

Touchstone

Volume 39

October 2021

Number 3

Uses and Abuses of Power

Editorial 3

Articles

Prolonged Vigilance: On Theological Method and Its
Power Operations
Natalie Wigg-Stevenson..... 6

Idol No More? The Biblical Imagery of Divine Kingship
William S. Morrow..... 15

The Use and Abuse of Power: Jesus and His Confrontation
with Projective Anxiety
Jody Clarke..... 26

Battlefield or Garden: Power in the Pastoral Relationship
Wendy Kean 35

And With Authority: Church and Power in Ecumenical Dialogue
Scott Sharman..... 43

Women of Influence: A Vocational Response to Online Hate
Kate Miller 52

Profile

Sang Chul Lee
Hae-Bin Jung..... 61

Reviews

The Canada Crisis: A Christian Perspective

By Douglas John Hall

Nicholas Athanasiadis..... 68

The Way of St. Benedict

By Rowan Williams

D.V. MacDonald..... 70

Misguided Love: Christians and the Rupture of LGBTQI2+ People

By Charles Fensham

Harold Wells..... 72

Tender to the World: Jean Vanier, L'Arche and the United Church of Canada

By Carolyn Whitney-Brown

Reid B. Locklin 74

Editorial

Christianity and Power

Christians have always had an uneasy relationship with the concept of power. Jesus inherited a rich spiritual tradition that proclaimed God as the defender of the widow and the orphan, and exalted the humble and the poor. St. Paul wrote of the power of God “made perfect in weakness.” Both Jewish and Christian traditions frequently portray both human power and spiritual “principalities and powers” as forces at odds with the will and purposes of God.

In modern times, Christians have often been put on the defensive by critics like Friedrich Nietzsche who decried Christianity as a “religion of slaves.” By making humility, submissiveness and weakness its primary virtues, Nietzsche argued that Christianity fomented hatred and resentment towards the vital, strong and powerful, emasculating the human spirit and corrupting the advance of human culture.

As we have become painfully aware of the contribution of religion to Euro-centric colonialism, we have come to see how the powerful have controlled the powerless by holding up the ideal of the “good Christians,” meek and submissive to authority.

In Robert Harris’s novel *Imperium*, Tiro, the slave and secretary of the lawyer and politician Cicero, wryly notes that “Power brings a man many luxuries, but a clean pair of hands is seldom among them.”¹ This sums up one Christian attitude towards power, that it is inherently problematic and corrupting.

But “power” can be defined simply as “the ability to do or to act.” In this sense, power is unavoidable. Without the exercise of power, nothing could happen. The English word “power” comes from the Latin *posse* which is just the everyday word for “to be able to.” It’s reflected in most languages descended from Latin, including French (*pouvoir*), Italian (*potere*), Portuguese (*poder*) and Romanian (*să poăta*). Power can be mundane, non-controversial, neutral. The real question is *how* power is exercised, by whom and for what purpose?

The word “power” (Greek *dunamai/dunamis*) occurs over 150 times in the New Testament. St. Paul wrote that the Gospel is “the power of God for salvation to all who believe” (Rom 1:16). The concept of power is central to the Christian message. Power must be used. But it can easily be abused. It requires the guidelines, boundaries and definition to be used rightly. For Christians, these are to be found in the Gospel.

¹ Robert Harris, *Imperium*, (London: Penguin Random House UK, 2006), 4.

Articles in this Issue

This issue of *Touchstone* explores the use and abuse of power from six fascinating perspectives. Natalie Wigg-Stevenson looks at the underlying, often hidden assumptions about power that are operative whenever a group of people does theology. Using ethnographic methodologies, she examines how these assumptions work differently in, for example, academic and non-academic contexts, and at the presuppositions that theologians, pastors and lay people bring to their reflections on a faithful life.

William Morrow begins his article by noting the common accusation that the biblical God is an abuser of power, a narcissistic megalomaniac. He looks at the origins of many of the unflattering characteristics attributed to the God of Israel in ancient Near Eastern ideologies of kingship. He offers a positive, corrective reading of the biblical tradition by pointing out how the monotheistic portrayal of God in Hebrew Scripture is also the source of the rejection of oppressive idols, an openness to a redemptive future, and a commitment to justice.

Jody Clarke uses the psychotherapeutic concept of “projected anxiety”—the projection of something noxious or unhealthy within the self onto others—to interpret Jesus’ action in the face of power. By absorbing destructive rage and violence, Jesus redemptively transforms it into healing and benevolence.

Wendy Kean draws on her experience as a military chaplain to offer insights into the relationship between unhealthy power relationships and professional sexual misconduct and abuse. The exercise of power can be understood through the metaphor of a “battlefield,” in which power is used to compel compliance. But power can be more helpfully understood through the metaphor of a “garden,” as the patient and ongoing cultivating of personal character which manifests itself in just and equitable action towards others.

Scott Sharman looks at power in its institutional manifestations through the lens of the long history of dialogue between The United Church of Canada and The Anglican Church of Canada. He reminds us that our day to day experience of power and authority is often mediated through institutional structures and norms. His history of this behind-the-scenes ecumenical effort is both informative and helpful.

Kate Miller, a progressive woman who has chosen a life of homemaking, recounts her foray into the online world of “biblical womanhood, describing a virtual ecosystem that fuses traditional “femininity” with noxious conservative political movements. She describes her use of handcrafts to subvert and thereby disempower a message of hate.

Each issue of *Touchstone* includes a profile of an individual who has had a significant impact on the church. This month, I'm delighted that we can feature the remarkable life of Sang Chul Lee, former Moderator of The United Church of Canada. What a story! Well worth reading.

As usual, *Touchstone* includes four reviews of current books. In our February 2022 issue we will be introducing a new feature, a Book Notices page which draws our readers' attention to books that we think are worth reading. Contributions to this page are welcome! Include the title, author, publisher, date and number of pages, with a brief (2 to 3 sentence) description and send it to paulridleymiller@gmail.com.

You can support *Touchstone*

Touchstone is a valuable forum for wide-ranging theological conversation within The United Church of Canada and beyond. If you enjoy reading it, you can encourage others to subscribe, giving a gift subscription to someone you know, or making a tax-deductible financial donation. Look at the coloured insert in the middle of this issue for details.

Paul Miller

PROLONGED VIGILANCE: ON THEOLOGICAL METHOD AND ITS POWER OPERATIONS

by Natalie Wigg-Stevenson

Theological writing about power often focuses on how power can be used and abused in interpersonal relationships and social organization. These are important topics, particularly if Christian theology is to contribute to dismantling social structures that confer privilege to a few while marginalizing others. But in this essay, I focus on power's operation in how we make theology in the first place.

There can be an unspoken—and occasionally, offensively spoken—assumption among academic theologians that only we can get God right. After all, we're the ones who have studied the Christian traditions: who, therefore, know the revelation that's come before. Our work is to figure out where things *on the ground* have gone wrong and fix them. I'm polemicizing, of course. And yet, we often don't need to dig too deep to find this view operating—at least implicitly—as a scholarly motivation to write in ways that try to *do good* in the world. It's worth noting, however, that this view is not held by scholars alone. Throughout my ethnographic work, I've connected with numerous Christians who won't interpret their own insightful reasoning about faith as a form of "theology" because it isn't "academic" enough.

There's an alternative assumption, of course, that only those "on the ground" can truly know God. This view is also held by theologians who work both inside and outside the academy. The former can romanticize everyday life as embodying pure and unmediated wisdom, untainted by academic abstraction or oppressive traditional machinations. The latter, alternatively, imagine academics as being out of touch, living too distant from the stuff of real-life concern—as if academics somehow don't experience illness, job insecurity, caring for children and/or parents, burnout and everything else that might require *ad hoc*, context specific, ways of reasoning our faith.

Theology understood thusly imagines church, academy and everyday life as distinct spheres that require bridging. There is a failure to see that these spheres already overlap in mutual conflict and cooperation, with many of us operating in and across all three at once. The task of the academic theologian with this view of theology entails not speaking from one sphere towards another. The theologian's task, rather, is to operate at their organic overlap in a self-reflexive way, nurturing the multiple theological possibilities that the overlap produces. This task, I have argued elsewhere, is less one of speaking a proclamation, and more one of

engaging in a conversation.¹ For the purposes of the theme of this issue, then, I'll be asking how we should understand—and grapple with—the power dynamics inherent in theological knowledge production when it shifts from proclamation to conversation: that is, when we understand the academic theologian as being not outside of but, rather, inside the fray.

I use ethnography in my research to attempt this theological conversation, drawing on fieldwork conducted during a year-long study at First Baptist Church, Nashville (FBC) in 2010. The collaborative methods I attempted at FBC distributed the power to construct theology amongst a group of gathered Christians. In other words, I sought to share power more equitably than typically occurs with academic theology. And yet, as I argue here, even collaborative approaches to theological knowledge production are power laden. Collaboration is just as rife with potential for power's abuse as more hierarchical approaches. Vigilance is required no matter the context.

Theological Fieldwork

FBC ordained me in 2009, a year before my fieldwork began. I served there as a part-time associate (i.e., unpaid) minister throughout the fieldwork, as well as for a year afterwards before I moved to Toronto. This means that I embodied a hybrid position of minister/scholar throughout my research with them. So, while I used standard ethnographic practices of participant observation and interviewing, I also deployed my hybridity to design and teach adult education theology courses to a self-selected group of church members as a type of ethnographic focus group. In so doing, I sought to decentralize the power I as an academic theologian had to make theological claims on my own.

As Kathryn Tanner has influentially argued, theology operates across a discursive spectrum. At one end, we have everyday theological discourse (i.e., *ad hoc*, context specific ways of reasoning faith), and at the other end, academic theological discourse (i.e., theology that withdraws from the everyday to use historic, systematic and, by necessity, somewhat abstracted modes of reasoning).² It's important to emphasize that this is a spectrum not a binary, for Tanner: theological discourse does not pick a side but, rather, traverses the whole line. Furthermore, no approach along

¹ Natalie Wigg-Stevenson, "From Proclamation to Conversation: Ethnographic Disruptions to Theological Normativity," *Palgrave Communications* 1, no. 1 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.1057/palcomms.2015.24>.

² Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology*, Guides to Theological Inquiry (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997).

the way is explicitly valued over another (though the rest of Tanner's *corpus* indicates that she might have her own preferences). Anyone working anywhere along the continuum can do theological bricolage: that is, a process by which someone assembles disparate theological forms into something that has creative resonance for others.

For Tanner, academic theologians listen to everyday theological conversations in order to discern and then articulate answers for the questions that bubble up *on the ground*. But I wanted to collapse those distinctions even further. Which is why I assembled this group in the basement of FBC. There, we gathered Christians whose theological reasoning operated across the spectrum. Each one brought multiple different kinds of skill, insight, issues and gifts to the conversation, offering it up to a participatory, collaborative form of theological knowledge production that no one of us could have done on our own.

