of Religion Academy Series* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1989).

[4] See*: https://library.timelesstruths.org/music/A_Mighty_Fortress_Is_Our_God/* (Accessed 11.24.18).

> account of gratitude or ingratitude, praise or blame, gain or loss . . . by faith Christians are carried upwards above themselves to God, and by love they sink back below themselves to their neighbors, still always—abiding in God and God's love . . .[5]

Luther insists that living enlivened by evangelical freedom looks like Christians acting on behalf of others so freely that their works of love are seen not as add-ons, but as extensions of their faith.

What is at stake in all this is the character of the relationships between the ones doing the serving and the ones being served. The service of one toward another is of course to be commended and appreciated even if the helper has acted only out of obligation or to fulfill a contractual commitment. In the sphere of our earthly existence, when we do the work we have agreed to do, that is a good thing. We get strong performance reviews, we don't get sued, we get paid for our work. When others fulfill their contractual commitments to us, we appreciate their conscientiousness, but we don't necessarily understand it to be an expression of their love or commitment to us, personally. "Thanks so much for doing that!" we might say in response, paying for the service or vowing to repay the favor in the future.

But something shifts when the helper helps not because they are obligated to do so or because they expect payment in return, but because they love the person they are helping. Service, in that instance, is an extension and expression of that love. In such a case, the helper is not doing something for the other out of a sense of contractual obligation, but because they are freely *with* and *for* the other whom they are serving. The relationship between the two, then, runs deeper than a contract. It is more covenantal than contractual in nature. The one serving and the one being served are bonded not primarily by the behaviors of acting, thanking, and reciprocating, but by the joining of their lives by love.

III. Calvin: Freedom *From* and Freedom *For*

Sixteen years after Luther's essay on Christian freedom was making the rounds, Swiss theologian John Calvin published the first edition of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536). Christian freedom was a prominent theme.[6] With Luther, Calvin argued that Christians are "free

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[5] Martin Luther, "On Christian Liberty." Accessed 11.23.18 @ *https://www.checkluther.com/wp-content/uploads/1520-Concerning-Christian-Liberty.pdf.* Language has been made inclusive.

[6] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1936), trans. Ford Lewis

from the Law," insisting that adherence to the law is no path to salvation. Righteousness comes only by way of Christ, not by way of adherence to rules, even if those rules are the beautiful commands of God.

One of the key implications of the truth that we are saved "by Christ alone," according to Calvin, is that those elected to be the sons and daughters of God can enjoy the assurance that nothing can take their salvation away, even their own disobedience or disbelief. This, Calvin thought, means that Christians are free to live authentically before the God who accepts them without condition, praying without restriction for anything they want or need. He called prayer, in fact, "the chief benefit of faith," a kind of perk that manifests our freedom in Christ.

Just as Luther argued that Christians should serve others even though they have no earthly lords, Calvin argued that Christians are called to keep God's law even though they are free from obligation to do so. Again, this might seem contradictory, but Calvin was thinking not only in terms of what salvation by Christ alone saves us *from*, but also what it saves us *for.* Saved from our sins, we are free to live in continuity with the righteousness that is ours in Christ. Saved *from* obsessing over our own obedience or disobedience, we are saved *for* living lives in accordance with God's commands.

In the context of Christian life, then, the point of adhering to God's laws, including the commandments, is not, according to Calvin, constantly to assess our worthiness, but to help us envision and live into who and what God created us to be. Calvin was fond of referring to the world as "the theater of God's glory," and God's commands, he thought, were a gift to us to help us better perceive what God's glorious Kingdom is all about. The Kingdom of God is a place where we don't kill each other, lie to each other, steal from each other, or cheat on each other. It is a place where parents are honored, where Sabbath is kept, where God is respected, and where idols have no place. It is a place where we and all those around us are free to be who they are before one another and before God.

Calvin also emphasized that Christians are free from things that don't matter so they might focus on things that do. The Latin word he used for things that don't matter was "*adiaphora,"* which literally means "things indifferent." Calvin would have been of like mind with Zwingli in arguing in defence of those who ate those sausages. With Zwingli, his point would not have been that everyone should eat sausages, but that people should respect each other's decisions about what to eat and what

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Battles (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) VI:1-13.

not to eat in fidelity to God. To eat sausages or not to eat sausages was a debate Calvin considered to be *adiaphora*. He wanted the people of God to know that they were free from things that didn't matter so that they would be free to engage the things that did.

Of course, the difficulty comes when Christians disagree about what matters and what doesn't. Whether to use wine or grape juice for the Lord's Supper; whether it is okay to clap after the children sing in a worship service; whether or not it is appropriate to wear flip-flops to church. Calvin would say, with Zwingli, that we should study Scripture to discern where we should spend our energies.

Finally, Calvin insists Christians are free "to use God's gifts for God's purposes." In the context of sixteenth century Europe, this was a radical and liberating idea. This is because religious people tended to equate piety with ascetic practices, including fasting, abstinence from sex, and other forms of self-denial and even self-mortification. Calvin, alongside Luther, emphasized that the Gospel frees us to enjoy all of God's gifts, including food and drink, family life, and the beauty of this world. According to Calvin, "there is not one blade of grass, there is no color in this world that is not intended to make us rejoice."[7] God's children are invited to enjoy all of God's blessings, living abundant lives filled with gratitude.

For Calvin, living in freedom finally means living with a perception of God's majesty all around us. He is fond of citing Psalm 145 as he recommends "meditating on the wondrous works of God," which he believes will lead us to be "suspended in wonderment" and "stirred deeply."[8] To live with the perception of God is to live freely, desiring to keep God's commands because they are beautiful; refusing to get bogged down by stuff that doesn't matter so that we have time and energy to proclaim the majesty of God to others.

IV. Living unto Freedom

Having reflected a bit on the understandings of Zwingli, Luther, and Calvin, it might be apparent that evangelical freedom does not match perfectly with contemporary understandings of freedom, common in the Western world. We tend to associate freedom with choice. The more choices we have, the freer we are. The freest people, we imagine, are

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[7] From Calvin's Sermon #10 on 1 Corinthians, as quoted by William J. Bouwsma in *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 134-135.

[8] Calvin, *Institutes* I.5.9.

those who can buy whatever they want, go wherever they want, and influence whoever they want. They are the rich and the healthy, the privileged and the strong. Those we consider the least free are those who have no choices or perceive themselves as having no choices.

Evangelical freedom challenges the notion that freedom is calibrated according to the number of choices available. Freedom, as understood by the Reformers, is less about choosing among options and more about stepping into the reality of our identity in Christ. To the extent that it is about choosing, it is about choosing the only option that is true to God, and true to who we are, in relationship to God. To the degree we know who we are before God, we are freed from the bondage of trying to create the selves we think we should be by trying better to keep the rules or to impress others. Knowing we are saved in Christ alone, by faith alone, through grace alone according to the Scriptures alone, we are released from reacting to external pressures (church requirements, works, Law, and traditions) to be intrinsically motivated, Spirit-filled, faithful disciples. The myriad of choices around us falls away, in a sense, and we are (as Augustine famously put it) "free to choose for the good always."[9]

We might meet with suspicion the idea that evangelical freedom invites us only to one choice—the choice for the good. To be blunt: it sounds kind of boring to have only one choice; to choose the good without any real deliberation; to step readily into who we are supposed to be before God. Where is the challenge in that? Perhaps it will reassure some of us to remember how difficult it is, in the context of this world, to live into our evangelical freedom. The apostle Paul talks about not being able to do the good he wants to do, and doing the evil he doesn't want to do. "Oh wretched man that I am!" he cries, "who can save me from this body of death?" (Rom 7:24-25). But perhaps Paul's struggle isn't altogether reassuring. We don't want to be bored, but we also don't want to be stymied by struggle. What we want to be able to do, it seems, is to choose what is real and good without being bored or boring.

The story of Mary, the mother of Jesus, offers us a way of thinking of evangelical freedom that is far from boring. After Gabriel tells Mary she will bear a child who will save her people from their sins, Mary chooses to embrace who she already is before God. "Let it be unto me as you have said," she says, making the only choice that is a real

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[9] Augustine of Hippo, "On the Free Choice of the Will," *passim.* At *https://philonew.files.wordpress.com/2016/08/augustine-augustine-on-the-free-choice-of-the-will-on-grace-and-free-choice-and-other-writings-2010.pdf* (accessed 11.26.18).

choice, the choice for the good. Stepping into her freedom, she becomes not a passive vessel or a boring person but an active, creative, agent. She travels and sings; writes poetry and prophesies. "God has filled the hungry with good things," she says, "and sent the rich, empty, away."[10]

With Mary, the Reformers might have said, all Christians are invited to submit to being who they are in Christ, by faith, through grace. This is the path to our freedom. And when we step into this freedom we find we have entered into the wondrous, saving work of God—not only as recipients of it or as wondering observers, but as partners with Christ in the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18), empowered by the Holy Spirit to bear God to the world. As God has so freely loved us, so we are free to love one another.

[10] Paraphrased from Luke 1.

ALL MANNER OF NONLINEAR RESULTS

By Neil Young

What does "evangelical freedom" look like in the practice of congregational ministry?

> *When I preach I regard neither doctors nor magistrates, of whom I have above forty in the congregation; I have all my eyes on the servant maids and on the children. And if the learned men are not well pleased with what they hear, well, the door is open.*[1]

And, wouldn't we all like to be free to say something like that?

> *Although the Christian is thus free from all works, he ought in this liberty to empty himself, take upon himself the form of a servant . . . to serve, help and in every way deal with his neighbour as he sees that God through Christ has dealt and still deals with him. This he should do freely, having regard for nothing but divine approval . . . use your freedom constantly and consistently in the sight of and despite the tyrants and the stubborn so that they also may learn that they are impious, that their laws are of no avail for righteousness.*[2]

An uncharitable soul might call that treatise, "*The Freedom of a Christian, so long as they are protected by the Electors Frederick the Wise and John the Steadfast."* But we all know that the exercise of freedom in congregational ministry will tend to collide, late or soon, with the tyrants and the stubborn. So, at the front end of doing something, we do, in fact, calculate, "will I get in trouble, get static over this, get fired?"

The United Church over the past generation has seen change toward ministry as employment, with attendant performance evaluations,

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[1] Martin Luther, "Table Talk," 424. Many versions of this quote are available in volumes of quotes. This one is from *12,000 Religious Quotations*, ed. Frank. S. Mead, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House Company, 1989), 353.

[2] Martin Luther, "Treatise on Christian Liberty (The Freedom of a Christian), 1520," in *Martin Luther: Selections from his writings,* ed. John Dillinger (New York: Anchor Books, 1961), 75ff.

goals, objectives and so on. A pastoral relationship can be ended "without cause" on 90 days' notice and with no other provision for severance pay. It can seem like the door is as often opened to eject the exerciser of freedom as to let the not well pleased walk through.

"Grace," says Reinhold Niebuhr in a 1955 sermon, "is freedom from the law and from the terrors of the unkept law. It is freedom from anxiety about ourselves in the final court."[3] But Luther is also quite right to say that there is anxiety as we preach and work. Exercise of our freedoms may bring consequences on ourselves, on the congregations we serve and even into the wider community. We take that seriously, I think: the old United Church phrase of "peace and good order" is intimately connected with our aspirations to service, help and do good.

I speak here to those employed in ministries, but hope that the thoughts will connect with others doing other kinds of ministries. That is, while having no regard for anything but divine approval, still part of our vocation is to strive for other approval, in part because we need it to function, in part because it is often a reasonable reflection on our ministry efforts, and at the least to keep our situation stable so that we may be around to do more ministry tomorrow.

All right, then: what are our freedoms as we have actually experienced them and acted upon them? Humbling questions. What have I ever done in thirty years to exercise this freedom to act in ways that follow Jesus Christ and show forth a Christian love of neighbour?

Was it in doing something new and different? In April 1995, John Benham of Palmerston, Ont., and myself in Harriston, filled a school bus with our men's groups and went to tour the Algonquin Brewery in Formosa, Ont. We could make some Methodist jokes in advertising the event, but how much freedom were we really exercising?

We would not have done it if our better judgement thought it would make trouble. Had we been serving a generation earlier—certainly two—we would not have done it nor even considered doing it. Probably we were doing something a little unique, but it was not very daring, nor unique, come to that. It may be that our freedom was partly to do something that was a bit innovative locally and had mainly to do with harnessing attitudes that were changing rather than leading that change.

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[3] Reinhold Niebuhr, "Love and Law," reprinted from the Jan. 1956 issue of *The Pulpit,* in *A Treasury of Great Preaching, vol 10"* eds. Fant & Pinson (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1995), 365.

In fact, the event was nothing new in kind: it was just another event, another trip or tour, with the usual purpose of offering something to congregational life—which is no mean purpose in the ministry of a small town church, or any other. In this case, the result was interest—fellowship—and with a bit of follow-up among the two congregations in a softball game that summer. Not bad.