Sunday evenings, we'd gather to discuss theologians from Justin Martyr to James Cone, St. Augustine to Søren Kierkegaard, Marguerite Porete to Immanuel Kant, René Descartes to Elizabeth Johnson. The courses were arranged around two doctrines: one course on "Jesus Christ and Salvation" and the other, "God as Trinity." And the intersection of each thinker/doctrine provided frameworks for us to tackle our own contemporary questions of faith. As is common with ethnographic approaches, the course participants consented to our conversations being recorded and then used in my future theological writing. It's worth noting, though, that they quickly seemed to forget their role as research participants each evening as we entered vigorous theological debate.

Jesus Christ and Salvation

Tonight in the "Jesus Christ and Salvation" course, we're talking about Anselm and how his feudal context shaped his understanding of sin-as-dishonour in his theory of atonement. This group of Baptists in Tennessee probably engages images of God's honour more than liberal mainliners in Canada or the Northern US might. Even so, the concept still requires some translation to make it work for them. As one of them puts it, "We don't have a sense of honour in the same way . . . it's not an American concept, so I don't think it's the same understanding of how I understand sin."

In a feudal system, I explain, "if me, a little serf, dishonours my Lord and master, he's not going to go home and cry. He's probably going to chop off my hands." Ok, that's probably not entirely accurate, but I'm trying to make a point. "Like, he's going to be able to retaliate and do whatever he wants. But what that does in the mindset of the Medievals is..." Before I can finish the sentence, Ann interjects or, rather, speaks in

parallel with me to try to affirm what I'm saying: "It's a disrespect." When I go back to my digital recording of the evening, I can hear that this translation of "dishonour" to "disrespect" has been happening all night. But I don't really catch it till this moment.

"No," I respond, "it's not even about the disrespect. It actually creates a rip in the way things are supposed to be. It means that order and the way that God has intended order for human relationships has been broken momentarily." Sin-as-dishonour is not interpersonal between me and God. Sin-as-dishonour, rather, is the divine order of things being so disrupted that only an extreme public display of restitution can make things right again.

What I want the group to see is that with Anselm's theory of substitutionary atonement, God's power operates from primarily outside of the social system within which the rest of humanity lives. God's power operates by ordering the system itself and overseeing that order. In other words, God's power in this model is what the French philosopher Michel Foucault referred to as *sovereign* power: that is, the kind of dominating power a monarch exercises over his people—or in this case, that the Lord of the estate exercises over his serfs.

Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* opens with a man suspected of regicide drawn and quartered—a gruesome display of how a monarch's sovereign power operated in the Medieval period.³ As Ellen Armour argues, if concern about regicide was primarily its direct threat to the king, then it could be punished in private.⁴ But the public—even spectacle—nature of the punishment reveals a more complex situation at play. The criminal's actions have not so much threatened the king directly (i.e., they're not interpersonal) but, rather, they have introduced instability into the king's corporate body. His actions have disordered the way things are supposed to be. So, by executing the criminal publicly, the king re-establishes himself as the one who has power over all the people. He re-orders things back to their intended function. He can remind the people that their lives are his and not their own.

With the sovereign view of power inherent to Anselm's atonement theology, it's the system's internal order that needs to be maintained. And when that order gets disrupted—when the order and, thereby, God gets

³ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

⁴ Ellen T. Armour, *Signs and Wonders: Theology After Modernity*, Gender, Theory, and Religion (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.7312/armo17248>.

dishonoured—the spectacle of punishment-as-restitution is more important than actually punishing the right person. As Armour puts it, “Subjects matter only in the collective, not individually; the specific body being drawn and quartered could just as easily be another.”⁵ This is why for Anselm’s substitutionary atonement, Jesus can pay the debt for our sin: why he can restore the order that we’ve broken.

While the group might need to keep translating dishonour (which heightens God’s transcendence of a (dis)ordered system) into the interpersonal language of disrespect (which heightens God’s immanence to us in relation), Jesus paying their debt actually resonates deeply for them. This resonance is likely because of their familiarity with the popular hymn, “Jesus Paid it All,” which one group member mentions to a chorus of *oh yes, right right, good one!* kinds of responses. They’re a little more comfortable with the solution than they are with the problem when it comes to a Medieval understanding of sin, it seems.

It might seem strange to give so much attention to how our group engaged Anselm’s substitutionary atonement theory here, but their grappling provides insight into how they understood (if only implicitly) God’s power, transcendence and immanence in relation to what was possible (or even permitted) in theological conversation. While they might no longer have thought about God within a corporately constituted structure of sin-as-dishonour, some remnant of that image remained operative in their trust that Jesus had, in fact, *paid it all*. Hidden therein, Anselm’s more fearsome God would rise to the surface of their theological imaginations whenever he was even only slightly invoked.

Most of the time, the group’s approach to shared theological construction happened freely, playfully even. They would chat about things like God’s characteristics, God’s work in the world, their own spiritual experiences, etc., without much anxiety. In other words, when it came to engaging with God’s redemptive immanence, theology was understood to be a shared spiritual practice of worship—as numerous class members framed it. But whenever our topic turned to more transcendent Divine images (e.g., to the inner workings of the Trinity), they would start to clam up. As one class member put it: “I think that’s what makes the Trinity such a scary concept to wrestle with. You don’t wanna get it wrong . . . there’s just so much more at stake. You remember that vengeful God!” In sum: whenever the group pictured God as transcendent, they wanted me just to give them the answers. I was to do theology in their place. But when

⁵ Armour, 28.

they pictured God as immanent, it was much easier for them to do their theology in collaboration.

So let's return to the question animating this inquiry: how does our understanding of power operations change when we shift our dominant metaphor for theological construction from proclamation to conversation? That is, when we understand the academic theologian not as set apart to do the theology but, rather, as doing it collaboratively from inside the fray? As I've already noted, it's too easy to claim that replacing a hierarchical model for theological knowledge production with a more collaborative one will automatically mend the problems associated with power dynamics. And here Foucault can guide our exploration once more.

From Sovereign Power to Disciplinary Power

For Foucault, sovereign power has largely been supplanted in our contemporary context by what he called *disciplinary power*.⁶ One of his prototypical images of how disciplinary power arises as the spectacle of punishment described above is gradually replaced with the seemingly more benevolent view of criminality as something to be repented of and reformed. This fact is supposedly evident in the architectural design of modern *penitentiaries*, which were viewed as giving each inmate the individual space to search his (and in this context, it was "his") soul and transform himself from within. The belief that such penitence was even possible was, interestingly enough, rooted in a progressive view that humanity was inherently good (i.e., a modern refusal of original sin) and that anyone who had strayed from that goodness would—given the right conditions—simply return to it.

But, as Foucault's study shows, the prison's architectural design reveals a different—and more insidious—operation of power entirely. Based on Jeremy Bentham's infamous and influential panopticon model, the penitentiary space was organized by a centralized viewing tower from which guards could oversee (quite literally) the inmates' highly structured daily activity. This watchful eye might sound a lot like a sovereign understanding of power. But Foucault points out that while the guards in the tower could see the inmates, the inmates could not see the guards. As a result, the inmates followed the rules whether or not they were actually being watched.

Surveillance and the illusion of surveillance had the same effect

⁶ Foucault's additional category of biopower is a fascinating one that brings together sovereign and disciplinary forms. Its use remains beyond the scope of this paper, however.

because the inmates had so internalized the highly structured norms of the place. Reformation, as a result, didn't arise from within each man; rather, it was disciplined from without to such a degree—i.e., to the point of its internalization—that it only came to *have the appearance* of arising from within.

By shifting the locus of power from outside the system to its very centre, the prison ended up dispersing power throughout the people: the power, that is, to self-monitor and thereby self-regulate without any sovereign to enforce them. Furthermore, the prison, Foucault argued, was not unique in this way. Rather, it revealed the ways in which disciplinary power operates throughout all of society. We all submit to being shaped by disciplinary regimes—that is, institutions like medicine, education, nationalism, etc.—to be healthy, productive citizens. We're all disciplined to fit in. And when we fail to fit in with them, those regimes become more visible as they try to make us do so.

So how does this relate to our basement group's tentativeness to talk about Godself, even when they viewed talking about God's operations in the world not only to be acceptable but, even, to be an act of shared worship? Through centuries of thought and practice, Anselm's sovereign God (not to mention multiple other versions of God) has become *internalized* to a Christian imagination that we all inherit. Even if our beliefs about that *sovereign(ity)* have changed, it can still exert power over (or, better, into) us.⁷ And when we get too close to its edges, we feel that power more. Whenever members of our group remembered the ever-watchful Divine eye, they'd quickly self-monitor, self-regulate and self-correct. In other words, they'd shut down from theological engagement.

So what I want us to see from all this is that more hierarchical visions of God (and, by extension, of theological knowledge production) aren't inherently more abusive of power than flattened out ones. They might be or become abusive, of course. But they aren't always necessarily so. Anselm's articulation of God isn't necessarily bad and ours—the more “progressive” one—isn't necessarily good. In a move that certainly sounds like—but doesn't have to be!—relativism, bad and good here are matters of degree and context. They actually have to be arbitrated. Power can't be denied, and even when it's dispersed it still has the capacity to control.

⁷ I'm not saying here that Christians no longer believe in the sovereignty of God. Some don't and some do. But *the way* that we believe it—at least, for Baptists and The United Church of Canada: i.e., those about whom and primarily for whom this article is written—has largely changed.

Concluding Remarks

We are increasingly aware how impossible it is to relegate Christian abuses of power to a pre-modern past—part of the reason why I’ve sought to reclaim Anselm to support my argument here and have done so without trying to make him more “progressive”. Given the impossibility of relegating power’s abuse to the past, then, we’ve seen here that it’s entirely too easy to imagine that the solution to power’s abuse is simply power-sharing. Those of us who seek to disperse our power, who share it with the gathered, might be able to strive towards a more collaborative understanding of truth. We can know that we can only truly know God when we know God together. But we also have to recognize that we’re still operating within this disciplinary power regime. And there are two points to this regime to which I want to attend here in closing.

The first is that there’s an affective resonance that keeps ringing through our visceral experiences of the Divine long past the time when our intellectual beliefs might have changed. Similarly, even once we’ve let go of any image we might have of the academic theologian as sovereign — consider the prison watchtower’s all-seeing eye transformed into the scholar atop his ivory tower—a communal approach to theological knowledge production doesn’t simply fix dynamics we have long dismissed as problematically hierarchical. The astute reader has likely noticed that in my narration of our group conversation above, I describe our conversations as *me* wanting *them* to understand something particular about Anselm. I refer to *them* as “*the group*,” as if I somehow am not a part of that group. That’s not to say that I abused my power. But no matter how much I might have tried to resist and/or share it, the affective resonances both they and I felt in relation to the figure of the teacher kept us from supposedly genuine (that is, idealized and, therefore, impossible) collaboration.