Is there freedom in doing something that is not new and different at all? In imitation of my friend, John Hogman, I nominated Fridays at 10 a.m., and invited folk to show up. "Coffee Hour" is hardly a new idea, but this one became the group of choice for a dozen people. And, if we mostly talked about this and that, folk gave and received some significant pastoral care.

The results were all out of proportion with the effort it took to put the coffee on. There is certainly freedom in believing that God will bring a good result out of some of our humbler efforts, and I guess we rarely go far wrong in gathering folk together.

In the late 1980's, it was not unusual for the *Moose Jaw Times-Herald* to carry a notice that the Moose Jaw Food Bank would be closed for a while, due to lack of food. In my 4-point pastoral charge, 160 km. south on the Montana border, I instituted the passing of a hat (an old fedora) once per month, asking for loonies, which were new at the time. Each month saw enough collected to buy a quarter of beef which the local abattoir packaged, froze and delivered to the Food Bank.

Most interesting is that the program continued for some years after I'd moved on, and took its own shape with youth group food drives and a lasting connection to the Food Bank. In ministry, we plan as best we can and have an eye toward results. But no one can reasonably say that a semi-spontaneous passing of the hat will yield thus and such in the long term. Yet, do this job long enough, and you will find the freedom to hope for all manner of nonlinear results.

Two years ago, I fielded a request for a wedding. The service was to be at Toronto's City Hall. A week before the wedding, the groom mentioned, "Oh, by the way, it's a *Star Trek* wedding. The wedding party and guests will be wearing uniforms from *The Next Generation."*

Fortunately, I have some knowledge of the *Star Trek* universe. I figured that the black suit and clergy shirt could plausibly be around in 300 years (if we go by the Original Series, fashions will have regressed

into the 60's[4], but I digress). And, I own a working Starfleet communicator badge, to wear on my jacket. So, all was good.

The City Hall staff were pleased, and the wedding service was fun and meaningful—not least taking wedding photos in front of a motivational banner that said, in 2-foot letters, ENTERPRISE. Go figure. But the interesting parts were before and after. The City Hall wedding chapel is a busy place and the service before ours ran late. When they emerged, it was clearly a Sikh wedding. Instantly, it was smiles all around and Vulcan hand-salutes, hugs and selfies and group photos.

They went on their way, a few odd wedding photos richer, and we went in for our allotted half-hour. On exiting we collided with the next party, who wore traditional Muslim dress. Same result: laughter, smiles all around, Vulcan peace signs, hugs and selfies and group photos. I thought, "Wow, we've stumbled onto the true interfaith nexus."

It's no joke. Notwithstanding that everybody was happy for a wedding day, and that this is Canada and all that, folk who were intentionally dressed to celebrate their different faiths and cultural origins laughed and smiled and celebrated together and took photos with arms over shoulders. This doesn't happen every day, and sometimes never.

Can we be free to hope that God will bring in a (small) good result out of even our goofing-around? Not that it will ever find its way into your job description, but you will see good and graceful results now and then—surprisingly often—out of your quirks and interests and idiosyncrasies. It is actually quite rational, based on experience, that Christ will make use of all the parts you bring to your ministry, even the nerdy ones (maybe especially those).

A man attended worship on a few Sundays, and said that he was church shopping. I went to visit him and found that his chief personal interest was in handguns. He was a target shooter and qualified instructor. He worked in the security industry. I had some training with pistols and was not alarmed when (after asking) he brought out firearms from his collection to show me. I was able to converse with him on the subject.

This proved an icebreaker. He had never met a minister who was not at best politely repelled by his interests. He became involved in the congregation. Over some years there was significant opportunity for pastoral care, including his wife's funeral and, finally, his own. Something of a loner, he found a place in the congregation and

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[4] *Vogue,* 22 July, 2016, "What has Star Trek to do with Fashion?" Accessed at *https://www.vogue.com/article/star-trek-surprising-fashion-influence*.

(unusually for him) made friends. At the end, 19 out of 20 people at his funeral were from our congregation.

All in ministry will testify to God's grace at work when the lonely and isolated find community and caring. It is as wonderful to see as it is impossible to engineer—except that it happens. But the freedom question is this: how much freedom would I have had if I had polled-around a bit on taking this approach? Some United Church circles take a pretty dim view of guns. Martin Luther is mainly writing about freedom to act faithfully while going *against* the current currents of the Church, and that is a freedom as useful today as in past times.

In being invited to write this article, some interest was expressed about the congregation I serve, St. Andrew's United, near Yonge & Bloor in downtown Toronto. This valuable property was redeveloped in the early 1980s, with a new church building, an office tower on the property which provides a significant annual income, and some capital funds also resulting. Out of this, it is asked, what freedom did the congregation experience, both to do the project and to engage in significant new directions for ministry as a result?

My response must be anecdotal, based on reading of minutes and documentation and on the known life of the subsequent church, but I will suggest that a search for evangelical freedom in this case will be somewhat disappointing—or, maybe, real.

The project was well done and significant financial advantage was obtained. But it is also the case that the project was decades in length from concept to completion, that there was significant resistance from the courts of the church, and that the life of the St. Andrew's congregation looked much the same after the project as before.

There was a modern building to worship in, and the air conditioning was a draw on Sundays, but subsequent Annual Reports of the congregation show a familiar pattern of dinners and events, meetings, projects and pastoral care. The one unusual aspect of the life of the church, that there were ample funds for outreach, soon settled into a yearly roster of grants to community organizations, not unlike what is done by many (most?) congregations, if on a smaller scale.

There is a pitfall in looking for our freedom in the new and different, or at the cutting edge, or in trying to detect new results that are not like old results: most things we do in ministry and in the life of the church are not new. We imitate ideas we have heard about. We bring to our next congregation things that worked in other churches, but that are new to this one. We come up with something that seems edgy, but others

have done it. Everybody thinks their duck is a swan, so our project seems to us like a real outbreak of freedom in ministry. And so it is, in a way.

Because we are always free to hope for faithful action to yield its results according to God's own good time and will. Including after we are gone—name someone who is dead, who once did something that continues to yield graceful results in your life today. Wonder if you will be that person for someone else, but will never know it.

We can choose to be free from understanding fully what God will bring out of our faithfulness, and we are free to believe that it will be something good. This may make a hash of job descriptions and serve you little at performance evaluation time, but we are always free to believe that "results" will come by the grace of God. It happens all the time.

Step up to the pulpit with a real barn-burner of a sermon, and listen to the crickets chirping after you're done; bring something you have thrown-together, and someone tearfully says that you changed their life. Leave a pastoral charge dogged by feelings of failure; find out a generation later that your time is remembered as a golden age. Read in old minutes about how the Presbytery dogs were called-in on a former minister; meet the people that minister touched with the love of Christ.

Most of the above examples are chosen as being perhaps a small bit unusual, to amuse the reader through a long article. And few will have trouble thinking of their own equivalent experience. That is my point. We all have had evangelical results from the 90% of ministry activity that is more or less the usual life of the church as it unfolds in a year: worship, sermons and prayers, meetings, visiting and pastoral care, working together with others, doing things in the community. Results come constantly, in all places, from all directions, and if they are not large, yet they still happen. Then, of course, we all have our stories, fun and sad and just plain weird, and can tell our own tales of the unusual.

To observe actual results in the field of ministry is to find a freedom to believe in what we are doing and to believe in what we are believing. Surely experience vindicates ministry done in faithfulness and love of neighbour: how startlingly often God creates something out of it and how humbling it is—often not the result we had planned or expected.

Hardly a new thing. On Jan. 31, 1872, in the student Q&A after the opening lecture of his first of three series, in the *Yale Lectures on Preaching,* Henry Ward Beecher told this story of the first pastorate of his father, Lyman Beecher, at East Hampton, Long Island, 1798-1806:

> There was one man in that congregation who was never converted, who never gave up ostensibly his infidelity;

> although he loved my father very much indeed, yet he never seemed to be brought into the kingdom during his time there. There was one little child, Harriet, born into our family, which after a short time fell asleep. This little baby was the only thing we left behind in moving from that place. So this man, twenty or twenty five years after father had gone away, said one day to his wife, "I cannot bear to have that little child of Dr. Beecher's left there all alone"; and he had the child taken up, and put it in his own ground, where his wife now lies on one side and he upon the other, and the little baby snugly gathered into their bosoms there. Such was the effect produced upon his mind by my father's preaching and example; and though he did not outwardly come into the community of the faith, the impression never wore off, and I should not wonder if he were in heaven.[5]

Nor do we need to wonder, either. In practice, our evangelical freedom is to depend upon the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to accomplish all that we have wanted, and plenty we never expected nor intended. Not to mention undoing a few things, while at it.

I doubt if most of us will ever be free of anxiety over our ministry and its results, Reformation or no. As Charles Haddon Spurgeon preached, "Only in heaven are **we** out of gunshot of the devil."[6] But, if we are anxious, perhaps we may hope to be forgiven in this, as well as in so many other things.

In the same sermon quoted earlier, Reinhold Niebuhr says, "We can, in fact, not make any claims of perfection in the name of grace; for the "wind blows where it wills" and the gift of grace, being a gift, is not subject to human striving."[7]

Probably, we will continue our striving and have the odd anxious care for what result is going to fall on our efforts. But we are free, always free, to hope that God will do through us what God wants to do and that, at the end, by God's grace, what needs forgiveness will be forgiven, and that all good things will be revealed.

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[5] Henry Ward Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching, first, second, and third series* (New York: Fords, Howard & Hurlbert, 1892), 24.

[6] C.H. Spurgeon, "A Lesson from the Life of King Asa" in *Spurgeon's Sermons, vol. 10* (Grand Rapids, MI; Baker Books, 1999), 69.

[7] Niebuhr, "Love and Law," 367.

DIMENSIONS OF FREEDOM: HUMAN AND CHRISTIAN

By Nicholas Olkovich

Although individuals from very different cultural, political and religious backgrounds are passionate about "freedom," the concept itself remains highly contested in today's increasingly polarized political climate. In his landmark work *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, Catholic moral theologian Servais Pinckaers distinguishes between two paradigmatic stances in this debate: "freedom for excellence" and "freedom of indifference."[1] The former conceives freedom as a positive capacity to choose in ways consistent with the human person's natural desire for knowledge and value. The latter conceives liberty in negative terms as a capacity for selecting between contraries absent interference or coercion. Human consciousness—and human history writ large—is marked by the conflict between these two accounts of human freedom. The tension between the agent's natural orientation to self-transcendence, and those various forms of bias or sin that distort or suppress the former, finds unique resolution in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christ redeems—fulfills and perfects—human freedom in and through what Canadian Jesuit philosopher and theologian Bernard Lonergan describes as 'the mysterious Law of the Cross.' Christian freedom is the fruit of human participation in the paschal mystery, a participation mediated through the celebration of the sacraments, especially baptism and Eucharist. This union with Christ is made possible by the gift of the Holy Spirit, the gift of God's love that heals and elevates the baptized believer's desire for self-transcendence. Post-conciliar Catholic theology stresses the universality of this gift and the possibility that non-Christians may be united to Christ and the Church in less than explicit ways.

1. "Freedom for Excellence" and "Freedom of Indifference"

Disagreements concerning the nature of human freedom often center on two dialectically-opposed options: "freedom for excellence" and "freedom of indifference." Pinckaers situates the former within a *eudaimonistic* or teleological account of human nature found in similar but slightly different ways in the work of Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas. *Eudaimonistic* conceptions of human nature emphasize the way in which the desire for happiness or fulfillment motivates, shapes and

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[1] Servais Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1995). See also *The Pinckaers Reader: Renewing Thomistic Moral Theology*, ed. John Berkman and Craig Steven Titus (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005). For a short introduction to these main themes see his *Morality: The Catholic View* (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 2001).

norms particular acts of human knowing and choosing. According to both Augustine and Aquinas, the human spirit is an unrestricted desire or thirst for knowledge, value and love, an orientation to self-transcendence that finds its fulfillment in God. This notion of God as humankind's *summum bonum*, the *telos*, goal or end toward which humans are by nature propelled, is captured by Augustine in the opening of his autobiographical *Confessions*: "you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you."[2] Roughly correlative with what the Catholic tradition has called the natural law, this account of humankind's spiritual inclinations differs in fundamental ways from some Protestant approaches. Certain strands of Calvinism, for example, highlight the way in which the effects of original sin have corrupted the *imago Dei* to the extent that human beings lack any natural desire for the true and good.[3] Although habitual transgressions can diminish this orientation, Pinckaers, following Aquinas, argues that the natural law is "indelibly inscribed on the human heart."[4] Humans are made for communion with God and no amount of waywardness can fully extinguish this desire.

Informed and shaped by the human person's orientation to cognitive and moral self-transcendence, freedom for excellence or perfection is a capacity to choose in ways consistent with the agent's desire for the *summum bonum*.[5] Freedom, in this sense, is never pure spontaneity but rather always a response to a prior call.[6] Closely resembling what philosopher Isaiah Berlin conceives as a "positive" conception of liberty, freedom for excellence or perfection is a freedom *for* or *to* seek the true and good that finds its fulfillment in actions conducive of genuine happiness.[7] This *eudaimonistic* account of freedom

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[2] Augustine, *Confessions* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2014-2016), I.1.