And second, by acknowledging how power was dispersed throughout the group we can recognize how many different kinds of power were operative among us. It’s not that some had more power and others had less. Power isn’t typically so measurable as that (thought we often wish it were). I was ordained, but so were a number of them (FBC is a common destination for retired Baptist ministers). I was a young, bi-racial woman whereas all but one of them were older than me, they were all White, and half of them were men. I could design and direct the topics we pursued, but I always had to do so in a way that I knew would be intelligible to them (e.g., we studied a classical but not contemporary feminist theologian and we didn’t study queer theology at all, despite my own scholarly interest in that area). We were all internalizing a view of God’s power in our lives—

as well as the forms of power with which society imbues us—as we conversed about the Sacred together. We all self-disciplined and self-regulated in relation to each other, depending upon where within the web of power-relations we were positioned.

The reason these two points matter is not because any attempts we pursue to combat hierarchical abuses of power through more collaborative approaches—both to ministry and to theology—are useless. But it is to point out the gap between what’s possible and what we might wish were possible. That gap matters not because we can overcome it, but because it can keep us on our toes. Power will always find a way. The gap between what’s possible and what we wish were possible is, therefore, the space for our vigilance. It’s where we become the ones who can wait and keep watch . . . of ourselves, of course. But then again, from what we’ve seen here: for better or for worse, that seems to be how this whole power thing works.

IDOL NO MORE? THE BIBLICAL IMAGERY OF DIVINE KINGSHIP¹

by William S. Morrow

Characterizations of the biblical God as an abuser have become a well-honed cultural trope. Richard Dawkin's jibe is representative:

The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.²

Nor are such critiques confined to those who manifest general antipathy to the Christian tradition. For example, about a decade ago the well-known pastoral psychologist Donald Capps diagnosed the biblical God with "narcissistic personality disorder." He concluded that Scriptural narratives demonstrated the primary features of this pathology: "a pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy or behavior), need for admiration, and lack of empathy, beginning by early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts."³

Unfortunately, Dawkins and his followers engage in a thoroughly ahistorical reading of the biblical text. They express little interest in how the biblical imagination functioned for its original readers or where its imagery was derived from. Approaches like that of Capps are similarly

¹ My thanks to Ruth Morrow, Tracy Trothen and Mark Ward for reading an earlier draft of this article and sending me their comments. Of course, responsibility for the opinions expressed herein is solely mine.

² Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London: Bantam, 2006), 31. Dawkins claim has been provided with biblical proof texts and expanded by Dan Barker, *God: The Most Unpleasant Character in All Fiction* (New York: Sterling, 2016).

³ Donald Capps, "God Diagnosed with Narcissistic Personality Disorder," *Pastoral Psychology* 58 (2009): 199. His criteria were based on the standard reference used in psychiatric care: *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders—DSM-IV* (American Psychiatric Association, Washington, DC, 1994). For another charge of divine narcissism in biblical tradition see Stuart Lasine, "Divine Narcissism and Yahweh's Parenting Style," *Biblical Interpretation* 10.1 (2002): 36-56.

uninformed by historical considerations. It is not possible, however, to adequately assess how to interpret the Bible's abusive God imagery unless we engage in this kind of reflection.

As scholars have shown, ideas about God in the Hebrew Scriptures drew on several social relationships in the ancient world.⁴ Nevertheless, the most pervasive metaphor for imagining divine reality came from the ideology of kingship.⁵ In many ways, YHWH the god of Israel was perceived to be the ancient Near Eastern (ANE) king *par excellence*. As a monarch, he (sic!) demanded complete loyalty from his subjects and in return rewarded them with his favours (e.g., fertile land, victory in battle). The idea that there was only one God was also closely connected to the metaphor of kingship. Indeed, it is possible to see monotheism as a religious development that took the ideology of kingship to its logical conclusion: since there can only be one king, by extension there could only be one deity.

By way of example, these elements find expression in Israel's invasion of Canaan as depicted in biblical sources (e.g., Joshua 6–12). Although historical reconstruction casts doubt on its veracity,⁶ what is important here is the connection between the conquest tradition and the ideology of kingship. As the true ruler and owner of the land, YHWH had the right to bestow it on those whom he deemed capable of complete loyalty to him. Evidently this could not be the adherents of traditional Canaanite religions, as they were committed to the veneration of a multiplicity of deities. Therefore, YHWH was at liberty to displace these peoples and give their land to those who would be faithful to him. There are multiple examples of ANE monarchs acting in a similar fashion.⁷

In fact, almost all the epithets that Dawkins ascribes to YHWH can be predicated on ancient Near Eastern kings:⁸

⁴ A good recent survey can be found in Theodore J. Lewis, *The Origin and Character of God: Ancient Israelite Religion through the Lens of Divinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

⁵ Mark Zvi Brettler, *God Is King: Understanding an Israelite Metaphor*, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement* 76 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1989), 160.

⁶ See, e.g., William G. Dever, "Israel, History of (Archaeology and the "Conquest")," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:545-58.

⁷ See, e.g., Jonathan Valk, "Crime and Punishment: Deportation in the Levant in the Age of Assyrian Hegemony," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 384 (Nov 2020): 77-103.

⁸ Unless otherwise noted, all of the characteristics listed in this chart and the one

Petty	Royal correspondence shows that kings were often quick to perceive slights to their honour.
Unforgiving control freak	According to royal annals, rebellions were often put down with great violence and forgiveness denied.
Vindictive	Avenging disloyalty was a common justification for military action.
Bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser	The Assyrian and Babylonian empires routinely deported portions of the populations they had not killed to suppress the possibility of rebellion.
Misogynistic	Patriarchal ideology predominated in the ANE. ⁹
Infanticidal/Filiocidal	Infant and child sacrifice was practiced in certain expressions of West Semitic religions. ¹⁰

that follows are documented in studies such as Lori L. Rowlett, *Joshua and the Rhetoric of Violence: A New Historicist Analysis*, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement* 226 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 71-120; and Richard Jude Thompson, *Terror of the Radiance: Aššur Covenant to YHWH Covenant*, *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* 258 (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2013), 113-54.

⁹ This claim needs to be nuanced in view of recent feminist scholarship as noted by Carol Meyers, “Was Ancient Israel a Patriarchal Society?” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 133 (2014): 8-27. Nevertheless, it is generally true in the administration of biblical and ANE law, see Elisabeth Meier Tetlow, *Women, Crime and Punishment in Ancient Law and Society: The Ancient Near East* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 217-19; Morrow, *Introduction to Biblical Law*, 239-47.

¹⁰ This claim is not without controversy, but for recent confirmation of child sacrifice in Phoenician religion see Patricia Smith, “Infant Sacrifice? The Tale Teeth Tell,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 40.4 (2014): 54-56, 68.

Megalomaniacal	Extravagant praise of the ruler is a common theme in royal inscriptions.
Capricious	Kings often changed royal policy and alliances when it suited them, disregarding the oaths they had sworn earlier.
Malevolent bullying	Imperial conquests were frequently undertaken with no thought for their effects on those who were subjugated.

Additionally, this list dovetails with Capp's indictment of the biblical God. The divine narcissism that he describes is closely aligned with the ideology of kingship:

Pervasive patterns of grandiose behaviours	The great kings of the ANE were known for monumental building programs and imperial expansion.
Need for admiration	Royal inscriptions show a perennial interest in being recognized and lauded for posterity. Many kings also had hymns of praise written on their behalf.
Lack of empathy	A particular expression of this trait can be found in the use of war as a means for enriching a ruler's kingdom at the expense of others.

Before proceeding, it is necessary to explain what I mean by the "biblical God." By that phrase, I refer to the deity who is the focus of those writings Protestant Christians customarily call the "Old and New Testaments." While these books do not necessarily speak in one voice, Christian theology has always assumed that collectively they refer to a single divine reality. In other words, it is appropriate to assume that there is a certain unity in the testimony of various books of the Christian Bible

to the concept of God.

What are we, who continue to participate in the church, going to do with the idea of God as an ANE king? There is no doubt that this imagery has abusive potentials. It hardly needs to be stated that there is a significant degree of overlap between narcissistic leadership and abuse.¹¹ In my own work, I have illustrated this potential with respect to the book of Job. There I used the concept of “toxic religion.” This term refers to a variety of religious settings in which psychological problems among believing persons can emerge. These often manifest themselves in cases in which an individual’s own desires, needs and experience are overwhelmed by demands for rigid conformity to standards of belief or behaviour. In the case of Job, his friends were confident that their “expert” theological knowledge could explain why he was suffering. In part, Job’s protests of innocence were intended to defend against an abusive religious discourse, which insisted on his sinfulness. Ironically, the divine revelation in Job 38–41 showed that Job’s comforters did not know nearly as much about God as they thought they did.¹²

To translate the experience of Job into more general terms: how well ought we to presume that ANE kingship imagery describes the way of God in the world, in the church and in the lives of individual believers? I am going to answer that question in two ways. First, we should appreciate how the metaphor of divine kingship made a positive contribution to the development of biblical religion. Second, we need to probe the fact that biblical writers were aware that using royal metaphors to describe the nature of God had its limitations.

Before one engages in a critique of the imagery of divine kingship, it is necessary to understand how it might have operated in a therapeutic way in its original historical context. In the case of the writings found in the Old Testament/Jewish Bible, that original historical context overlaps considerably with their original canonical context. And here I take my stand firmly on the consensus of historical-critical study of the Scriptures. While there is no doubt that the books of the Hebrew Scriptures contain

¹¹ The literature on the abusive effects of narcissistic leadership in the church is large and growing. Often it is referred to as “spiritual abuse.” Among recent titles see, e.g., Chuck DeGroat, *When Narcissism Comes to Church: Healing Your Community from Emotional and Spiritual Abuse* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2020).

¹² William S. Morrow, “Toxic Religion and the Daughters of Job,” *Studies in Religion* 27 (1998), 263-76.

traditions (oral and written) from the monarchical period (c. 1000-586 B.C.E.) and even earlier, in their current form they stem from the early Second Temple period (c. 515-100 B.C.E.). Therefore, the original readers of the canonical Scriptures were Second Temple Jews. They used this body of literature (along with additional writings) to maintain their lifestyle and distinctive religion in a world in which they were very much a minority.

From that historical perspective, one ought to appreciate the development of scriptural religion as a considerable intellectual and spiritual achievement. The perception that the divine reality was characterized by a single “You,” who related not only to the “I” of each person in Israel but also to the “I” of each person of the entire world, was an astonishing feat of the religious imagination.¹³ Although certain Greek philosophers theorized about a unified cosmos, those elite belief systems were not widely shared. But biblical monotheism, largely by drawing on the ideology of divine kingship, enabled an entire people to embrace a unitary perspective on the world. It also created a community characterized by a high degree of ethical responsibility due to its confidence in the lawful, predictable patterns of life. This perspective played a significant part in the development of Western civilization.

Ought modern readers to be scandalized by a belief system that projected ANE royal ideology onto the God of Israel? So long as we are engaged in the realm of historical reconstruction, that answer should be “no.” Given the embeddedness of biblical writers in ANE culture and social norms, what did we expect? The scandal is that abusive ideas about the kingship of God all too often continue to be at work in the contemporary church with deleterious consequences. There are, however, means for neutralizing the toxin that biblical kingship ideology can potentially inject into contemporary communities of faith.

But a corrective reading requires readers of Scripture to discover the importance of one trait left unacknowledged in the lists above. This has to do with the ideal king’s commitment to justice. ANE monarchs were supposed to be the administrators and guarantors of divine justice. Moreover, they had a particular task to secure justice for the poor and the

¹³ The terminology of “I” and “You” is based on Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Walter Kaufman (New York: Touchstone Books, 1970). For the importance of Buber’s concepts in biblical theology, see Walter Brueggemann, *An Unsettling God: The Heart of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 6. For an example of Buber’s continuing relevance to Christian and Jewish spirituality, see Dan Merkur, *Relating to God: Clinical Psychoanalysis, Spirituality and Theism* (Lanham: Jason Aronson, 2014), 265-69.

indigent, for orphans and widows. As heavenly king and Israel's monarch, YHWH was insistent that his kingdom be a paragon of justice (e.g., Deuteronomy 16:20; Psalms 94; 97; Amos 5:24; etc.) This divine trait is attested in the biblical legal collections and in the prophetic corpus.¹⁴

It is often supposed that those who espouse abusive images of God in the church are diligent readers of the Bible. I suggest, however, the problem is that biblical writings are often not taken seriously enough. To do justice to the Scriptures is to discover that the biblical symbol system itself puts limits on the value of a social imagery that connects God to the icon of the ANE monarch.¹⁵ Here, I note three scriptural principles which undermine toxic images of the monarchical God in the Bible. They include: the polemic against idolatry; an openness to change represented by the messianic hope; and the spirituality of arguing with God.

First, it is necessary to recognize that the ideology of kingship contributed substantially to the polemic against idolatry that is characteristic of biblical faith. The belief that it was possible to venerate a multiplicity of deities was contrary to the ascription of divine kingship to YHWH: there could only be one king. Yet, loyalty to YHWH and the concomitant rejection of a multiplicity of deities doesn't fully comprehend the biblical injunction against idolatry. For there is a puzzling development that goes squarely against the ideology of ANE kingship. I refer to the fact that the polemic against idolatry extends to a prohibition of any material representation of God (e.g., Exodus 20:4-5a). From the vantage point of ANE kingship this prohibition is as remarkable as it is unexpected. Throughout the ANE, kings were fond of erecting visible representations of themselves in a variety of styles and places. But this was anathema to biblical faith.

The prohibition against visual representations of God had various implications.¹⁶ Here, I want to emphasize the fact that biblical thinkers were aware there were limitations to imaging God in human terms. In other words, they realized that the claim "God is king" was a metaphor. Literary theorists generally recognize that there exists an irreducible tension between the metaphor and the object it seeks to describe. The two are never

¹⁴ For the attribution of concepts of royal justice to the God of Israel, see Brettler, *God Is King*, 109-16.

¹⁵ The phrase "social imaginary" is taken from philosopher Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University, 2004).

¹⁶ William S. Morrow, *An Introduction to Biblical Law* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 64-67.

identical, and there is ample evidence in the Bible that its writers never assumed a complete identity between the metaphor of ANE kingship and the God of Israel.¹⁷ This perception was imbedded in the rejection of visual images of YHWH. A similar point was made by the emphasis on the holiness of the God of Israel: there were limits to projecting human attributes onto YHWH.¹⁸

The limits that biblical authors recognized extended beyond the visual to ideas about divine reality as well (as, e.g., one finds in the books of Job or Ecclesiastes). After all, an idol can be a concept.¹⁹ In this vein, Jewish scholar Dan Merkur suggests that the trajectory of biblical spirituality favours the tradition of negative theology, sometimes called the *via negativa*. As he explains, negative theology is not a body of doctrines, but a way that some Jews and Christians have employed in order to approach God. The negative way inevitably alters theology by subordinating theory about God to lived orientation towards God.²⁰ The upshot of this mode of reflection is that Jewish tradition has been suspicious about the capacity of theological discourse to do justice to the nature of God.²¹ Concomitant with this hesitation has been a refusal to pronounce the personal name of Israel's deity. In harmony with that perception, in this article I have consistently written the personal name of Israel's deity without vowels: YHWH. Moreover, it is customary in Judaism to write "G-d," to guard against the assumption that any final description of the deity is possible for human beings. I suggest that this is good practice for Christians as well as Jews. For the rest of this paper, therefore, when I refer to the biblical deity I will write "G-d."

Second, and connected to the polemic against idolatry, is the recognition that biblical spirituality is an open system.²² In fact, neither creation nor history are finished according to biblical thought. Even as the writers of Scripture tried to normalize their own present, they were open to the possibility of a revelation of divine kingship still to come. This is represented by the hope of the messianic age. For example, although many rabbis thought that Torah teachings would remain intact in the world-to-come, there were opinions that the Messiah would change key

¹⁷ Brettler, *God Is King*, 160-66.

¹⁸ Morrow, *An Introduction to Biblical Law*, 162.

¹⁹ Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1991), 22-24.

²⁰ Merkur, *Relating to God*, 157.

²¹ Erich Fromm, *You Shall Be as Gods: A Radical Interpretation of the Old Testament and Its Tradition* (New York; Henry Holt, 1966), 31-32.

²² Fromm, *You Shall Be as Gods*, 44.

commandments now found in the Pentateuch including sacrificial and purity regulations.²³

From the perspective of the early church, the revelation of the resurrected Christ changed long-standing conventions that prevented the coming together of Gentiles and Jews into a single body of believers (e.g., Galatians 3:28). In time such considerations would also work themselves out in challenges to institutions of slavery and gender inequity. Even in the present, the revelation that the church claims to possess lacks finality. Christians continue to live between the now and the not-yet. According to traditional church teaching, another moment in salvation history is still in the future. To do justice to the messianic hope is to realize that the kingship of G-d is a concept which lacks a certain degree of fixity. It represents an expectation whose full dimensions are not yet clear (e.g., 1 Corinthians 13:12).

Third, intolerance of dissent is characteristic of narcissistic leadership styles (in the family, in corporations, or in the church). By contrast, one of the vital traits of biblical faith is permission to argue with G-d. I have written about the value of this biblical spirituality elsewhere;²⁴ here I can only summarize a few key points.

Perhaps most significant, given the need to combat abuse in the church, is a parallel that can be found between the spirituality of arguing with G-d and advocacy for human rights. In the Psalms of lament, in the Prophets and in the book of Job we find faithful worshippers challenging what they perceive as arbitrary and irrational exercises of divine power, by appealing to the divine sense of justice. The fact that the ANE king *par excellence*, YHWH, was considered totally devoted to justice gave his worshippers leverage against him and his perceived presence in the world (e.g., Genesis 18:22-33).

Three elements combine in human rights discourse in our day. These are: entitlement, grievance and trial. "Entitlement" assumes that all human beings are entitled to certain rights in the body politic. "Grievance" refers to the fact that violations of these rights can be protested. "Trial" refers to the fact that grievances for violated entitlements can be aired in juridical contexts. Such a process is not far removed from the religious imagination that generated the law-court pattern of prayer. Lament prayer assumes that worshippers have basic entitlements to life whose threatened

²³ Morrow, *An Introduction to Biblical Law*, 170.

²⁴ See, e.g., William S. Morrow, "Lament," in *The New Interpreter's Bible Handbook of Preaching*, ed. Paul Wilson (Nashville: Abingdon, 2008), 85-86.

erasure can be grieved in a quasi-judicial context. As I wrote in *Protest Against God*, “In many cases, these biblical prayers represent an attempt to make a claim on a residual entitlement to life when all other supports have failed.”²⁵ Implicit in the lament paradigm, therefore, is the assumption that human beings have the right to be protected from arbitrary actions that threaten their lives. This fact has significance not only for assessing the imagery of G-d but also for challenging narcissistic leadership wherever it appears in human community.

In summary, I want to return to the biblical passion for justice; but I also want to invoke the virtue of humility and its importance in confronting abuse. For this purpose, I want to riff on the work of pastoral theologian Chuck DeGroat, who has written on the problem of narcissistic leadership in the church. In a recent interview, DeGroat replied to the question, “How can the church better take the plank of narcissism out of its own eye?” in the following terms: “Humility, humility, humility. Are we willing to hear how others experience us? Are we willing to self-evaluate?”²⁶

Doing justice to scriptural imagery requires a certain degree of humility on the part of the Church. Among other things, this entails accepting the fact that there are people in the pew and on the street who experience an abusive deity in their reading of the Bible. Neither denial nor overpowering their experiences by appealing to some doctrine of the authority of the Scriptures is an option.

But doing justice to the biblical tradition also involves the recognition that scriptural writers approached the task of talking about G-d with a certain degree of humility. Above I suggested that analyses such as those by Capps and Dawkins were ahistorical. More importantly, they do not take into account the dynamism of the scriptural symbol system. Contemporary readers should recognize that biblical writers were aware of the limitations of metaphors when applied to divine reality. That self-evaluative awareness is visible when it comes to the cluster of images that represent G-d as the ideal ANE monarch.

Consequently, readers cognizant of the abusive potential of biblical kingship imagery might keep the following perspectives in mind. First, the scriptural polemic against idolatry is suspicious of the potential of royal ideology (and indeed of any theological construct) to fully

²⁵ William S. Morrow, *Protest Against God: The Eclipse of a Biblical Tradition*, Hebrew Bible Monographs 4 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2006), 216-17.

²⁶ Benjamin Vrbicek, “Self-Important Shepherds: How can the church protect itself from narcissistic leaders?” *Christianity Today* 64.2 (March 2020): 69.

comprehend divine reality. Second, biblical theology has a degree of openness to it. As we find in the New Testament and in developments within rabbinic Judaism, there is a lack of fixity that has the potential to qualify conventional understandings of divine presence (i.e., the kingdom of G-d) in the world. Finally, one of the chief attributes for which the divine king is praised facilitates protest of the misuse of power. G-d's single-minded advocacy of justice demands that religious leaders do justice to their people's experience and to the complexity of the biblical witness to divine kingship. This affects both their reading of the Scriptures and the ways in which they deal with others in the church.