[3] See for example: Paul J. Waddell, *Happiness and the Christian Moral Life: An Introduction to Christian Ethics*. Third Edition (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 127.

[4] Pinckaers, *Morality*, 111.

[5] Ibid., 68.

[6] On freedom as a "re-sponsive" spontaneity see for example: David L. Schindler, *Ordering Love: Liberal Societies and the Memory of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 91.

[7] See Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *Liberty: Incorporating Four Essays on Liberty*, ed. Henry Hardy (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002), 167-217. Berlin distinguishes between "positive" conceptions of *freedom for* pursuing a particular goal or end and "negative" conceptions that correlate liberty with *freedom from* coercion or interference.

sanctions what Pinckaers calls "moralities of happiness and the virtues."[8] Since freedom for excellence is not an ability that is given to human beings fully formed it must be developed over the course of an individual's lifetime. Writing in his now classic work *After Virtue,* Alasdair MacIntyre distinguishes between "untutored human nature"—human nature prior to moral formation—and the human person who has achieved fulfillment. Midway between both states lie the moral precepts—both internal and external—that instruct humans on "how to realize our true nature and to reach our true end."[9] According to both Aquinas and MacIntyre, human freedom must be formed through a process of moral education and apprenticeship that culminates in the exercise of virtue, those dispositions or habits of desiring, thinking and acting that facilitate fulfillment. Freedom is like a "talent" or an "acquired skill in an art or profession" that must be cultivated over time.[10] It becomes an effective power precisely insofar as human beings acquire those stable character traits necessary for consistently authentic living.[11]

Pinckaers argues that this conception of the relationship between human nature, freedom and morality is challenged by late medieval authors such as William of Ockham. Ockham's tendency toward nominalism—the claim that only individuals exist—leads him to deny Aquinas' teleological conception of human nature. This rejection, coupled with Ockham's tendency toward voluntarism—the claim that will or choice is prior to reason—leads him to conceive freedom in abstraction from the human spirit's natural inclinations as a power to "choose indifferently between contraries."[12] Resembling what Berlin calls "negative liberty," freedom of indifference is a "neutral" capacity to select among a variety of options in the absence of internal and external coercion.[13] This account sanctions what Pinckaers calls "moralities of obligation" that displace the centrality of happiness in the moral life.[14] For late medieval nominalists, the moral law is not a tool designed to help form human freedom in its search for fulfillment but rather a series

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[8] Pinckaers, *Morality*, 68.

[9] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 53.

[10] Pinckaers, *Morality*, 69.

[11] Ibid., 70.

[12] Ibid., 69.

[13] Berlin himself notes this connection. See, for example, "Two Concepts," 175.

[14] Pinckaers, *Morality*, 71-72, 78.

of arbitrary divine commands that place restrictions on freedom's exercise.[15] The eclipse of *eudaimonism* contributes to the emergence of what Edmund Pincoffs calls "quandary ethics," a particular form of moral problem-solving that focuses on answering the question "what should I do?" in abstraction from broader questions concerning virtue and the good life.[16]

1.1 Freedom and Liberal Democracy

Ockham's conceptions of freedom and law are radicalized by classical liberals such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. Combining elements of late medieval nominalism and voluntarism with variations of early modern empiricism, both authors characterize human beings as self-interested monads who utilize instrumental forms of reason to pursue their own distinctive conceptions of the good.[17] Certain modern expressions of what Pinckaers calls freedom of indifference are virtually synonymous with a capacity for radical self-determination, an ability to pursue personally selected aims or goals "regardless of what those aims and desires might be."[18] Hobbes and Locke replace Ockham's divine command theory of ethics with a system of positive laws that guarantee citizens' reciprocal "right[s] to be left alone."[19] Individuals are free to pursue whatever they like provided they refrain from interfering with

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[15] Ibid., *Morality*, 71-73, 78. Since nature and reason are subordinated to divine freedom and omnipotence, Ockham construes God's will, independent of divine reason, as the source of the moral law.

[16] See Edmund Pincoffs, "Quandary Ethics," in *Mind* 80 (1971): 552-571. Stanley Hauerwas and David B. Burrell discuss the resulting shifts in "From System to Story: An Alternative Pattern for Rationality in Ethics," in *Truthfulness and Tragedy: Further Investigations in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1977). See also Pinckaers, *Morality*, 73.

[17] See for example: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. C.B. Macpherson (London: Penguin, 1985) and John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, ed. C.B. Macpherson (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980). Robert Barron makes this connection between Ockham, Hobbes and Locke in *Exploring Catholic Theology: Essays on God, Liturgy and Evangelization* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 209.

[18] Waddell, *Happiness*, 142.

[19] David Hollenbach, *The Global Face of Public Faith: Politics, Human Rights and Christian Ethics* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2003), 220. Liberals tend to conceive civil-political liberties in purely negative terms as immunities that guarantee individuals freedom from interference in matters that pertain to private perfection.

others' private pursuit of perfection. Although the Catholic Church has consistently rejected liberal individualism's relativistic conception of human freedom, it has in recent decades come to adopt a more nuanced position vis-à-vis liberal democracy.[20] Contemporary Catholic Social Teaching strongly affirms the importance of civil-political rights not merely as immunities from coercion but also as "social empowerment[s]" that condition a community's search for truth and value in freedom and in dialogue.[21] Not all forms of freedom of excellence are incompatible with modern respect for cultural and religious diversity.[22]

1.2 The Misuse of Human Freedom

The tension between freedom for excellence and freedom of indifference is not limited to the historical contrast between *eudaimonistic* and modern liberal accounts of law and morality but is, in some sense, intrinsic to human consciousness itself. The doctrine of original sin attests to this opposition by highlighting the way in which human nature is marked by various forms of bias—what the Christian tradition calls sin—that suppress or distort the agent's natural orientation for knowledge, value and love. Lonergan names two forms of bias—individual or personal and group—that are particularly prevalent in today's increasingly polarized context.[23] Roughly correlative with modern liberalism's conception of freedom as a capacity for radical self-determination, personal egoism denies the spontaneously intersubjective dimensions of human nature and reduces the basis for decision-making to narrow self-interest. Certain forms of group bias or egoism emerge as exaggerated reactions to liberal individualism and find expression in pejorative forms of tribalism that adopt rigid us versus them mentalities. Both forms of bias represent impediments to authentic happiness or

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[20] See for example: Vatican II, *Dignitatis Humanae*.

[21] See for example: David Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 162.

[22] Lonergan argues that the natural law need not be construed as a static collection of principles that colonize discourse *a priori* but rather should be conceived as a shared desire for truth and goodness—a heuristic conception of the good—that guides the ongoing development of traditions and their interaction with one another. See for example: Bernard Lonergan, "Natural Right and Historical-Mindedness," in *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J.*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (New York: Paulist Press, 1985).

[23] Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1992), 244-251.

fulfillment. The conflict between the human spirit's natural orientation to God and these two dimensions of bias results in what Lonergan calls "moral impotence," a restriction of "effective freedom" captured well by St. Paul in Romans 7:15: "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate."[24] Humans' inability to resolve this tension through their own efforts points to the need for a divine solution capable of liberating humans from sin.

2. Jesus Christ and the Perfection of Human Freedom

Much of the Hebrew Bible focuses on this tension and, more specifically, on the cycle of sin and repentance that marks the covenant relationship between Yahweh and the Israelite people. Prophetic condemnation gives way to messianic hope and expectation during and after the Exile as the Israelite people look toward the fulfillment of Yahweh's promise, to a future age when humans will live in right relationship with God and each other. Christians claim that this hope is realized in a unique and definitive way in the Incarnation and, more specifically, in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Human freedom is healed and is perfected in and through what Lonergan calls the 'just and mysterious Law of the Cross,' a principle of transformation that applies to Christ but that is also a precept addressed to human freedom.

2.1 Bernard Lonergan's Law of the Cross

According to Lonergan, the Law of the Cross constitutes the essence of what Christians regard as redemption or salvation from sin. The Law itself consists of three individual steps: (a) sin leads to death; (b) such dying, insofar as it is freely accepted out of loving obedience, is transformed; and (c) this transformed dying receives the blessing of new life.[25] The first step represents the culminating moment in Jesus' short-lived public ministry. The latter is animated by Jesus' commitment to the Kingdom of God, the in-breaking of God's reign of justice, peace and love that finds expression in his preaching and teaching, in his healings

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[24] On moral impotence see Lonergan, *Insight*, 650-653: "To assert moral impotence is to assert that man's effective freedom is restricted."

[25] See Bernard Lonergan, *The Redemption*, trans. Michael Shields, eds. Robert Doran, Jeremy Wilkins and H. Daniel Monsour (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018). My rendering of the three steps of the Law of the Cross is indebted to William P. Loewe's clear and accessible summary in his *The College Student's Introduction to Christology* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 164-173.

and miracles, and in his inclusive form of table-fellowship. Jesus' commitment to the kingdom reaches its climax when those members of the Jewish and Roman authorities whose power and privilege depends on defending the status quo lash out against him.[26] This is the first step of the Law of the Cross. Jesus' arrest and death are simply one more manifestation of the dynamic whereby sin—the misuse of human freedom—leads to suffering and death, both physical and spiritual.

Faced with his impending death Jesus recognizes that any attempt to meet violence with violence or any effort to backtrack or renege is incompatible with his own mission. By contrast with certain modern accounts of human freedom that regard the cross as the ultimate negation of self-determination, Christians argue that it stands out as a symbol of human freedom's fulfillment. Elizabeth Johnson highlights the perennial temptation to conceive the relationship between divinity and humanity as one of opposition or competition. This sort of approach has sanctioned the belief that "in order to honor God and grow in holiness, we must put ourselves down, be diminished, [or] somehow get ourselves out of the way."[27] Although there is truth in the notion that spiritual growth is a function of ascetic denial, Johnson reminds us that since humans are naturally oriented toward the infinite "the closer we become to God, then the more fully our true selves we become."[28] Jesus is "in fact more human, more free, more alive, more his own person than any one of us, because his union with God is more profound."[29] Liberated from the limitations of bias and sin that distort human nature's orientation to the true and good, Jesus is "totally free" to accept dying, not out of "fear" or "compulsion" but rather out of love for the one he calls Abba and for all of humankind.[30] True freedom finds expression not in radical indifference but in self-giving love.

The second step of the Law of the Cross highlights the way in which Jesus' loving fidelity—"his active refusal to play the normal game"—breaks the cycle of sin and reconciles humankind with God.[31] It is Jesus' loving commitment to the Father and to his fellow human

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[26] Loewe, *College*, 169.

[27] Elizabeth Johnson, *Consider Jesus: Waves of Renewal in Christology* (NY: Crossroad, 1992), 28. See also Pinckaers, *Morality*, 72. "Moralities of obligation" pit humans against God in a zero-sum game of wills.

[28] Johnson, *Consider*, 29.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Barron, *Exploring*, 196. See also Loewe, *College*, 170.

[31] Loewe, *College*, 170.

beings, not simply his suffering and death that is redemptive. And yet Jesus' death is not the end of the story. According to the third step of the Law of the Cross, his transformed dying receives the blessing of new life. Jesus' resurrection vindicates his loving concern for the poor and the marginalized, it reveals that God's love "rules the world and will triumph over all attempts to defeat it."[32] The resurrection is, as Pope John Paul II wrote, "the supreme exaltation of the fruitfulness and saving power of a freedom lived out in truth."[33] It frees Jesus from the limitations that mark human existence and for a qualitatively different form of life in communion with God. In and through the resurrection Jesus experiences the eschatological consummation of the Kingdom whose future realization Christians continue to await.

2.2 The Nature and Source of Christian Freedom

The Law of the Cross is not merely a principle of transformation in the life of Jesus but it is also a precept addressed to human freedom. In *Gaudium et Spes* 22, the Fathers of the Council (Vatican II) describe the way in which the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ reveals the true destiny or calling of humankind.[34] In his extensive writing on the relationship between freedom and truth, John Paul II frequently cites the Gospel of John's claim that human freedom's natural orientation to knowledge and value finds its proper foundation and fulfillment in the truth that is Jesus Christ.[35] Christians are liberated from bondage to sin and freed to live authentic lives precisely insofar as they unite themselves to Christ who is the paradigmatic model for human freedom and happiness. Catholic theology teaches that participation in the paschal mystery is ordinarily mediated by the Church in and through the celebration of the sacraments, those rituals that make possible encounter with the Risen Lord. In the celebration of baptism and Eucharist, Christians are united to God through Christ in his self-offering to the Father and to one another as members of the one Body of Christ, the Church that is called to be sacrament of communion or salvation in

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[32] Waddell, *Happiness*, 42.

[33] John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, 87.

[34] See Vatican II, *Gaudium et spes*, 22. "Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear."