THE USE AND ABUSE OF POWER: JESUS AND HIS CONFRONTATION WITH PROJECTIVE ANXIETY

By Jody Clarke

A Way into the Problem

For the past twenty years I have worked closely with Dr. Habib Davanloo, the Canadian psychiatrist who developed a form of psychotherapy known as Intensive Short-Term Dynamic Psychotherapy (ISTDP). Davanloo, who is now in his nineties, resembles Yoda, the wise diminutive guru in the Star Wars trilogy. He is short in stature, walks with a cane, is bald with slightly protruding ears, and eyes that are dark and penetrating. He speaks clearly and to the point, but his lessons are often veiled by anecdotes and references to world history. He understands power and the use of the rhetorical question. Finally, he is most certainly a Jedi warrior.

Four or five times each year fifteen therapists participate with Dr. Davanloo in closed-circuit video workshops. The workshops that take place in Montreal are designed to advance our understanding of the unconscious. It is an intense learning environment that is thematically consistent with the central tenets of ISTDP. During one such workshop, the group was working on the lethal malady known as “projective anxiety” (PA). Essentially, PA involves the externalization of a noxious aspect of the self onto others and this projection is fused with anxiety. In other words, those suffering with PA takes their rage out on innocent others. There is a sadistic twist to the lethal character of PA, in the sense that those with the condition are particularly activated by kindness and vulnerability.

Davanloo turns to me—the one pastoral theologian in the program—and says, “Jesus Christ was the recipient of the world’s projective anxiety.” He says this with sweeping gesture of his left hand, as if carving out the circumference of the globe. Then with his right hand Davanloo makes a sharp punching action. “On the innocent Jesus, the whole of mankind (sic) pushes all of their projective anxiety. This is why he is crucified, but first tortured. Projective anxiety is full of torture too. Jesus Christ activates the world’s projective anxiety.”

Here was Dr. Davanloo, a secular Iranian born psychiatrist who taught at McGill, suggesting that the crucifixion of Jesus was not about the expiation of sin. Instead, something about Jesus animated the PA of the world. On further thought this initially foreign idea made sense to me. Jesus does embody a salvific formula. This man of peace who presses the case for meekness, kindness and turning the other cheek, is articulating exactly the kind of power the world needs. But his message of compassion inadvertently animated a deep unconscious rage in those for whom

closeness was a kind of poison.

For the past three years my theological imagination has been incubating and distilling this idea. What did Jesus do to animate such hostility? According to PA he definitely did something—he was gentle, and that gentleness somehow threatened those who held worldly power. This pattern of innocence being crushed by PA is not new. When power is used wisely its legacy is one of equanimity and kindness, easing anxiety and infusing those who are touched by it with a sense of resilience. The proper use of power does not eliminate tension but fosters a sense that all will be well. Conversely, when power is abused, its legacy is that of destruction and increased isolation. It creates an atmosphere of anxiety and the perpetuation of corporate and individual suffering. So why with such obviously different outcomes, do those with power abuse the privilege it offers?

The use and abuse of power proceeds along two parallel roads—one traveled by those who use power for the greater good, the other by those who use power in the service of self. However, if the Jesus example is correct, the roads are not strictly parallel or independent. When power is used in a way that enhances kindness, generosity, and closeness it elicits a disproportionately deleterious response from those who abuse power. Benevolence activates a destructive force in the unconscious of power abusers because kindness activates guilt.

This dynamic relationship between the use and abuse of power has been played out for thousands of years and continues to dominate our world. Those who use power with compassion do so in the interests of justice and equality, not to activate the beast locked away in the unconscious of power abusers.

The image of a police officer, Derek Chauvin, kneeling on the neck of George Floyd, a Black American, until he is dead is now seared into our collective minds. It is a graphic example of the misuse of power. The incident, like so many others experienced by Indigenous groups and people of colour can be attributed to institutional racism, colonialism, imperialism, and a wide array of other equally harmful “isms.” In the final analysis, it is all about the misuse of power. We are bombarded with flagrant examples of people twisting their power and privilege in ways that seek to humiliate and destroy those who are subject to such tyranny.

Does Power Corrupt?

The proverb “absolute power corrupts absolutely” coined by Lord Acton, a nineteenth century English parliamentarian, is an excerpt from a longer phrase in his 1887 letter to Bishop Mandel Creighton that reads, “Power

tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men (sic) are almost always bad men.” The first part of that famous saying and the sentence that follows appear to undermine the definitive tone of the frequently quoted maxim. The indictment is not absolute, to be definitive Acton should have stated, “Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are always bad men.” He does not write that. Acton offers two qualifications to his observation, holding out the possibility that power does not always corrupt and that some great men are not necessarily bad.

Had Chauvin used his power differently and sought to get to the bottom of the possible counterfeit issue that drew the police officers into the intersection of East 38th Street and Chicago Avenue in Minneapolis that May evening, what a difference it could have made. While Acton was likely referring to the emperors of Rome and the exploits of Napoléon, the adage can easily be applied to anyone who abuses power. In Floyd’s case, Chauvin had absolute power. Bystanders may have questioned Chauvin’s authority, but they could not negate it. His fellow and subordinate officers remained passive in its presence. Rather than critically engaging Chauvin, they deferred to him.

This brings us back to Acton’s decision to qualify his statement about power as a potential instrument for harm. Acton was aware of the tension within the nature of power. Can great people be generous brokers of their power or is power destined to be used to torture and destroy? To shed light on Acton’s theory, a scan of the internet quickly established a list of the most powerful figures in history. It is no surprise that the list consists largely of males who played pivotal roles in shaping the dominant European and North America narratives. No women appear on this list of powerbrokers that includes Hitler, Churchill, Napoléon, Lincoln, Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, Peter the Great and Luther. More inclusive lists mentioned Mandela, King and Gandhi. Undoubtedly the list is a Euro-American male-centric reading of power and its effect on the global history. Most of the people on the list—including Churchill—could be convicted of war crimes. Lincoln was assassinated because he used his power to promote racial freedom, not racial equality. Regardless, he was not a war-criminal. Martin Luther was considered an outlaw heretic by the Roman Catholic Church. Luther’s *95 Theses*—essentially a critique of the church’s abuse of power and privilege—ushered in the Reformation. It also unleashed an era of PA, predicated on a tide of violence and torture. Between 1523, the formal beginning of the Reformation, and 1648 (the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia) an estimated 5,000,000 people died in ecclesial wars.

Activating the Beast that is Projective Anxiety

A significant addition to Acton's list of global powerbrokers, alongside Mandela, King and Gandhi, is Jesus of Nazareth. This is significant for several reasons. First, in a culture that is so structurally racist, it is striking that four men of colour would be included at all. Two other notable features set them apart from their Eurocentric counterparts—each spent time in prison, and three were killed. King was shot once in the head, Gandhi received three bullets in the chest, and Jesus—whose incarceration was brief—was tortured and nailed to a cross. Their power was based on extolling the virtues of non-violence. Mandela, King, Gandhi, and Jesus used their power to introduce the possibility of social change. They advocated for the elimination of racial and colonial tyranny. Each extolled the importance of relationships. The difference in their understanding of power is strikingly evident in Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision of a new world.

On August 28, 1963, a quarter of a million people gathered on the National Mall in Washington to listen to speakers argue the need for federal legislation to address mass unemployment as well as racial and social inequality. Martin Luther King, Jr., was one of the last speakers. The day was hot, and the speeches were the culmination of a long, arduous day. King was about to deliver his "I have a Dream Speech." The now famous oration did not follow the script he had before him. He began by referencing the "shameful condition" of race relations a hundred years after the Emancipation Proclamation, but then something inspiring and relational happened.

At the midway point of his speech, Mahalia Jackson, the famous Gospel singer—who would end up singing at King's funeral not long after and who had already sung the spiritual "I Been 'Buked and I Been Scorned" earlier that day—yelled to King, "Tell 'em about the 'Dream,' Martin, tell 'em about the 'Dream'!" Jackson was referring to a theme that King had consistently returned to in his preaching. Prompted by Jackson, King moved away from his notes.

Jackson understood the power of riffing—a jazz term that refers to the practice of taking a melody line and improvising on it—and she encouraged King to do what he did best. King took his "melody line" about a dream, and blended it with history, scripture, poetry, and literature. Laced with emotion and the resolve to think big, King shared his vision of hope. "I have a dream," he declared, "my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today!" The dream was even more inclusive, when King, paraphrasing Paul's letter to the Galatians

stated, “a day when all of God’s children—black men (sic) and white men (sic), Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics—will be able to join hands.”

In that speech King positioned himself as part of a realm beyond the relational instrumentalism found in civil-rights legislation. His was a vision of a world where character and relationship serve as the forces that shape the future. It was this speech that galvanized the PA of white America because at an unconscious level it brought them face-to-face with their guilt.

In 1963 the Dream Speech had little impact on the white majority. Most non-black citizens believed that Black Americans were well off. Much like the officers and bystanders who watched Chauvin kneel on the neck of George Floyd, they were indifferent. In Canada, most non-indigenous Canadians considered the Residential Schools program to be in the best interest of “the Indian.” Federal Legislation from the 1880s until 1969 consistently viewed the presence of Aboriginal people as a “problem.” The best way to void treaties, eliminate reparation and to obliterate First Nation’s culture was to annihilate the “savage” and absorb the domesticated “Indian” into the white culture. The knee of European-Canadians was firmly on the neck of the Indigenous people of the land that is now called Canada. If the “savages” could be made invisible, perhaps the cultural guilt could vanish too.

The knee on the neck exemplifies the dynamic tension between the “use of power” and the “abuse of power.” The latter clearly despises the former—in fact, those who abuse power are driven by an unapologetic impulse to annihilate those who use power wisely. King’s Speech was a threat. Black Americans—and Black Canadians—activate a sense of threat. Indigenous people embody a threat, and that threat activates anxiety, and anxiety opens the doorway of projection. To diminish these merciless feelings the threat must be eliminated. The real threat to be dealt with is that the one kneeling on the neck must come to terms with their own guilt.

The Reactive Dimension of Projective Anxiety

King’s Dream Speech, Gandhi’s advocacy of non-violence, Mandela’s belief in racial equality and Jesus’s assertion that the meek shall inherit the earth appeal to the relational dimension of our humanity. They are inviting all people, rich and poor, religious, and non-religious, people of every race to live differently with each other. They are not overtly advocating for the overthrow of the world order. People who are loaded with PA are not concerned about the loss of material privilege; that is not the source of their

fear. Rather relational closeness and the guilt that stems from a life lived by avoiding closeness is. In response to closeness, those who suffer with PA have an unconscious need to crush such sentiments.¹ The presence of this reactive need to crush the other is graphically evident in the relationship between Jesus and Pontius Pilate.

Did Pontius Pilate abuse the power of his office when he agreed to the execution of Jesus? It could be argued that he was simply placating the mob which was exhibiting a communal PA. Perhaps the hapless Pilate was simply caught up in the collective sadism that was coursing through the streets of Jerusalem on that fateful night. But Pilate was a Roman governor, the most powerful man in Judea. He had grown up in a world of privilege and was one of the elites in arguably the most powerful nation in the world. He had no need to appease the masses or anyone else.

A similar pattern emerges in the gospel descriptions of the crucifixion drama. It begins with a conversation between Pilate and the chief priests, then shifts to an exchange with the crowd. In each rendering of the account, Pilate appears to be toying with both groups. By referring to Jesus as the “King of the Jews” (Mark 15:9) Mark suggests that Pilate was intentionally activating the unconscious of the priests by encouraging their “jealousy.” If Mark’s understanding is correct, then the underbelly, the sadism of Pilate is exposed as we see him taking pleasure in stirring up the priests and the crowd.

Jesus’s demeanor in Pilate’s presence embodies the power found in meekness. Jesus is not petulant, defiant, or reactive. Encountering such a response must have been disconcerting for Pilate. Unlike the fawning of the chief priests and the crowd, Jesus’s poise, gentleness, and unruffled demeanor challenged Pilate’s perception of his own authority.

On Jesus’s last Friday, Pilate directed his troops to whip and humiliate Jesus before nailing him to a cross. The punishment was definitely disproportionate. Pilate—subject to his PA—felt a need to break Jesus. What aspect of Pilate’s story led to him viewing Jesus as a threat?

¹ Normal projection is evident when people attribute an unconscious conflictual feeling to another. For example, “My teacher does not like me.” “There is a conspiracy against me.” People take an internal pain, such as a sense of rejection or loneliness and put it on someone else. Anxiety—currently a global emotional health crisis—is an internal alarm bell. Healthy anxiety is necessary for our survival. But when projection and anxiety fuse, the impulse to react is cemented to the conflictual feelings. And so, the unconscious, loaded with negative feelings pours these sadistic and murderous feelings onto the object of derision.

Despite his immortalization in the Creeds of the church, little is known about Pilate's early years. We know that people suffering with PA have often experienced early traumas in life, particularly a rupture to the parent-child bond. Although little is known about Pilate's childhood, that is not the case regarding the early years of the men who killed Gandhi and King. Gandhi was shot three times in the chest at close range on the afternoon of January 30, 1948, while conducting a multi-faith prayer meeting. A sectarian Hindu, Nathuram Godse, who was opposed to Gandhi's sympathetic stance on Islam, was his assassin.

Godse was the fourth son of a highly traumatized family. His three older brothers had all died in early childhood which resulted in the family believing they were cursed. In the interest of escaping the curse, Nathuram was raised as a female until he was six. He was given a female nickname and the ritualistic nose-piercing. It appears that Godse struggled through much of his life, particularly in school. Initially, he admired Gandhi, but in his late teens he fell under the influence of a Hindu extremist. It is not surprising that Godse, a traumatized son in a traumatized family, was vulnerable to the machinations of a religious fanatic.

James Earl Ray, King's assassin, was born into an impoverished family, which like Godse's family, experienced the death of at least one child. Ray's father was a small-time criminal who frequently changed the family's last name to avoid consequences from the law and other criminals. As a boy Ray worked in a brothel and was arrested for petty crimes in his early teens. He shared Godse's difficulty in school and was described by one teacher as "repulsive."

The seeds of PA are born in the first few days of a child's life when a rupture occurs in the parent-child bond. The child, completely dependent on the parent, searches for intimacy, security and closeness and receives the opposite. Such was the case for both Godse and Ray.

Jesus' meekness, Gandhi's generosity of spirit, and King's vision activated the PA of Pilate, Godse, and Ray respectively. The all-powerful Pilate, because of his own PA became a conduit of the world's PA when he both humiliated and executed Jesus. Godse, because of his own fear of the world, became a channel through which PA in the form of religious extremism murdered Gandhi. Ray, an impoverished and brutalized man, became White America's instrument of death via the bullet that killed Martin Luther King, Jr.

Engaging Projective Anxiety in the Search for Peace

It could be argued that Pilate, Godse, and Ray each acted alone but each man served as the reactive instrument for millions of people who were

threatened by the prospect of a kinder world.

This brings us back to Dr. Habib Davanloo. In ISTDP, the word “dynamic” is critical in understanding how the therapy works. The healing process begins when clients seek an end to their suffering. Suffering often includes destructive behaviour, the sabotaging of life, a deep ache arising from a sense that a malignant force is gnawing away inside the self. The therapist invites the person to explore their experience of their feelings. However, the truth locked deep in the unconscious is not keen on being discovered so it resists the process. As the therapist calls into question the usefulness of the resistance, the person becomes irritated with the therapist, who remains focused on the forces that are crippling the person’s life. The therapist continues to point out how the defences are working against the person’s self-declared interests. A dynamic tension—what Davanloo refers to as a head-on-collision—is created within the person. The collision is not actually between the individual and the therapist, but between the destructive forces perpetuating the suffering and the desire for freedom.

The therapist, with gentle yet focused resolve, invites the person to consider a world that is not predicated on suffering or self-sabotage. Then when the person finds the internal tension insurmountable, the therapist invites the person to pour all their rage onto the therapist in terms of thoughts and ideas. Remember the person is already angry with the therapist for calling into question the usefulness of the time-honoured defences. A vital element in this unconscious drama has to do with the transference of feelings onto the therapist. The therapist and individual in therapy together are activating the beast. On one hand, the person longs for closeness and intimacy, but on the other is wondering, “Who the hell is this therapist that they would get so close?!”

The rage is palpable. In thought or idea, the person gives expression to the inexpressible, and murders the therapist. Davanloo says, “You can hear the knife as it passes through the air!” It unleashes the rage as the person gives expression to the deep unconscious pain that has been the source of so much misery. In the aftermath of the attack—with the passage of the rage—the person feels calm—the anxiety has vanished. The therapist then invites the person to look into the eyes of the murdered therapist. Inevitably, the non-anxious individual sees the eyes of a genetic figure—often the father, mother, or grandparent—ultimately the one viewed as responsible for the betrayal. Over the course of treatment, the person might visit and revisit several figures gradually peeling back complex layers of betrayal.

After what Davanloo refers to as a “breakthrough into the unconscious” the individual is freed from PA along with the accompanying

anger and psychic pain that dominated his/her life. Had Godse looked into the eyes of Gandhi he would have seen the eyes of his heavily traumatized mother, an emotionally frozen woman who feared bonding with another baby boy who might die. If Ray had looked into the eyes of King, he would have seen the eyes of his violent and unreliable father who consistently failed the family. If Pilate had looked into the eyes of a dead Jesus, he would likely have encountered the pivotal figures who had betrayed him as a child. We are left to wonder who Derek Chauvin would have seen had he looked into the eyes of a deceased George Floyd.

Activating the murderous, torturous rage is simply a pathway to access the PA. The purpose—for those courageous enough to embrace it—is to eliminate the forces of destruction from the unconscious. Immediately after a breakthrough into the unconscious, those who look into the eyes of the murdered genetic figure experience a wave of guilt—guilt that the genetic figure was the source of both love and rage. The inability of a person or group to acknowledge or handle this guilt is what triggers the PA response when a gentle, non-violent, compassionate soul wanders onto the world stage offering a different way of seeing life. With the break-through comes recognition that this repressed guilt has impacted much of the individual's life. Within the context of ISTDP, once the guilt is poured out the individual begins to experience empathy and affection for the genetic figure, perhaps for the first time. Godse would see his fragile and frightened mother and recognize her broken and grieving heart. Ray would see many of the injuries that his father sustained in life and begin to feel affection toward him. This breakthrough enables a new respect for and access to kindness as a response.

When a gentle, non-violent, compassionate soul wanders onto the world stage offering a different way of seeing life, the projective anxiety of those who cannot handle their guilt is poured out. As Davanloo asserted, Jesus knowingly absorbed this, as will those who follow him. The extent of this absorption is made clear in the Gospels, and in deep loving kindness that inspires what the followers of Jesus called the Spirit, a peace that remains guilt's most powerful antidote.

There is power in kindness. It contains no torture, no murder, no rage, no need to destroy or control. It is free from PA. Gandhi's family forgave Godse and petitioned that he not receive capital punishment. King's family forgave Ray. Jesus forgave everyone.

BATTLEFIELD OR GARDEN: POWER IN THE PASTORAL RELATIONSHIP

By Wendy Kean

Imagine this: Male instructors at an ecumenical learning centre for ministry personnel role-played a pastoral care scenario for marriage counselling, during which they advised students to give “the wife” whatever she wanted. Some of the male ministry personnel responded by joking among themselves about “the little woman,” until one of the female students in the room stood up and shouted, “Enough!” A flurry of apologies pinged the phones of the three female ministry personnel on the course, among whom there later developed an accusation of lacking a sense of humour. Even if the instructors intended to poke fun at the business of role-playing rather than at women, they did a grave disservice to experienced ministry personnel undergoing mandatory professional development as part of their employment. What happened in that room was not only a failure of leadership and discipline, but of the guardrails meant to prevent sexually inappropriate comments and behaviour: structures of accountability and character.

Structures of accountability and character are the poles around which good policies on sexual misconduct are formed. Together accountability and character formation supply a much-needed grammar for reinvigorating the lexicon for sex and gender-based misconduct. The anecdote above was one episode in a career filled with several challenging experiences, many but certainly not all profoundly life-giving. I share this one to name the easy recourse to inappropriate language taken by facilitators and classmates during professional development in the most intimate, and therefore morally demanding, of pastoral disciplines. I can only surmise that those who joined in the banter presumed they were protected by their valuation of their moral character as persons educated, formed, and recognized or ordained in their own denominations.

In *Children of God*, Mary Doria Russell’s science fiction novel about mission and reconciliation, the character, Daniel Iron Horse arrives at a life-transforming insight about his own identity:

Only here had [Daniel] come to understand that he was not a battleground—to be divided and conquered by [competing identities] but a garden, where each person who’d contributed to his existence longed to see that something of themselves had taken root and grown.¹

¹ Mary Doria Russell, *Children of God* (New York: Villard Books, 1998) 418f.