[35] "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32) For John Paul II's extended discussion of the relationship between freedom and truth see for example: *Redemptor Hominis* and *Veritatis Splendor*.

human history. Regular participation in the liturgy is designed to form Christians such that the paschal mystery becomes "autobiographical."[36] The liturgy is, in this sense, a school for discipleship, a training ground for Christian virtue. This is precisely why Christians return time and time again to renew and strengthen their baptismal commitments at the Eucharistic table, to foster their relationship with Christ and to cultivate human freedom's true potential.

The vertical and horizontal relationships established and nurtured in the liturgy and lived out in daily life are made possible by the "gift of God's love . . . poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Romans 5:5). The fruits of that gift, sent by the Risen Lord at Pentecost and given to the believer in baptism, are "love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). According to the Catholic tradition, grace does not do away with or deny the human person's natural inclinations but rather fulfills, heals, and elevates human nature.[37] Lonergan describes this gift in phenomenological terms as an "experience of unrestricted being-in-love," an experience of transcendent value that incipiently fulfills the human person's natural desire for happiness.[38] The experience of God's love not only provides a foretaste of ultimate fulfillment, it also simultaneously heals and elevates the believer's desire for knowledge and value. The healing effects of that love dissolve the various forms of bias and sin that restrict an individual's effective freedom while its elevating effects enrich and strengthen her orientation to self-transcendence. Grace, in this sense, sets important conditions of possibility for consistently authentic living and fulfillment.

This transformation of the believer's consciousness—what Lonergan calls "religious conversion"[39]—is correlative with what Jeremiah describes as the "new law"—"an infused or interior law"—

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[36] Susan Wood, "The Liturgy," in *Knowing the Triune God: The Work of the Spirit in the Practices of the Church*, eds. J. J. Buckley and D. S. Yeago (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 106.

[37] Aquinas develops the distinction and relationship between human nature and grace first articulated by Philip the Chancellor. The Thomist tradition distinguishes between: (a) the human person's natural orientation to "truth and value;" (b) the misuse of human freedom that is a function of bias or sin; and (c) the fulfillment of the former by the gift of God's love or sanctifying grace.

[38] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1972), 105-107.

[39] Ibid., 241.

inscribed on human hearts (Jer. 31:33).[40] The new law—the "law of freedom"—not only liberates the baptized from the externals and peripherals of the Jewish law it also frees them to live as Jesus lived.[41] Christian freedom in the Spirit must not be equated with moral licence—a tendency that Paul himself appears to have combated in Corinth—but rather should be understood by analogy with the way that love transforms an individual's entire horizon. Reborn in the Spirit, Christians should be motivated not by obligation or fear of punishment—extrinsic and external stimuli—but rather by a deep and abiding desire for truth and value that is a function of love.[42] The infused virtue of charity works in tandem with the virtue of prudence to liberate Christians from narrow forms of legalism and to assist in concrete discernment of the good.[43] Since grace itself is freely given and received, humans face the ongoing decision whether to reject God's invitation or to accept and nurture it, to place the experience of that love at the center of their lives. Authentic Christian freedom is thus never a secure possession but always a precarious achievement.[44]

2.3 Christian Freedom and the Universality of the Spirit

For much of its history the Catholic Church adopted a form of religious exclusivism that restricted salvation to baptized Catholics, a position summarized by the infamous tag-line: *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (outside the church there is no salvation). This account was challenged by the teaching of Vatican II and post-conciliar Catholic theologies of religious diversity that place more emphasis on the universal scope of God's salvific will.[45] Christian inclusivists do not deny that all salvation is mediated in and through Christ and the Church but they are more inclined to balance that commitment with recognition that the offer of God's love is given to all human beings in all times and all places. According to Lonergan, although Christians correlate the experience of

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[40] Pinckaers, *Morality*, 83-84.

[41] Ibid., 91-92.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Lonergan is especially critical of those forms of moral reasoning that focus on the blind application of abstract first principles to particular cases.

[44] On the dialectical nature of religious development see for example: Lonergan, *Method*, 110-112.

[45] Although there are elements in the tradition that mitigate against a strict form of exclusivism, it is not until the Second Vatican Council that the Church begins to rethink its official position. See for example: Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate* and *Lumen Gentium*, 16.

unrestricted being-in-love with the gift of the Holy Spirit, the experience itself is methodologically prior to its interpretation and therefore transcultural.[46] This allows Lonergan to speak of how grace is present beyond the visible boundaries of the Church and to specify the manner in which non-Christians—including even atheists—may be related to the paschal mystery in less than explicit ways. Christians do not have a monopoly on the very love and freedom that grounds consistently authentic living. The shared orientation to knowledge and truth together with the universal gift of God's love are essential to the cultivation of those forms of solidarity—intellectual and social—necessary for overcoming pejorative forms of liberalism and tribalism in the contemporary world.

3. Conclusion

Contemporary debates concerning the nature of human freedom are marked by an opposition between two paradigmatic options: "freedom for excellence" and "freedom of indifference." The tension between these two accounts of human freedom—between freedom as a capacity for perfection and freedom conceived as licence—sets the background against which the reality of Christian liberty can be understood. The conflict between human nature's orientation to self-transcendence and bias or sin—the misuse of human freedom—finds unique resolution in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christian freedom is a function of the believer's participation in the paschal mystery, a participation mediated by the sacraments of the Church. This union is made possible by the gift of the Holy Spirit, the gift of God's love that fulfills, heals and elevates the baptized believer's natural desire for truth and goodness. Although Catholic tradition has traditionally restricted the possibility of such transformation to baptized members of the Church, post-conciliar Catholic theology affirms the universal scope of God's invitation. Christian freedom is a live possibility for all who cooperate, even if only implicitly, with the gift of God's love.

[46] See for example: Lonergan, *Method*, 11, 107, 119-120, 240-241, 278, 283.

EVANGELICAL FREEDOM
by Don Schweitzer

Evangelical freedom is a state of being that comes as a gift and that seeks actualization in daily life. This freedom is called evangelical because it is based on the gospel. Like other freedoms, it is freedom from certain things and for others. The formation of The United Church of Canada was partly an exercise of evangelical freedom. So was the United Church's 1988 decision that in and of itself gay or lesbian sexual orientation was not a barrier to ordination. Its 2006 decision to become an intercultural church was for the sake of the evangelical freedom of ethnic and racial minorities within it, so that they could live their faith without having to conform to the cultural norms of the United Church's white majority. Evangelical freedom is multifaceted. What follows will explore its basis in the gospel, its characteristics and its telos.

Evangelical freedom is based on God's freedom.
In Scripture freedom is one of God's central characteristics. God is free from prior or external restraint and God's freedom is exercised to create, to save and fulfill creation.[1] God is a source of social and political freedom for people, as well as freedom from guilt and anxiety. In the synoptic gospels Jesus rarely speaks directly of people's freedom, but concern for this was entailed in his proclamation of the reign of God. Jesus' ministry respected Torah, social conventions and Jewish religious institutions of his day, yet demonstrated freedom in relation to these[2] in order to bring freedom to sinners, the sick, the demon possessed,[3] and women, who found a new space of freedom around him in a patriarchal culture. His followers experienced his message as a call to a freedom "founded on, and made possible by, the approaching rule of God already present"[4] in his person and ministry. Paul identified divine freedom as the basis of the freedom that he exhorted Galatian Christians to preserve and live out.[5] The God revealed in Jesus Christ "wants human freedom, justifies human freedom and unceasingly makes men and women free for

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[1] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology Vol. I* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 248.
[2] James D.G. Dunn, *Christian Liberty* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 51.
[3] Jürgen Moltmann, *Religion, Revolution, and the Future* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), 68.
[4] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977), 78.
[5] C. K. Barrett, *Freedom and Obligation* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985), 8.

freedom."[6] This freedom has a higher purpose. It is to be exercised in practices which mimic God's forgiving and empowering grace.[7] Through this exercise the freedom, love and beauty of God finds further expression in the lives of individuals and communities.[8] The freedom and love of God is thus the basis and reason for evangelical freedom.

How is evangelical freedom given to people?

Evangelical freedom has several levels of interdependent meaning.[9] It includes freedom from external forces like economic oppression. It includes freedom to fulfill one's human potential and freedom from guilt. It has communal and personal dimensions. These are interlinked. No one level of meaning can be complete without the others, and the experience of evangelical freedom in one sphere should create a drive to experience it fully in all levels and with all other people. Evangelical freedom begins within history with the communion with God that Christ establishes. It may come to one in any number of ways. But as this freedom is part of Christ's liberating work it will only be complete in an eschatological fullness that lies beyond history.

The communion with God that Christ establishes rests upon justification by grace. This grants people a new identity based solely on God's grace. Our sense of ourselves is formed largely by the recognition we receive from others and ourselves. The way others see us, the way we see ourselves, shapes our sense of who we are and what we can do. In justification by grace we receive recognition from a transcendent source that outweighs all others. Regardless of what we have done or how others may view us, the love of God shown in Jesus Christ becomes the deciding factor determining who we are, how we should live and what we are called to do. Though others may denigrate, exclude or condemn us, though our conscience may convict us, God in Christ justifies us. This defines us once and for all as having a divinely granted status and dignity. In Martin Luther's words, justification by grace makes a person "a

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[6] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1981), 218.

[7] Serene Jones, *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 173.

[8] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV.3.2* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1962), 654, 668.

[9] This paragraph is drawn from Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Gustavo Gutiérrez: Essential Writings,* ed. James Nickoloff (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 193; 193-235.

perfectly free Lord of all, subject to none."[10] This freedom is a spiritual reality that comes as a gift. It is based on the new reality brought into being by Jesus' death and resurrection. The Holy Spirit is the means by which this freedom is given and preserved.[11] Evangelical freedom is created, sustained and guided by the co-operative and complimentary activity of Word and Spirit, which together lead creation to its eschatological destiny. Through the Spirit the reconciliation of the world to God that has been achieved in Christ is subjectively appropriated. As one receives the Spirit one experiences an anticipation of the eschatological freedom that is promised in Christ.

What is evangelical freedom a release from?

Evangelical freedom has personal or interior dimensions.[12] It is freedom from guilt. Justification by grace does not deny a person's responsibility for their actions or those of their community, in the past or present. But it declares that a person is more than their actions. It insists that no matter what a person has said or done, they are "a human self who lives from God's recognition."[13] A person is not forever imprisoned by their guilt. Through Christ they are reconciled to God in spite of it and so have a destiny of healing and salvation.

In conjunction with this, evangelical freedom releases people from self-dependence so that they can acknowledge and accept their limitations and weaknesses. A person exists with finite freedom in the face of overwhelming forces that are beyond their ability to overcome and with needs that they can never fully meet. Modern Western notions of autonomous or self-dependent freedom are therefore always accompanied and undermined by anxiety and doubt.[14] The value of freedom depends partly upon it being exercised in pursuit of a higher good of lasting value. Anxiety and doubts continually arise about what autonomous human freedom can achieve and what its goals might become. These doubts can engender despair about freedom ever being realized and misgivings over what aspirations to freedom might unleash.

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[10] Martin Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian* in *Luther's Works Vol. 31*, ed. Harold Grimm (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), 344.

[11] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology Vol. 3* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 129-30.

[12] Gutiérrez, *Gustavo Gutiérrez: Essential Writings,* 230.

[13] Eberhard Jüngel, *Theological Essays II* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 237.

[14] The following discussion of autonomous freedom is drawn from Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 560-3.

Conversely, autonomous freedom seeks to set its own goals and to overcome every barrier. In this understanding of freedom as self-dependence, the overcoming of any limitation becomes a liberation that brings a person closer to the fuller realization of freedom, so defined. There is resonance and congruence between this and evangelical freedom. The "memory of Jesus' execution, understood as an instance of unjust human suffering,"[15] and the memory of his resurrection, understood as God's overcoming of this injustice, lie at the heart of the gospel. In light of this, a "critical ethical line must be drawn between injustice and justice, between the world of domination and a world of freedom and well-being."[16] Overcoming injustice is a crucial realization of evangelical freedom. As overcoming barriers to human fulfillment increases the possibilities of fulfilling human potential, this is part of evangelical freedom too. However, evangelical freedom can also be expressed in one's acceptance of being differently abled.

Evangelical freedom exists for the sake of service to God and the world. Its goal is communion with God, other people and creation. The goal of autonomous, self-dependent freedom on the other hand is always in danger of becoming simply achieving more freedom, so that no higher purpose remains for which freedom should be exercised and there is nothing to give value to human activity beyond a person's choosing to engage in it. The "ultimate emptiness" of this self-dependent notion of freedom always threatens to lead to nihilism.[17] Evangelical freedom links up with and supports aspirations for liberation from all forms of oppression and exclusion, but differs from modern notions of autonomous freedom in that it is not something a person achieves on their own. It comes instead as a gift that empowers one to seek liberation for one's self, other people and creation. Evangelical freedom always has this higher purpose. It comes into being through the love of God and it exists for the sake of that love being further expressed in peoples' lives.

Justification by grace does not destroy a person's freedom, but it does what finite human freedom cannot do. It reconciles a person to God and grants them a hope-filled future. This re-establishes human freedom on a new basis. As John Calvin noted, the anxieties and doubts that come with finite human freedom can create a labyrinth within a person's mind,

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[15] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Critical Feminist Historical-Jesus Research," in *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus Volume 1,* ed. Tom Holmén and Stanley Porter (Boston: Brill, 2011), 529.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Taylor, *Hegel*, 563.

"a long and inextricable maze,"[18] in which one's conscience never knows peace. Evangelical freedom releases one from constant doubt and indecision and empowers one to act.[19] The ambiguities of finite human freedom remain, but it now operates on the basis of an underlying assurance that enables one to act responsibly and acknowledge one's failings. Evangelical freedom is a release from burdens of responsibility that one cannot carry. It is the freedom to be truly human, to embrace one's creaturely condition and rejoice in it. Paradoxically, the more one depends on God, the more one's freedom and autonomy increases.[20] Modern aspirations to freedom include a quest for interior liberation.[21] Evangelical freedom is not foreign to this. Justification by grace cannot replace the work of counselling, but it can add a transcendent dimension that reaches beyond what secular therapies can provide.

Evangelical freedom is also release from fear of evil, sin and death. Its horizon is hope inspired by Jesus' resurrection, the expectation "that God's promised future will become a reality,"[22] that sin, death and evil will ultimately be overcome. These are no longer final realities which hold life captive.

Similarly, evangelical freedom is an inner release from the confining identities that hegemonic social forces impose upon people. Though a person be denigrated by racism, hemmed in by patriarchy, white privilege or xenophobia, burdened by guilt, failure or low self-esteem, justification by grace reveals that these forces do not finally define us. Over against such psychic confinement and disempowerment, justification by grace reauthorizes a person "to move through the world as an agent, a self responsible for the actions it initiates,"[23] able to respond to God's call. Even the privileged and prosperous need this kind of release. As Miroslav Volf argues, globalization has become a defining feature of societies and a formative influence on peoples' characters: "with the market as its driving force, it tends to turn things and people into commodities, to lock their gaze to the flat plane of ordinary life; it

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[18] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* ed. John McNeill (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 839; 3.19.7.

[19] Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV.3.2*, 669.

[20] Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 79.

[21] Gutiérrez, *Gustavo Gutiérrez: Essential Writings*, 188.

[22] Letty Russell, *Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective: A Theology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), 41.

[23] Jones, *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology*, 67.

undermines the enjoyment of the very goods it helps create and erodes altruism and solidarity."[24] Globalization thus creates a mental/spiritual cage of consumerism in which people endlessly pursue goods and services but never have enough, no matter how much they acquire or experience. Volf argues that world religions situate human life within a vision of how life should be led. They link the transcendent to ordinary life with accounts of what it means to live well.[25] Christianity that is true to the church's memory of Jesus does not denigrate ordinary life but rather reframes it, so that it takes on new meaning and transcendent purpose. This frees people from the cage of consumerism that globalized market forces create in their minds and societies.[26] Evangelical freedom includes release from the character deforming power of globalized capitalism as well as other forms of inner captivity. It is a new personal reality, a new sense of ourselves, our destiny and our calling, a sense of dignity and self-respect that comes as a gift of God's grace. It is based on the faith that we belong to God and that our ultimate identity derives from this.

Evangelical freedom extends outwards into interpersonal relations. It includes freedom from the imposition of laws and practices foreign to one's self and one's cultural heritage.[27] The United Church's 1986 Apology to First Nations Peoples confessed that the United Church had failed to respect this in relation to indigenous peoples in Canada:

> We confused Western ways and culture with the depth and breadth and length and height of the gospel of Christ.
>
> We imposed our civilization as a condition of accepting the gospel.[28]

As Paul argued in his letter to the Galatians, the gospel cannot be tied to any one culture. It gives people the freedom to inculturate it in their own culture. Justification by grace thus requires that Christians respect the freedom of others to live the gospel in ways congruent with their own cultural identity. The 2006 proposal that the United Church become intercultural stressed the need for racial justice within the church.[29] This

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[24] Miroslav Volf, *Flourishing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 55.
[25] Ibid., 55-6, 75.
[26] Ibid., 81.
[27] Michael Wolter, *Paul* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015), 365.
[28] The United Church of Canada, *1986 Apology to First Nations Peoples*, at *https://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/resources/1986-1998-aboriginal-apologies.pdf*.
[29] The United Church of Canada, *Record of Proceedings of the 39th General*

was a call to transform the church so that the evangelical freedom of ethnic and racial minorities within it will be respected.[30]

What is evangelical freedom a freedom for?

Evangelical freedom is a liberation to self-respect that finds expression in love for others. It is a liberation for Spirit-inspired creativity in theology and in living one's faith. The two go together. It thus has implications for how the gospel is understood. The theological diversity within the New Testament indicates that the gospel binds Christians to the memory of the ministry of Jesus, his death and resurrection, but frees them to understand this and live it out in dialogue with the Spirit and the needs and challenges of their context.[31] Evangelical freedom means that there is room for theological diversity and theological creativity within the church. As Samuel Chown argued against critics of the newly formed United Church, to restrict the church to any one confession of faith for all time offends against Christian liberty.[32] The letters of Paul, and John's and Matthew's gospels, teach that Jesus' resurrection and the gift of the Spirit give Christians the freedom to adapt Jesus' teaching and re-formulate the church's understanding of his saving significance as they encounter new situations.[33] Faithfulness to the New Testament witness to this freedom sometimes requires one to move beyond what Christian faith meant then, on the same basis by which New Testament understandings of the faith were developed.[34] At times, as in the United Church's 1988 decision, this can include the church changing its mind in a radical way, saying yes to something to which it formerly said no, or, as when white Christians began to oppose slavery, saying no to something which churches were allowing.

The nature of the gospel as good news is tied to this aspect of evangelical freedom. If the church proclaims an understanding of the gospel from another time or place that is not appropriate to its context, it may represent a flight from reality and become a counter-sign to the

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Council, 2006, 582.

[30] Ibid., 588.

[31] James D.G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* 2nd edition (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1977/1990), 381.

[32] S. D. Chown, *The Story of Church Union in Canada* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1930), 65.

[33] Sean Freyne, *The Jesus Movement and Its Expansion* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 200-1.

[34] Leander Keck, *Christ's First Theologian* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015), 130-1.

gospel by refusing to address the sin and evil of the present.[35] The gospel can only remain good news if it is interpreted with the same creative fidelity that was exercised in the writing of Paul's letters, the gospels, and other New Testament materials. Evangelical freedom is based upon the gospel, and the gospel must be interpreted with evangelical freedom if it is to remain good news.

Evangelical freedom is thus a gift to Christians and a responsibility they are called to exercise. The "Introduction" to the United Church's 1940 *A Statement of Faith* recognized this combination of freedom and responsibility when it declared that the "Church's faith is the unchanging Gospel of God's holy, redeeming love revealed in Jesus Christ," but that "Christians of each new generation are called to state it afresh in terms of the thought of their own age and with the emphasis their age needs."[36] As Douglas Hall puts it, "Christians are bound by a tradition whose goal, if we allow it, is to set us free."[37] The gospel does this as people accept and exercise this freedom. This creative fidelity requires a discipleship of twofold engagement: critical listening to Scripture, church history and theological voices of the church's past,[38] and critical engagement with one's context that seeks to discern where the Spirit is at work and what Christ is calling the church to be and do. The liberation for Spirit-inspired creativity in theology and in living one's faith that is part of evangelical freedom is a freedom for others. It enables one to follow Christ in new situations where inherited concepts and practices no longer give appropriate guidance. It is the freedom to ask as Bonhoeffer did, "Who is Jesus Christ for us today?"[39]

Evangelical freedom frees a person to express aspects of God's love and beauty in one's own life. As Luther put it, the gift of freedom that makes one "subject to none" also makes one "a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all."[40] The Reformed tradition in theology recognizes a third use of the law as a guide in living out this calling. The law specifies the kinds of action that are in keeping with one's new

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[35] Douglas John Hall, *Thinking the Faith* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989), 97-9.

[36] The United Church of Canada, *A Statement of Faith, 1940,* in The United Church of Canada, *The Manual*, 2016, 15.

[37] Douglas John Hall, *Bound and Free: A Theologian's Journey* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 21.

[38] Ibid., 20-21.

[39] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison: Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Volume 8* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 362.

[40] Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*, 344.

identity in Christ and so helps people live out the righteousness that they have received.[41] Evangelical freedom is never complete in history, but always remains anticipatory to some extent and so is always in need of guidance from the law and some structure to orient it. However, the concreteness of the law can make it oppressive, because the law's teachings can never be adequate to all the new situations that Christians encounter. Through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit one interiorizes the law's meaning and intent and so becomes free in relation to it.[42] In this way evangelical freedom increases with sanctification. This process, while always fragmentary, can give one the freedom to judge a given situation in light of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and if need be, to depart from the law's specific injunctions.[43] Evangelical freedom thus stands in a dialectical relationship to the law. As this freedom is never complete in history, it needs the guidance the law offers. Yet as a gift of the Spirit, evangelical freedom includes freedom in relation to the law, so that one can at times depart from it or revise it.

As this freedom in relation to the law is never fully achieved in history, Christian freedom is always embattled. It may be embattled by legalism that abdicates responsibility to judge and interpret the law as one seeks to follow it, or by desires that can lead to abandoning the law for licence. Licence and legalism are tendencies that are always present in the lives of Christians and their communities. One guards against legalism by remaining open to the Spirit. One guards against licence by remaining grounded in Christ. As evangelical freedom is never complete, it always exists "in struggle, in contradiction, and in temptation."[44] It is sustained in this by justification by grace. As justification is always received in faith, it too "is always under attack and can always be disputed."[45] But it is only something like justification by grace and the universal hope that is bound up with it that can make a person truly free.[46] Christian faith is a yes to an all-encompassing freedom that beckons in the resurrection of the crucified Christ and that is experienced

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[41] Cynthia Rigby, "The Christian Life," in *The Cambridge Companion to Reformed Theology,* ed. Paul Nimmo and David Ferguson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 100.

[42] Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit Vol. II* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1983), 125.

[43] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology Vol.III* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 232-3; Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology Vol. 3*, 75-7.

[44] Moltmann, *Religion, Revolution, and the Future*, 66.

[45] Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 405.

[46] Ibid.

in the Holy Spirit. It is this freedom that enables one to open one's self in love to others amidst the trials and temptations of life.

Evangelical freedom "is a life force"[47] that seeks actualization in every dimension of life. It is expressed in self-acceptance and service to others. It seeks celebration in worship. It recognizes that "God is interested in the freedom of the whole human race,"[48] seeks to serve the extension of this and looks to the future with eschatological hope. Evangelical freedom is a gift of grace that requires that it be exercised in the service of the liberation of others.[49] It can make a person so free that they will give way and creatively withdraw for the sake of others.[50] In Canada this is what is presently needed on the part of settlers in relation to indigenous peoples and their lands. Canadian society was built on and still largely runs on the assumptions that indigenous peoples and their lands are available for economic exploitation, for use by others, and are subservient to the interests of the Canadian state.[51] To achieve reconciliation with indigenous peoples, Canadian settlers need to reject these assumptions and turn away from these practices by exercising free, creative self-withdrawal[52] in relation to indigenous peoples, so that the latter have room to exercise their right to self-determination. Evangelical freedom is the kind of spirituality that can empower settlers to do this.

Conclusion

Evangelical freedom is a gift. It can only be preserved by accepting the responsibilities that come with it. It is inherently expansive. It seeks the full freedom of all. At its heart is joy arising from what God in Christ has done for us, a hope for all of creation, and a love that seeks the well-being of others.

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[47] Eberhard Jüngel, *The Freedom of a Christian* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 19.

[48] Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958/2010), 217.

[49] Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ* (New York: Crossroad, 1980), 513.

[50] Hans Küng, *The Incarnation of God* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1987), 308-9.

[51] Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2014), 125.

[52] The concept of free, creative self-withdrawal is explored in *Touchstone 35/3 (October, 2017).*

FROM THE HEART

EVANGELICAL FREEDOM: SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE

By Rev. Dr. Tony Thompson

A cursory overview of history would suggest to us that the Reformation unleashed a plethora of independent thinkers who stepped out of institutionally restricted thought patterns to embrace a broader worldview and therefore also a deeper theological view. We, who call ourselves members of the United Church of Canada, have continued that Reform tradition. We have been gifted with those in our midst who have challenged us to explore our faith questions "outside the box." We have listened to the voices of those who have suggested that there are different ways of understanding our relationship with The Creator-Christ-Spirit and therefore also different ways of being "evangelical" . . . reflected in the ways in which we live The Good News so that others might share in our joy and in our hope. As a denomination, we have engaged in dialogue with our Indigenous sisters and brothers in seeking to understand, and therefore to address, the harm that a particular vision of evangelism has caused previous generations, and the ways in which that harmfulness continues to seep through the current generation, even as we work together to address our shared responsibilities. The United Church remains, for many of us, a faith community that lives out its evangelism by daring to engage its members in the challenges of interpreting Good News in a modern context.