At the end of his life, Daniel recognized that he had been shaped by competition about his identity by his indigenous and European grandparents. As the head of a mission that had deliberately sacrificed the happiness and well-being of its weakest and most spiritually vulnerable member to further the political and ecclesiastical aims of the wider faith community through an act of coercive power, he realized the breadth and the depth of the reconciliation he needed to seek. In truth, we all act out of a mixture of motives and goals; sometimes, like the students in the role-play for marriage counselling, we are seeking to fit in or gain approval from significant others; sometimes we are trying on a new identity; sometimes we go along with what is expedient, believing that having discerned a vocational pathway and been recognized in it, there is no more hard work left for us to do. The battlefield does not appear suddenly when there is conflict; it develops over time as stressors and issues are ignored or put off until another day. So it is with sexual and professional misconduct.

The images of battlefield and garden—and the tension between them—provides a helpful lens through which to reflect on issues of professional misconduct, especially sexual misconduct. Medical, legal, and spiritual and religious professionals are governed by formal structures of accountability ranging from statements of professional ethics and codes of conduct to juridical processes for evaluating and managing the external aspects of misconduct, culpability, and sanctions. Character, as a “set of dispositions, desires, and habits . . . engraved during the struggle against [one’s] own weaknesses,”² is equally important but hard to inculcate as it depends on a process of intentional cultivation and learned experience, and character-based violations are harder to remediate. It is not surprising, then, that codes of conduct are more appealing to institutions as easier to enact and enforce than character, which is the ever-evolving result of time, effort, and experience. On the other hand, structures of accountability are vulnerable to prejudicial interpretation and dilution while character, once formed, is durable and capable of withstanding significant adversity.

Understood as gardening, proper professional conduct involves breaking new ground, improving the soil, and weeding the garden to bring it to fruitfulness. It is hard and time-consuming work, but it is also hope-filled and rewarding, because it participates in the work of creation. The battleground, on the other hand, is a place of episodic chaos, where objectives are achieved at the expense of the lives and wellbeing of combatants, bystanders, and creation itself, even before counting the

² David Brooks, *The Road to Character* (New York: Random House, 2015) 263.

financial cost. At the end of his life, Daniel Iron Horse pivots from understanding himself as “a battlefield” to “a garden”, when he recognizes he has moved past injury toward reconciliation, by understanding that his illusion of an identity shaped by the power of others has impaired his recognition of the planting and pruning of his gifts done by those who fostered his wellbeing and his ministry.

Daniel’s image of himself as a battlefield illustrates the most significant danger in institutional policies regarding sexual and personal misconduct: people with positional or personal power, including clergy and counsellors, become habituated to being treated with deference, as do leaders in a battlefield context.³ The dynamics of deference and power lie at the heart of professional misconduct. Even though ministry personnel may question the extent of their power within their faith community, they still inhabit the structures of the institution and hold significant authority through their role, their specialized education, and their identity as one called, recognized, and set apart for their work. Depending on role and faith group, this may be expressed more as accompaniment rather than as control or domination. Nevertheless, power plays an essential role in the dynamic of ministry and is due only in part to institutional systems.

When governed by resilient and credible structures, positional and personal power are both institutional and personal goods. For both powers to serve the wellbeing of others, a robust process of formation of character and habit as well as inculturation into the demands of accountability are necessary. Without these guardrails, power is unaccountable, and character is missing, as observed in the classroom at the start of this reflection. The language of structures and character may not be familiar to many readers, but the principles underlie the denomination’s concern for human needs. This includes its ongoing work of reconciliation for complicity in a range of injustices, especially those linked to Canada’s colonial past.⁴ As Gail Allen and Marilyn Legge observe in their essay, “Ecclesiology,” (2019), the development of United Church doctrine mirrors the church’s adaptation to changing social and cultural realities and aspirations, including concern for abuse related to power imbalances other than those

³ I am unable to find the source for this excellent phrase, but believe it comes from Richard Gula, who is cited elsewhere in this paper.

⁴ Gail Allan and Marilyn Legge, “Ecclesiology: ‘Being the United Church of Canada,’” in Don Schweitzer, Robert C Fennell, and Michael Bourgeois, eds, *The Theology of The United Church of Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2019) 182.

which reside in the institution.⁵ This is expressed particularly well in *A New Creed* (1968) when it summarizes the vocation of the church “to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope.”⁶

Allan and Legge describe what they term “the ongoing process of ecclesial metanoia” as they outline the church’s commitment to tackle sexism in the traditions, structures and policies of the Church, and to “stand in solidarity with those in society and within the church who experience sexism.”⁷ One cannot help noticing the length of time between *A New Creed* and the publication of *Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy and Procedures* by the Office of Vocation (2020). The observation of the time lag is not a criticism of the policy nor the process, but recognition that even where there is a clearly articulated and long-standing ecclesiology of equality of all vocations among its membership, and considerable time and energy has been spent on addressing the problem of sexual misconduct, it remains a challenging issue to resolve. It is especially important to get such policies right the first time if all parties are to have confidence in the justice of the institution.

To prove the point, compare the church’s policies and procedures regarding sexual misconduct with those of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), where CAF’s most recent programme to stumble in the face of sexual misconduct, Operation HONOUR, was developed by military leadership in relatively quick fashion. Promulgated as a no-fail operation, without first establishing the necessary educational material or formational programmes for military personnel regarding the complex nature of power and sexual harassment, it presumed that everyone would simply follow orders.⁸ It did not account for the skepticism it would meet, or the CAF’s lack of credibility on the subject. The wide ranging allegations against its top leadership and the more recent news of the suspension of two of the investigations stand in contrast to the policy of The United Church, which clearly understands that sexual misconduct occurs primarily in situations where “one of the parties is in a position of power with respect to the [complainant].”⁹ Using the definition of sexual assault found in the

⁵ *Ibid.*, 183.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 183-184.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 184; 185, FN 48.

⁸ See Wendy Kean, “So Close and Yet So Far: A Feminist Perspective on Operation HONOUR.” In *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol 1 No 3 Summer 2021.

⁹ The United Church of Canada Office of Vocation, *Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy and Procedures*, (November 2020.), 7.

Criminal Code of Canada, and of sexual harassment as an exercise of power, it describes sanctionable behaviour concretely but not exclusively, yielding generous statements of what constitutes sexual misconduct and sexual harassment.¹⁰

Inculcation of a healthy institutional or other-centred mindset happens by practising the customs of the community one is called to serve. Such practising not only helps ministers conform to community values and integrate them into their identities, but also helps strengthen their moral character as community leaders.¹¹ No process of inculturation into the ethos of any institution is perfect, but healthy structures of accountability are necessary if the character of the institution and its members is to be credible. Richard Gula, a Roman Catholic theologian, argues that the problem with accountability arises from a misunderstanding of the nature of the call to religious vocations as one which exempts those in ministry from upholding professional standards,¹² as if asserting one's call comes from God is sufficient grounds for ascertaining character.

Formal statements of ethics for ministry personnel provide "objectively measurable criteria for evaluation" and discipline, as a way to balance structures of accountability and character in healthy tension.¹³ Observing that Christian faith communities often struggle to recognize ministry personnel as professionals, Gula asserts that ministry as a vocation is most successful when all take seriously the marks of professionalism: specialized knowledge and skills and their limits; service to fundamental human needs, in particular the common good; commitment to the best interest of the other; structures for accountability and regulation as a means of doing justice towards the community served; and qualifications for admission to the profession, including disciplinary procedures and sanctions.¹⁴ Reluctance to accept these markers as the standard for paid accountable ministry weakens the professional duty to manage the imbalance of power inherent in the pastoral relationship.

Gula advocates for structures of accountability expressed in a

The other complaints "were not investigated because [they] did not fit within the policy", 9.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 26, 27.

¹¹ For comparison with notions of secular institutional mindset, see David Brooks, *The Road to Character*, (New York: Random House, 2015), 116f.

¹² Richard Gula, *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1996) 1.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2f.

formal code of ethics that include measures for performance and behaviour. Such a code not only emphasizes the professional character of ministry, it enables the reform or removal of those who fall away from professional and community norms.¹⁵ Formal codes help ensure justice towards the community¹⁶ because they name the expectations of standards for ministry personnel and for the structures of accountability that will address issues arising from misuse of power in the pastoral relationship. It is the fundamental inequality of power in the pastoral relationship, not the language or the enactment of vocation, which lies at the heart of the moral demands on ministry personnel.¹⁷ The duty to manage this inequality, what Gula calls the “fiduciary obligation,” fails most often and most injuriously in intimate matters, namely sexuality and confidentiality.¹⁸ It is here where moral ministry is intrinsically tied to experiences of and convictions about God as “the fixed point of reference for the morally right and wrong,”¹⁹ and it is why professional ethics for pastoral ministers must be grounded in that which God values, and its expression dependent on how the faith community envisions them.²⁰ Ministry is more than recognizing and enacting a personal and communal call, but is one that symbolizes and participates in the eschatological vision of the church.²¹

David Brooks, of *The New York Times* and *PBS NewsHour*, has an abiding interest in character and ethics. In *The Road to Character*,² Brooks observes that the life of publicly recognized service to a community is a commitment to gardening in a locus of values and practices.²² He argues that when anyone publicly serves a community, they give themselves vocationally to the truth that its values and practices are an integral part of their covenantal relationship with it.²³ He takes a less exalted, but no less sacred, view of vocation than Gula, calling it “the daily task of doing some job well.”²⁴ Focussing on the individual rather than the institution, he advocates for holiness embedded in mundane things like promises and oaths, which provide concrete opportunities for the commitment to self-sacrifice and service. Brooks is interested in values that serve to avoid

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 63f.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

²² David Brooks, *op.cit.*, 115.

²³ *Ibid.*, 116.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 184.

harm to others. He is particularly concerned with lust, which he considers to be the primary sin. As the product of an emotional emptiness resulting from unwillingness to serve others,²⁵ he argues lust can only be avoided by placing others at the centre of our lives, to help shield us from what he calls “the small perversities of complacency.”²⁶ For Brooks, if lust is at the heart of the misuse of power, then character is its counterweight, and structures of accountability are the means to identify, correct, and remediate its uses.

The life-long process of becoming a mature servant of the church calls for ongoing discernment and appropriation of one’s vocation through reflection, primarily on our limits. If we train our gaze only on our gifts, we are prone to what Brooks calls moral romanticism, a dependence on our own inner goodness.²⁷ Attention to gifts needs to be balanced with submission to duty. The voluntary nature of ministry coupled with its transcendent dimensions is not a “once and done” activity that concludes with recognition, commissioning or ordination; it necessitates the free and on-going acceptance of self-discipline and the discipline of the church as a reminder that we represent more than ourselves or our call.²⁸ Structures of accountability for paid, accountable ministry personnel and formation of character are intimately tied to the various understandings of ministry in the United Church and to the nature of ministers’ relationship with God, especially God in Christ. Together, structures as the moral responsibility of the community and character as the moral responsibility of the individual are evidence that what is important to God is also important to the church.