I consider myself to have been blessed in this: that I grew up in The United Church of Canada and that I have spent my adult life in ministry within this denomination. As I prepare for my retirement, I find myself grateful for this opportunity to reflect on a lifetime filled with experiences that have shaped my personal faith journey, and that have helped me walk alongside others on our shared faith journeys. I reflect, probably with rose-tinged glasses, on my younger self, going to Sunday school at Rosetta United Church, a small rural community in the Ottawa Valley. There I listened to the biblical stories, recognizing, with the clarity of hindsight that, in those days, I was filled with so much certainty about so many things. I reflect with some chagrin these days on just how cut-and-dried my beliefs must have seemed to others in the early years of my life—perfect little boxes that I did not question until I became a teenager. While a High School student in Almonte, I volunteered as a Sunday school teacher in my new home congregation, Guthrie United Church in Clayton (Rosetta having been closed in the general amalgamation of pastoral charges in the mid-1960's). There I found myself having to respond to the questions from children in Grades 4, 5 & 6, who were already challenging the "truth" of the stories I was retelling. I marvel at how much my faith perspective has changed between then

and now!

Those years of teaching Sunday school lessons marked the beginning of that process of discovering the freedom, which the United Church generously gave me, to question and to explore. In light of those years, I chose to take a religious study course as part of my first year at Queen's University. There I encountered the writings of theologians such as Martin Buber, Teilhard de Chardin, and Paul Tillich. There I found myself wrestling with the concept of a "phenomenology of religion" and with some unique terminology that centered on an Ultimate Source of Being. That course not only gave me the grace to discern a call to ministry; it gave me the permission I had been seeking, without ever realizing it until that moment, to question what I believed and, more specifically, to question even why I believed what I believed. Out of that course grew my life-long passion for learning more, for exploring more deeply, and for granting myself the permission to ask the challenging questions and to be open to the answers, no matter how unconventional, never mind controversial, they might prove to be.

Being part of the United Church of Canada, with its rich history of diversity and of independent theologians, also meant that I have worked with congregations filled with folk who have been receptive to my personal exploration as I have shared my ongoing faith journey with them through sermons, through prayers, through group-studies, and through personal conversations. I consider myself to be fortunate to dwell within a denomination whose members have been willing to see the boundaries of their faith stretched as we wrestle in community with each other over the issues that have been of concern to us: women in ministry; an open communion table accessible to all ages; respect for the rainbow variety of gender identities; a shared responsibility for the stewardship of creation; a deeper justice-seeking relationship with our Indigenous neighbours, to cite but a few. All of these encounters have been possible because we are members of a church community that aligns itself with the Reform tradition and understands that to be evangelical means to live out the Good News in the here-and-now of everyday life. I count myself as one who has been privileged to have worked within a denomination that takes its evangelism seriously; that refuses to become moribund; that wrestles willingly with the implications that each unexpected understanding brings to issues old and new.

I also recognize that the journey has been difficult for some, and impossible for those who have drifted away. Occasionally I have heard the plaint, "Where is the stopping point? Why do we have to keep on changing?" The line in a familiar hymn comes to mind, "Change and

decay in all around I see!" If we reach a point where we do not change, then what have we become? The history of the Christian faith is a catalogue of constant change, beginning with the adaptation of a foundation story from its Hebrew roots, followed by some Greco-Roman philosophy thrown into the mix, which held a faith community in place until the Reformation challenged basic assumptions and pushed the boundaries of the community beyond its momentary institutional rigidity. Change, from out of a historical context, truly is the one true constant. We grow, or we stagnate. My experience within the United Church of Canada is that we, its members, share a passion for growing into new learning curves. In the process, we might leave some long-time friends by the wayside, but we also have an opportunity to embrace new neighbours, who in their turn become friends who offer us new glimpses into our faith relationships. This has been and remains our strength, as we celebrate our faith in the One who said, from out of a burning bush that was not consumed by its flames, "I am becoming who I am becoming!"

My retirement takes place at time when the United Church is undergoing a seismic shift, at least structurally. How do I respond to that? There is relief that I will not have to deal in any administrative sense with whatever institutional polices emerge from this new structure. Admittedly, this is a somewhat self-centered response from one who will no longer be in paid accountable ministry. However, I also feel excited. This, after all, remains "my" denomination and therefore my faith-home! My passion for theological reflection will not be diminished. Indeed, I find myself intrigued to discover what emerges from out of all the Remits and the decision-making by those who have made a commitment to keep the United Church relevant and yet still evangelical in a new era. This might not be as seismic a shift as was the Reformation, but it is a significant shift, nonetheless. What I trust is that, regardless of the institutional structure wherein denominational discipline will be maintained, there will continue to be the freedom for those of us who are passionate about theological exploration to think "outside the box" and to engage our sisters and brothers in reflections that will still push the boundaries beyond where they exist today. I am reminded of the title of one of Chris Evans' books, "The Kingdom is Always but Coming!" Perhaps the same could be said of the United Church of Canada: that it is always but coming! For this, I remain thankful!

ELINOR HARWOOD LEARD
BY BETSY ANDERSON

Elinor Harwood Leard is one of two United Church women reported to have been the first married woman ordained by The United Church of Canada. The other is Margaret Butler. In both cases their request for ordination triggered a motion to The United Church of Canada General Council for a ruling on the legitimacy of ordaining married women. In the case of Margaret Butler, ordained by Montreal and Ottawa Conference in 1947, the actual ordination took place relatively quietly one year after her original 1946 request. However, Elinor Harwood's ordination ten years later, was hotly debated to the end and covered in the press. Finally, despite a telegram from Moderator, Rev. Dr. James M. Thomson, Elinor's prediction "that the farmers of London Conference would make up their own mind," proved correct. She was ordained 6 June 1957 along with ten male ordinands.

Elinor Harwood Leard was born 20 October 1922 on her parents' farm on the 8th Concession, Raleigh Township, Ontario. The third of four children born to Orval Harwood and Macel Sterling, she was baptized at the age of seven by Rev. Smale and deeply shaped by her connection to Wesley United Church. Educated in a one-room school house across from the farm, she passed the entrance exams for Chatham Collegiate Institute where she studied 1933-38. Her graduation at 15 and acceptance into the University of Western Ontario was noted in the local newspaper, as was her sense of call to ordained ministry. This call was confirmed when she was accepted by London Conference as a candidate for ordination in 1939, at the age of 17.

While at Western, Elinor was active in many extra-curricular activities, including a stint as President of the Student Christian Movement. She spent the summer of 1939 as staff in a girls' camp and in local preaching. She served a mission field at Talmadge, Saskatchewan between her third and fourth years at Western.

However, Elinor's passion and talent for education was not

without its challenges. Her education was financed through scholarships as well as working. Her family helped as they were able and she also received an annual grant of $60 from her church. She stayed at home to care for her ill mother in the summer after second year university, but as she approached graduation, her father felt that she needed to pursue a more remunerative profession than the church and that her insistence on pursuing ministry was contributing to her mother's ill health.

After a summer working in a war plant and thinking it would reduce the family strain and give her a little more maturity before studying theology, Elinor applied to do an MA in English Literature and received an excellent scholarship from Radcliffe College, Harvard. A loan of $600 from the local IODE (Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire) covered her additional expenses. However, the strains of studying, working, and family discord impacted Elinor's own health and after one term at Radcliffe, she followed her doctor's advice to take three months off. Happily, as she recovered, she was offered a job teaching Latin and Religious Education at Alma College, a United Church-related girls' high school in St. Thomas, Ontario.

Elinor's ambition to begin theological studies was finally realized when Gertrude Rutherford, Principal of the United Church Training School (UCTS), invited her to apply for a new scholarship which would allow seven women to complete a year at UCTS in exchange for three years serving the church. From 1944-45 she studied at UCTS and completed her first year of theology at Emmanuel College. The following year she criss-crossed the country as travelling secretary for the UCTS, then helped to found St. Luke's United Church in Sarnia in 1946, working under the Board of Home Mission. She completed her third year of obligation to the church as the first Personnel Secretary for Women's Work in the Church, in 1947-48.

That same year she met Earl Leard, then Secretary for Boys' Work at the United Church General Council office, while on the train home to Toronto from the North American Quadrennial of the Student Volunteer Movement in Lawrence, Kansas. According to Earl, in an interview after her death, and corroborated by Elinor's *Journal*, they stayed up all night talking as they travelled from Chicago to Chatham. The budding romance led to yet another adjustment in Elinor's plans, as she had applied and been accepted in 1948 as a WMS worker, with the understanding that she wished to serve overseas in education.

Through this period, Elinor also kept her relationship with the Education & Students Committee of Kent Presbytery up-to-date and in response to a 19 April 1948 letter from J.T. Clarke of Kent Presbytery,

informed them she was engaged to be married to Rev. Earl Leard. Acknowledging that perhaps she needed to ask the Presbytery's permission to marry, she went on to lay out their plans to serve the church in India and their shared understanding of ministry and how it would unfold in their married life.

> We have thought through carefully the implications of my remaining as a candidate for the ministry, and have decided that that is the course I should pursue. Marriage does not change the conviction of either of us that we have been called to the preaching of the gospel. Since my fiancé is a specialist in CE, our work will naturally fall in the same places. Especially because he feels, as I do, that both of us, to be true to our calling, must carry on the work for which we have been trained, I have no doubt but that I shall be able to give myself to whatever work presents itself to be done.[1]

Elinor completed her second year at Emmanuel College after she and Earl were married on 24 July 1948. In the summer before they sailed for Liverpool in September 1949, they directed the Student Christian Movement Industrial Work Camp in Brantford. With the support of Emmanuel College's Dean Matheson and Kent Presbytery, Elinor arranged to complete her final year of theological studies at Cheshunt College, Cambridge, where Earl was studying, prior to sailing for their posting in India. Elinor graduated *in absentia* in the Emmanuel College class of 1950, which included two other women, Nettie Wilson and Florence Wilkinson. Elinor and Earl left England for India on 18 June 1950, to serve the Malwa Church Council in the State of Mdhya Bharat, in North India.

Their first child, William, was born in Indore Christian Hospital on 25 March 1951 while they were in language school, and John was born the following year on 13 September. However, Elinor was frustrated by the lack of opportunity to work under the mission in the field for which she had been trained. Reflecting the sense of agency and integrity which Elinor brought to all her dealings with the Church, a month after her second son's birth, her 16 October 1952 letter to Dr. C.F. Grant, the Acting General Secretary of The United Church Mission in Indore lays out her decision regarding her relationship to the Mission.

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[1] Elinor Harwood 22 April 1948 letter to J.T. Clarke, Accession # 98.101C, United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto.

> In my opinion, one who is not actively engaged in the work of the Mission or Church and charged with responsibility there under, should not sit on the policy-making bodies of either. I wish, therefore, that my name be removed from the roll of the India Mission Council . . . Until such time as I am needed in similar work here, I wish to be free to fulfill my vocation according to my own plans. [2]

Unwilling to wait upon the slowly grinding wheels of mission field administrators, Elinor created her own job running a nursery school for her own children along with others, and was the Principal of the Ujjain Primary and Middle school for the WMS. Later she taught at Indore College, Union Theological Seminary and Daly College.

The Leards were on furlough in 1956-57 and spent the year in New York where Earl and Elinor pursued further studies at Columbia. Their third child, Katherine, was born there on 30 March 1956. As she had said she would do when she left for India, Elinor took the opportunity of their first furlough to request that Kent Presbytery put her name forward for ordination. Although other women had advised waiting for marriage until after she was ordained, since the church could not remove ordination, as it did designation of deaconesses when they married,[3] Elinor had previously determined that the right time to seek ordination was after the birth of her children.

This request for ordination launched a long correspondence between Elinor and Kent Presbytery. At first the Presbytery did not support her ordination. Eventually, after much conversation and correspondence, including eloquent and lengthy communication on Elinor's part about her understanding of ministry, the extent and nature of her work in India, her ability to work full time, and her expectation that the church's understanding of ministry would evolve and allow flexibility in the real life circumstances of its candidates, the Presbytery agreed "they will recommend and vigorously support the ordination of Mrs. Leard by the London Conference this June."[4] However, complications arose when the United Church's General Secretary Ernest Long

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[2] October 16, 1952 letter from Elinor Leard to Dr. C.F. Grant, Acting General Secretary, UCC Mission, Indore, India, Accession # 98.101C, United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto.

[3] Lois Wilson, *Turning the World Upside Down: A Memoir* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1989), 25.

[4] Accession # 98.101C, United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto.

attempted to intervene, prompting Clare Oke, of Kent Presbytery to assure Elinor, "We are not, nevertheless, going to surrender to Head Office just as a matter of course." [5]

At a special meeting of Kent Presbytery at which the Session of her home congregation, Wesley United Church, was present, as well as quite a number of WMS women,[6] Clare Oke outlined the five objections to Elinor's ordination of the General Council Office. He asked Presbytery to endorse the motions that had been previously passed regarding her ordination and despite much discussion and the objections of Rev. R.B. Craig, the Convenor of the Conference Committee on Colleges and Students, the motions passed 22-13.

The anticipation of controversy and debate regarding Elinor's ordination was not exaggerated. It began on the first day of the London Conference annual meeting when the Board of Colleges' non-concurrence motion regarding Kent Presbytery's request for Elinor's ordination was defeated, after which a motion recommending her ordination was passed. The next afternoon the meeting was informed that a telegram from the Moderator asking Conference not to proceed with her ordination had been received and the Board of Colleges Chair, R.B. Craig, moved that the decision to ordain Elinor be reconsidered. His motion was defeated and when he requested a recount, it was again defeated. In this charged atmosphere, later that evening Elinor addressed Conference along with the ten male ordinands. The following evening, 6 June, she was ordained. In her 1993 *Canadian Historical Review* article, "No Women Need Apply: The Ordination of Women in the United Church, 1918-1965," Valerie Korinek observes that Elinor's ordination was "extremely significant, since for the first time the church had acknowledged that the most important prerequisite for ordination was the merit of the candidate and her calling, not her motherhood."[7]

But the controversy wasn't over. On the last afternoon of the meeting, Conference approved a motion to request General Council to "appoint a Commission to make a thorough study of the ordination of women with emphasis upon the practical implications involved, and the ecumenical relationships of The United Church of Canada, in order to

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Valerie J. Korinek, "No Women Need Apply: The Ordination of Women in the United Church, 1918-65," *The Canadian Historical Review* 74, Number 4, (1993) 502.

establish a policy for the guidance of Presbyteries and Conferences."[8] The introduction to the motion referenced the difference of opinion at London Conference on the question of Elinor's ordination as a married woman with three children, and the two decades of the United Church's experience with women ministers. It also acknowledged that "the United Church recognizes no theological bases in objection to the ordination of women."

Elinor's 11 June 1957 letter to Anson Moorehouse, of the United Church's Berkeley Studios, is a poignant reflection of the personal impact her struggle for recognition of her call, vocation and commitment to serve in the church had been. Handwritten, just five days after her publically controversial ordination at London Conference, she writes of the toll the lack of opportunity and recognition during their time in India took on her relationship with Earl and her resistance to having a third child, lest it be a girl.

> Unconsciously, and against my will, Earl came to represent what I had lost from my life rather than my immense gains through marriage. And I determined we would limit our family to two, rather than the four we had planned, lest our third child be a girl. How could I bring a little girl into a world where she is not free, I thought? And it was only the fact that we were leaving that repressive attitude—designed to strengthen our home yet really tearing it apart at the core—that brought me psychologically to the place of desiring the little daughter whom you were the first to discern being cherished in Earl's heart.[9]

Elinor's struggle continued when they returned to India. Her request to have a position that recognized her ordination came up against the complexities of a recently amalgamated church which had not arrived at a common perspective on the ordination of women. The newly formed Church of North India was reluctant to be dictated to by foreign missionaries. While in India, she kept Kent Presbytery abreast of her employment situation and the recognition by the Church of Northern India, which finally came through on 7 June 1958. But the constant effort to overcome barriers was discouraging, and combined with the Leards'

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[8] Programme and Proceedings of the 33rd Annual Meeting of London Conference, p. 13 United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto.

[9] 11 June 1957 letter to Anson Moorehouse from Elinor Leard, Accession #98.101C, United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto.

growing sense that missionaries needed to get out of the way so that the Indian Church and its excellent leaders could direct God's mission in India, Elinor accepted an opportunity to serve as Assistant Minister at Tabernacle United Church, in Belleville, Ontario. She and the children left for Canada at the end of September, 1959. When Earl joined them a few months later they moved to Toronto where he began his work with Berkeley Studios and Elinor accepted a call to the Grahamsville pastoral charge near Brampton. Serving them from 1960 to 1962, she helped them recognize the transition that was underway in their community, leading to the creation of Emmanuel United Church in Bramalea, which she served until 1964.

The Commission on Ordination was established in 1958 and Elinor stated in an *Observer* article that its 1962 Report to General Council, which concluded that a married woman **could not** "discharge her obligations to her husband and children, and at the same time carry on the work for which she was ordained,"[10] ruined her vacation that summer. And in a 1963 letter to Rev. R.G. Oliver following the Commission's Report to General Council, Elinor reflects "I can only interpret this whole experience as meaning that God wants me to take it 'on the chin' so to speak for the sake of what He is planning to do with women far more capable and useful to Him when the social climate is ready to receive them."[11] The 1962 General Council did not adopt the Commission's recommendation and it was referred to the General Council Executive, which rejected the recommendation in 1963, an action confirmed at the 1964 General Council. The September 1964 *Observer* reported a male commissioner's comment that, "our church does not believe that fatherhood impairs a man's ministry. Neither do we believe motherhood impairs a woman's ministry."[12]

While these decisions opened the way for the ordination of other married women, such as Lois Wilson in 1965, it was a bittersweet outcome for Elinor Leard. After almost fifteen years of struggling for opportunity to follow her vocation in ministry in the United Church as overseas personnel and in Canada, she asked Presbytery to retain her on

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[10] Phyllis D. Airhart, "Women in The United Church of Canada," in *Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America*, vol. 1, eds. Rosemary Skinner Keller and Rosemary Radforth Ruether, Indiana University Press, 2006, 364.

[11] 15 January 1963 letter from Elinor Leard to Rev. R.G. Oliver, Accession #98.101C, The United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto.

[12] 1 September 1964, *United Church Observer*, 9.

the role, and moved on to dedicate herself to a high school teaching vocation. Elinor died on 8 January 2008.

Elinor Harwood Leard met obstacles and disappointment almost every step of the way in pursuit of the call to ministry she declared in 1938 and which the church recognized in 1939. But she would not compromise what she knew to be right and maintained her expectation that the church would find a place for her to exercise that vocation. She created her own path on her own terms and did not compromise her own intelligence and integrity and expected nothing less of the church. The record of correspondence leading up to and following her ordination in 1957 is a rich testimony to the way in which an individual with a deep sense of call, supported by family and mentors, can change the church and challenge it to unbind the social and cultural trappings which encumber the Christian ministry. "Like the original decision in 1936, each succeeding phase of women's ordination was a precedent-setting victory; however, the reality, as well as acceptance by both the public and the clergy has lagged far behind. Women's ordination in The United Church of Canada illustrates how difficult it is to change the gender ideology that suffuses the workplace."[13] The cost to such individuals is real and Elinor, in her decision to turn to teaching rather than continue to be limited and undermined as a woman in ministry, was consistent with her sense that God could lead her along several paths of satisfying work and service.

[13] Korinek, "No Women Need Apply," 509.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Death of Race: Building a New Christianity in a Racial World
Brian Bantum. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017. Pp. 182.

Brian Bantum's *The Death of Race: Building a New Christianity in a Racial World* is an accessible, provocative, theologically grounded foray into the incendiary and contentious discourse on race. He comes to this project as a bi-racial theologian who honours his bi-raciality while also acknowledging his awakening to an exteriorly initiated journey to "become black."

Bantum declares that race is "the structure of death, the dehumanizing and de-creating word a people sought to speak over the world, and violently succeeded. Race is what overshadows the world, conceiving our bodies and their differences as something to be perpetually overcome." He defiantly asserts, "My body is not a race." Bantum's title *The Death of Race*, provokes a certain curiosity. It could mean the *death* that racism has caused and continues to cause particularly for black and brown bodies. As well, it could mean the *end* (death) of the nefarious, artificial, colonizing invention of separating humans according to certain arbitrary external characteristics. Theologically, Bantum argues that we must take our bodies and their differences seriously, thereby honouring what it means to be made in the image of God. Bodily differences can indeed provide an opportunity to "understand God, the world, others, and ourselves more deeply."

In his first chapter, "Race Is a Story Written on My Body," he articulates the complexity of race and what it means for humans to be embodied. Black bodies do tell a compelling story, they bear witness that they are "a product of history and that we participate in history," and indeed that "our identities are about our bodies." Bantum's subtitle, *Building a New Christianity in a Racial World*, signals his desire to disrupt the status quo in the wider Christian community, as well as provoke radical theological conversation therein. Bantum argues that the Church has not dealt faithfully, courageously or satisfactorily with the reality of racism, and too often has been an initiator and accomplice in perpetuating and accommodating racism.

Bantum insists that our bodies are not extraneous to an intimate experience of God, and that different bodies multiply these experiences of God. He references God's intimate bodily creations in the Garden of Eden—*imago dei*—and the incarnation of Jesus Christ—divinity embodied—to extend his argument that we are "made in the image of a God whose life is relationship, whose life is difference and likeness and presence and love." Bantum employs the doctrine of the Fall in Genesis

to account theologically for the exploitative, racist, systemic oppression in human relations. "This fallen way of seeing and naming the world obscures our bodies, makes us more blind to who we are and who others are." Here I wonder if his analysis is sufficiently comprehensive to address the nefarious resilience and narrative, economic, social, and political power of systemic racism. However, his privileging of the sacrality of all bodies subverts the racist narrative that some bodies are ontologically better than others. Theologically, the incarnation of Jesus Christ confirms this, as does his consistent healing, touching and blessing of the bodies of the wounded, the vulnerable and the oppressed.

Bantum narrates, through the prism of the life and testimony of Jesus of Nazareth and Mary the mother of Jesus, an embodied faithfulness that dislodges the oppressive consignment of black and brown bodies to the machinations of race. He points to Jesus' ethnic and socio-political location as a Jewish man in the Roman Empire, signaling how culture "interprets a particular set of bodily markers." In the case of Mary, it is her agency as a woman and her prophetic *Magnificat* that signals the death knell of oppressive regimes, injustice of all types towards the vulnerable, and systematized domination—including systemic racism. Jesus' enfleshment and Mary's act of granting permission to God to use her body for the redemption of humanity and the cosmos, proclaims loudly that our bodies really matter.

Bantum's book is a clarion call to problematize the embodied reality of our diverse human family with all its difference. This problematization requires a critical and courageous engagement with and dismantling of the systems, narratives, polices and theologies that perpetuate the brutalization, marginalization and oppression of bodies of difference. As well, that same critical courage is necessary to envision, reimagine, organize and build just, equitable and honouring communities and institutions that live into the true reality of embodied sacredness.

As Bantum states: "The incarnation is the promise that our bodies and our words matter . . . an invitation to live into a new story." Perhaps it is the re-appropriation of God's liberative story, that will dislodge all plot lines of our human wrongdoing and re-narrate God's redemptive justice and shalom, thereby signaling, "the death of race."

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Existing Before God: Soren Kierkegaard and the Human Venture
Paul R. Sponheim. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017.
Pp. 180.

Existing Before God is the latest book by Paul R. Sponheim, professor emeritus at Luther Seminary in Saint Paul Minnesota. It is an introduction to Kierkegaard's thought and method via an in-depth analysis of Kierkegaard's book, *The Sickness Unto Death*. Various theologians/philosophers influenced by Kierkegaard are highlighted in the second section, moving in roughly chronological order from the mid 19th century into the 21st. Sponheim details where the various thinkers agree or disagree, and when they misrepresent Kierkegaard. The final section attempts to reconcile the legacy of Kierkegaard's ideas with today's pluralistic society. The introduction gives the most notorious aspects of Kierkegaards biography a light dusting before touching on Kierkegaard's use of pseudonimity and indirect communication, placing Anti-Climacus, the supposed author of *The Sickness Unto Death* in that context. Then we are off to the races.

Sponheim's analysis is thorough. While a complete beginner might find themselves lost in some of the denser sections (i.e. "The Pathetic and The Dialectical") of *Existing Before God,* an analysis that is introductory, while not talking down to the reader, is much appreciated. The central ideas are: the self in relation with itself as a "positive third" existing before the "constituting power" (a.k.a God as revealed through Christ); the infinite qualitative difference between the creator and the created; the obligation on the created; and sin as the willful misrelation on the part of the created. Each theme is unpacked both lucidly and dialectically. A large emphasis is placed on teasing out not just the "how" (the subjective dialectic of becoming a self) but also the "what" (that this process happens "before God") and that these must both be maintained in the proper relationship. Indeed, in the third section when Sponheim finds reason to criticize a writer it is often for placing too much emphasis on "how" over "what."

Kierkegaard says, in a journal entry referenced on pages *xxx* and 133, that "Anti-Climacus . . . regards himself to be a Christian on an extraordinarily high level." Just as for Marx the commodity "appears" as the elementary form of wealth in society, so this notion that Anti-Climacus "regards himself a Christian" demands further examination. The subjective experience that Kierkegaard is committed to revealing is one that cannot be captured by description but must be engaged viscerally through dialectic analysis. Sponheim writes on page *xxviii* that

"Kierkegaard's use of pseudonimity was . . . a method rooted in the content of his message." Sponheim handles this dynamic well in passages such as page 66-67 where he moves between Johannes Climacus and Anti-Climacus's contrasting points of departure to approach forgiveness as the truth in the infinite qualitative difference between creator and created.

The final section of the book muses about "what gifts Kierkegaard has for our time." On page 138 he offers Varughese John's reactionary claim that "there cannot be a proper understanding of subjectivity outside Christ and His revelation." We spend the last seven pages trying to untangle the paradox of how a person can become a Christian, with all the weight of Kierkegaard's obligation, without sliding into an essentialism that denies the subjectivity of the people with whom Christians share this cosmopolitan society. Sponheim ultimately lands on an appeal for the self to "rest transparently in the power that established it" attempting to reinsert the "how" and insisting that it not be subsumed under the "what." Perhaps this inability to really resolve this problem is due to the subjective, paradoxical nature of Kierkegaard's conception of becoming a Christian; on the other hand, perhaps it is because Sponheim is asking the wrong question.

Page *xi* of the preface ". . . claims [Kierkegaard] as a Christian was investigat[ing] specifically his understanding of Christian teaching about the human self in all its complexity as 'existing before God'." This claim comes up repeatedly throughout the book and one asks what this means? Is Sponheim simply stating that Kierkegaard was a Christian? Or is he saying that Kierkegaard is only for the Christians? Despite not wanting to essentialize the Christian God for human subjectivity, Sponheim cannot unessentialize the Christian in Kierkegaard and this ties Sponheim to a conservative reading.

The question for Kierkegaard was "How does one become a Christian within Christendom?" Kierkegaard lived in a society where a stale bourgeois Christianity was absolutely hegemonic. For Kierkegaard the becoming self was synonymous with the authentic Christian, within but also against Christendom. Today what is hegemonic is something more like bourgeois individualism. Sponheim wants to ask "How to become the authentic Christian in today's secular world?" A more progressive approach might be to ask, what does it mean to honestly become oneself within and perhaps against a hegemonic bourgeois secularity?

This book will be useful primarily for those looking for a gateway into existential theology. Anyone wanting a more secular

approach will have to look elsewhere.

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Fishing Tips: How Curiosity Transformed a Community of Faith
John Pentland. Toronto: Edge: A Network for Ministry Development, 2015. Pp xxiii + 220.

Rev. Dr. John Pentland's book, *Fishing Tips: How Curiosity Transformed a Community of Faith*, is perhaps even more timely now than it was when published in 2015. At a moment of massive transition in mainline denominations—particularly in the author's own, The United Church of Canada—Pentland's work offers significant encouragement for anyone concerned for the life and work of the local church. Accessible and engaging, *Fishing Tips* is part autobiography, part history, part leadership guide that traces the eleven-year transformation of Hillhurst United Church, Calgary, from a congregation with waning hope for the future, into a vibrant, active, hope-filled community of faith.

With a true pastor's heart, Pentland pushes against the rigidity and anxiety often experienced in the Church during times of change. He challenges long-held assumptions about leadership and spending money. He undercuts the narratives often embraced by mainline churches to explain what seem to be irreversible downward trends in attendance, resources, and the frequent death of local congregations. He invites the reader into a conversation about a renewed vision for the work of the church in the world that takes seriously our contexts, and what we do have, not what we lack.

Curiosity is the lens through which *Fishing Tips* invites us to look. While the particular story of Hillhurst undergirds the book, Pentland achieves his stated goal of avoiding one-size-fits-all answers. The "prescription," for churches ailing from familiar dis-eases in an increasingly secular culture, is learning to wonder how we might engage the gospel, each other, and the world differently. To that end, he reflects on nine "fishing tips," places in the communal and organizational lives of churches that are opportunities to consider what our particular congregations are called to, gifted with, and where some trust and risk might be necessary, in order to live faithfully and fully. Through these chapters, there is a refreshing expectation that "greatness" and "abundance" can be—should even be expected to be—part of the life of

the church. Great churches, says Pentland, are not satisfied with decline, or even the *status quo*, but "a great church is an aspirational church—it invites more: more personal integration, more connections, more engagement, more voice, more Spirit" (32).

Grounding his reflections in the post-resurrection story of Jesus suggesting his disciples cast their empty nets on the other side of the boat, and the extraordinary turn of events when they heed that unlikely suggestion, Pentland invites us to consider how, in our own churches, we might be called to do things in ways we have never done them. The introduction begins with a retelling of the story from John 21:1-6. Somewhat surprisingly, for anyone to whom the story is familiar, it ends not with the disciples wide-eyed as they recognize the risen Jesus as the one instructing them from the beach, but turning to see that "in the early morning mist the shore was as if empty." Pentland encourages disagreement and wrestling where it seems helpful (xiv). Here is one point of criticism from this reviewer—not just with the creative retelling but the occasional underlying sense that the motivation for a great, abundant, aspirational church is a touch "misty." Phrases like "we take the community's self-determined mission and vision statements and make them real . . ." (xix), or the implication that the church needs to "find" its place in the culture and nation (217), would seem to surrender the vision and mission of the church to the preferences of its members, and the influence of its surrounding culture. Biblically speaking, the church is not encouraged to fit in, nor are we encouraged to put our passions ahead of the will and way of Jesus Christ crucified, risen, and reigning. The One who guides us is not a mist on the shore, but a living Lord. It seems worth asking, at what point do we risk taking our culture, our passions and our best will and efforts too seriously? How do we, practically, live lovingly and creatively "in the world, but not of it?"

Nevertheless, *Fishing Tips* should be received with gratitude, and read with seriousness, by anyone concerned for the life and work of the church, and particularly the mainline church and its witness. Pentland's joyful faith, pastoral instincts, wide-ranging wisdom, and genuine desire to see congregations engaged with the world in all its diversity and wonder, are gifts to a church often beset by anxiety, parochialism, and navel-gazing. We would do well to accept the invitation to curiosity, trusting in the One who came that we might have abundant life.

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From Wrongs to Rights: How Churches Can Engage the United Nations Declaration on The Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Steve Heinrichs, ed. *Intotemak* Special 2016 Issue. Winnipeg: Mennonite Church Canada. Pp. 163.

This is a special edition of *INTOTEMAK*, a quarterly publication of the Mennonite Church Canada, as a resource of and for Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations. It is an anthology of prose, poetry, image and analysis, organized into five sections, each addressing implications of the *Declaration* (UN-DRIP). Not each section, nor each piece, is explicitly detailed toward a response by churches. Some offer images or words that lift up elements of the UN-DRIP or the context of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations and histories, without calling for any definite response. For example, a poem by Shane Rhodes pieces together words from the Government of Canada's statement of support for the UN-DRIP, words that speak of commitment and of reiterating a new path, and words that are placed alongside an image of the Parliament buildings in Ottawa in the 1920s. There are images throughout that invoke colonial encounters, self-determination, resistance, resilience, Indigenous leadership, the land. A piece drawn from Isabel Altamirano-Jimenez offers a definition of Indigenous as an identifier of peoples and communities. Such pieces in this assemblage of reflections and analysis provoke response without directing it. As a whole, the book does the same. The Introduction frames it as a "call to relationship." In that introduction, as throughout the materials, the call to move from "wrongs to rights" is informed by detail about UN-DRIP, by Indigenous voices and by theological commitment. However, the paths of action from the text are multiple and open.

This is not a cohesive book and it does not claim to be. However, it is clear and consistent in its purpose. As Heinrichs identifies in the Introduction:

> The contributors are an amazing group coming from a variety of peoples, places, and perspectives. They do not share the same worldview or religious tradition. That's a good thing. And they hold differing opinions about the *Declaration* and how it is best used. They are, however, all deeply committed to the task of undoing the colonial patterns and practices that keep Indigenous and Settler peoples apart. They're all committed to the hope and real

potential of a renewed, respectful relationship (p. 9).

The clarity throughout is found in its form as a resource and in its focus on information and perspective. As with many multi-vocal texts that take up responses to colonial violence and ongoing relations, the clear naming of perspective and context is made both in the introductions to each writer and also in various ways by the writers in their offerings.

It is for the readers to take up the responses and to implement action, from within our own contexts and perspectives. Toward this end, the text includes a short but detailed study guide, with discussion questions for each of the five sections of the book. The stated intent to foster conversation and learning is supported throughout in the level of detail, the organization around action-focused themes, the laying of perspectives alongside each other, the contextualization of writers and voices, and in the study guide.

The book does not claim to be comprehensive or exhaustive in representing all perspectives. It draws together difference and contested views and so invites them in response—even as it guides conversation toward action. While not explicitly directive, it is clear in calling for response. Where I offer a critique it is that it does not directly address potential slippages between Settler, Christian, and White. Indigenous Christian voices shape the text as do non-Indigenous Christian voices. White non-Indigenous voices also shape the text, as do the voices of non-Indigenous peoples of colour. The complexity of such positionalities could be brought more to the fore in the framing of the book, as such slippages are common in the readership of such texts—in ways that can reiterate the centering of white settler Christians as those who are "the church" that is called to engage. I do not see that as the intent of the book, but this could be made more explicit at the outset.

It is an informative resource and is also, in its format, invitational. It can be read in part, or in whole, and re-engaged for deeper reflection or further study. It would make an excellent classroom resource. Short texts, images, and different styles of writing make it accessible and will likely lend itself to a long life as a widely circulating resource for audiences both highly engaged and also newly responding to the call to relationship named in this text.

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Yours, Mine, Ours: Unravelling the Doctrine of Discovery. **Cheryl Woelk and Steve Heinrichs, eds. *Intotemak* Special 2016 Issue. Winnipeg: Mennonite Church Canada. Pp. 164.**

Yours, Mine, Ours: Unravelling the Doctrine of Discovery is a collection of short articles, poetry, photography, graphic comics, drawings and interviews, focused on the call to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery. Contributors include Indigenous and settler authors, poets, artists, and activists (primarily from Turtle Island). The impetus for this journal issue arises, in part, from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #49, naming the need for "all religious denominations and faith groups . . . to repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous lands and peoples, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and *terra nullius* (Call to Action #49) (3)."

Yours, Mine, Ours is divided into four sections: exploring the history of the Doctrine of Discovery and *terra nullius*; identifying how the Doctrine of Discovery is still actively used today; naming underlying assumptions about Indigenous peoples as well as land, history, and relationships; and finally, looking at how to "return, repair, and rebuild" relationships.

In addition, there is a two-page study guide at the end. This study guide acknowledges the need to continue with the work of repudiation and repair, and so offers a way for small groups or individuals to engage with the content. There are brief summaries of each part of the issue, suggestions for further reading, and discussion questions. *Yours, Mine, Ours* ends with further reading suggestions from the editors, sorted according to three themes: history and present impacts of the Doctrine of Discovery; theological resources; resources specifically for "children and older ones (163)."

There are a number of key points to *Yours, Mine, Ours*. The first, of course, is the exploration of how the Doctrine of Discovery and *terra nullius* were developed as theo-political constructs to justify European colonisation of the Americas and the Caribbean. This exploration of historical and current impacts and realities, along with the clear naming of the ways in which churches and settlers have benefited from these constructs, is invaluable and pointed. There is a clearly identified need for settlers to educate themselves about the ways in which settlers have benefited (i.e. privileges) and the ways in which these theo-political realities have functioned to dispossess Indigenous peoples and have led to the practices of cultural genocide. Throughout the journal issue, it is

clear that settlers have significant work to do in naming and changing the toxic realities of colonialism that still shape relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples.

There is a clear connection between colonization, land, and legal systems of rights and privileges, or conversely, systems of dispossession and destruction. Contributors explore these realities in prose, poetry, graphic comics, photography, and story-telling. Contributors also explore the ways in which decolonization of settlers' minds, theologies, scriptures, and communities are necessary for the healing of settlers and rebuilding good and just relationships with Indigenous peoples.

Yours, Mine, Ours is not a typical edited collection exploring a particular topic, in large part because it is multi-disciplinary, not only in approaches to content (theological, legal, sociological, etc) but also in the use of various genres (prose, poetry, art, etc.). In this way, it is more accessible to wider audiences. The short articles also lend themselves to an easier read. In this way, the book/journal could be used readily for church study groups, perhaps focusing on one section per gathering. Most of the articles are two to three pages long, and as such, just touch on a particular topic or question related to the Doctrine of Discovery, colonization, law and theology, and right relationships. The inclusion of some longer articles to explore ideas in more depth would increase the strength of this book. Therefore, the suggestions for further reading in both the study guide and at the very end of the issue are helpful for those looking to learn more in particular areas.

The audience for this issue will be primarily lay people and clergy in various denominations; those engaged in social justice and activist groups; and potentially theology, religious studies, and law students and professors. While the articles are short (and thus easy to use for a study group), a leader may wish to do additional reading prior to discussion, in order to give some further background information on each of these topics. I would recommend *Yours, Mine, Ours* to anyone interested in a starting point for exploring the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius. This would be particularly appropriate for church groups and communities engaged with (or wanting to engage in) work towards right relations and solidarity.

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