This essay is born out of years of witnessing marvellous ministry and unrecognized unprofessionalism in one and the same vocation. The classroom described at the beginning was not intended to be a place of sexism; none of the persons who participated in the jokes meant to exhibit sexism. As one of them said when he apologized later, “It just happened.” I have tried for years to understand how colleagues who respected women’s ministry, even upheld it in communities where its practice was restricted, fell into behaviour their own communities would have condemned. The only explanation I can think of is moral complacency: jokes about “the little woman” came out of the mouths of well-intentioned men who, as the sizable majority in that room, grew lax in minding the boundaries necessary for preserving character and moral probity and who,

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 192.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 195.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 244.

²⁸ Gula, *op.cit.*, 12.

at least momentarily, mistook their considerable numerical dominance for permission to ignore the discipline required of all ministry personnel: to remain inside the covenant of their vocation to serve all God's people.

Conclusion

The experience of ministry by the one being ministered to is intimately tied up with their experience of God:²⁹ God's presence, God's love, God's acceptance, even God's judgement. One may not always understand ministry in this way, but ministry personnel must accept this is how others will see them, especially when they find themselves in the neighbourhood of inappropriate words or acts. When a new pastoral relationship is formed, the congregation and the minister enter a covenant. This covenant confers on ministry personnel a fiduciary responsibility, "a positive obligation to honour the dignity of another by being trustworthy with what has been entrusted to us."³⁰ The burden of that obligation falls more heavily on the minister because the burden of trusting the other falls more heavily on the one seeking the minister's services.³¹ The pastoral relationship cannot be mutually reciprocal because it is fundamentally dependent on the minister to express the steadfastness and faithfulness of God to the community and its members, not the reverse.³²

Daniel Iron Horse's move from recognizing himself as a garden resulted from the end-of-life realization that his character was formed, not in spite of community but because of it, as the environment "in which one acts, makes mistakes, reconsiders . . . where one errs, repents, apologizes, is forgiven."³³ We learn and grow morally not from our successes but by acknowledging our failures and thereby understanding and owning up to our deficiencies.³⁴ Like gardening, no one in ministry is ever "finished," and like old battlegrounds, artifacts of past struggles will continue to appear, especially when we think they have all been identified and removed. As farmers in Belgium and France still attest, every year unexploded munitions surface during planting and harvest, lethal as ever, generations after their use.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 11, 12.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

³² *Ibid.*, 19.

³³ Brooks, *op. cit.*, 220.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 230.

AND WITH AUTHORITY: CHURCH AND POWER IN ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE

By Scott Sharman

Introduction

The New Testament speaks about both power and authority. Sometimes the words appear to be used interchangeably, and other times there seems to be nuance between them. Perhaps the clearest instance of the latter is the description of Jesus as one who speaks and acts not only with power but also “with authority” (Mark 1:27). The apparent differentiation serves as a point of departure for many kinds of reflection, including ways that power and authority show up in the Church.

“Authority is legitimate power.”¹ This is the opening line of a 1985 essay by Canadian philosopher/theologian Bernard Lonergan SJ on the “Dialectic of Authority.” In this pithy phrase, Lonergan is making the same kind of distinction as the Scriptures. On the one hand, there is “mere” or “naked” power; on the other, there is “authentic power,” which can be also called “authority.”²

It is in the cooperation of human societies, says Lonergan, where the dialectic of power and authority is played out. As new questions and challenges arise for communities, there is a perpetual need to render definitions and to adjudicate disputes over shared values that affect the common life. Invariably, societies create mechanisms for attending to new data, understanding it in relation to prior data, making judgments about what it implies, and deciding on the most appropriate response. Those who embody these structures within a community—the ones who Lonergan calls “the authorities”—hold significant power because of the way they can shape the corporate group.³

Critical for Lonergan, however, is the fact that such authorities do not automatically act with authority. Rather, their authority is conditional upon the extent to which they are authentic in using their power to move with the community through the processes of *attending*, *understanding*, *judging*, and *deciding*. Measures must be put in place within communities to ensure that this happens.⁴ Different communities might create different

¹ “Dialectic of Authority” in *The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, Vol. 16. Robert M. Doran and John Daniel Dadosky, eds. University of Toronto Press, 2017: 3-9.

² *Ibid.*, 6.

³ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

⁴ These are technical terms drawn from Lonergan’s description of the fourfold

structures for this according to their history and core values, and these structures can predispose a community towards greater or lesser authenticity in the way that power is manifested—either for good or ill.

Communities of faith certainly manifest all these dynamics as well, including Christian churches. The historical, cultural, and denominational diversity of Christian faith communities gives ample evidence of this in the variety of structures and patterns that they have produced. Indeed, in the realm of ecumenical dialogue between diverse expressions of Christian community, matters of ecclesial power and authority are regularly front and centre among the issues addressed.⁵

Church and Power in Ecumenical Dialogue

This article will focus on power and authority in ecumenical dialogue with the Lonerganian background serving mainly as vocabulary tools. Specifically, I will consider two church communities on the Canadian ecclesial landscape: The Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) and the United Church of Canada (UCC).

There have been many ups and downs in the ecumenical journey of the ACC and UCC. At present, these churches work together quite closely and share much. Yet, their oft-stated goal of full communion continues to elude them, and it is issues of power and authority which remain among the greatest sticking points. To put it plainly: Anglicans have bishops, the United Church does not; so never the twain shall meet?

Despite the enduring challenges, each iteration of Anglican-United ecumenical dialogue has led to greater clarity about the issues involved. Lonergan's logic finds application here because it gives language for the dialogue. The issue is less about churches having different kinds of officeholders or decision-making bodies, and more about the authenticity of certain kinds of ecclesial power. Therefore, if the interlocutors can show each other how their respective mechanisms and structures promote, rather than hinder, authenticity in the dialectic between authority and power, greater acceptance of diversity in forms may possibly follow. A tracing of the emergence of this realisation and the potential ecumenical advancement it promises will be at the heart of what follows.

In addition, I will look at a newer piece of the puzzle that has the

stages of human cognition. Each step can be an occasion for authenticity and inauthenticity.

⁵ See for example many of the publications of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), or the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches.

potential to open some previously locked ecumenical doors: namely, the movements towards greater ecclesial self-determination for Indigenous communities of faith in Jesus Christ. A perhaps unexpected but certainly related by-product of this important work has been renewed attention to the shapes and operations of the various instruments of authority of each tradition—perhaps even an expanded willingness to question their authenticity and permanence. From new cultural models of ecclesial structures of power and authority, therefore, comes much-needed grist for the ecumenical mill.

Anglican-United Dialogue Phase 1 – 1943-75

For as long as there has been a United Church of Canada, the issue of its relationship to the Anglican Church of Canada has been in debate.

In 1943, a formal agreement was made to enter into intentional prayer and dialogue towards the goal of visible unity, and various commissions were appointed to undertake the work. The 1950s and 60s saw high and low points in progress, but by 1972, a *Plan of Union* was before the churches as an official proposal for a full organic union as one church.⁶ The *Plan* was ambitious, and certainly not without its detractors from the start. Deeply entrenched issues of power and authority, including the perceived hierarchicalism of Anglican episcopacy on the one hand, and the supposed dispersed democracy of United Church conciliarism on the other, slowed initially rapid progress almost to a halt.

Philip A. T. Gardner's unpublished 2018 Ph.D. dissertation devotes a lengthy section to the United Church response to the potential merger as one way of reflecting on how the socio-cultural shifts of the 1960s impacted UCC thought.⁷ Gardner relates the opposition to union expressed by a former Moderator J. R. Mutchmore as a representative example. Mutchmore was not alone in his reluctance to see the United Church lose a democratically grounded system of church governance, which he felt served as a check against inauthentic uses of power in the Church.⁸ Gardner also suggests that the prevailing anti-authoritarianism of the 60s likely heightened these worries even more. Not only could greater acceptance of the Anglican emphasis on episcopal polity be interpreted as a judgment on the congregational and presbyterian features

⁶ The General Commission on Church Union, *Plan of Union and Bylaws*, Toronto, 1973.

⁷ Philip A. T. Gardner, *A Holy or a Broken Hallelujah: The United Church of Canada in the 1960s Decade of Ferment*, 2018.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 128.

of the United Church, but it might also harm the Church's integrity and witness as a whole in a world increasingly allergic to structures of centralization and perceived control.⁹

Narratives from the Anglican side often attribute failure to approve the union to the ACC House of Bishops in the early 1970s, but this is an oversimplification. Sentiments that the United Church was too non-liturgical, non-sacramental, anti-tradition, and the like, were heard from a number at the grassroots in Anglican quarters.¹⁰ But these were less critical matters. The creation in 1974 of a Task Force on Mutual Recognition of Ordained Ministry shows that, at the root, for many Anglicans, were a cluster of issues related to ministry, ordination, historic episcopacy, and apostolic succession.¹¹ Most Anglicans would not dare say that the United Church was not a true church because it did not have bishops. However, the absence of a personally locatable office with the responsibility to safeguard apostolic continuity and unity in the Church was felt by many Anglicans to be an impossible barrier to organic union. To put this in Lonergan's terms, Anglicans saw the flat and democratic structures of the UCC as prone to inauthenticity, and the dialogue was finally ended in 1983.

Anglican-United Dialogue Phase 2 – 2003-09

After a hiatus of two full decades, a national dialogue between the Anglican and United Churches in Canada resumed in 2003. The organic union that had been on the table in the 1970s was no longer the stated goal in this new round of the relationship, but a vision of distinct churches with mutual recognition of members, ministers, and sacraments was still held out to be possible.

It is important to acknowledge that the ACC-UCC relationship did not simply disappear in the intervening years. There was ongoing sharing and interchange, especially at local levels and in less formalized ways. For this reason, in the dialogue from 2003-2009 the focus was on the ways that Anglican and United followers of Jesus were still being drawn together in ministry. *The St. Brigid Report* (SBR), which represents the fruit of this period of work, is grounded in the belief that there already is communion between the two churches, even if it is not entirely visible or full. For that reason, substantial sharing of gifts can and should still take place in areas such as worship, sacramental practice, doctrinal expression, justice and

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 138-39.

¹¹ *Drawing from the Same Well: The St. Brigid Report*, ABC Publishing and the United Church of Canada, 2010.

reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, interfaith engagement, and more.¹² In the area of governing power and the offices of authority, SBR relates how considerable time was spent on assessing two influential external factors from the decades preceding:

(1) the 1982 Faith and Order paper *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (BEM) which is among the most important ecumenical achievements of the 20th century.¹³ BEM was able to articulate the distinction between the office of episcopacy (bishops), and the ecclesial ministry of episcopate (oversight) on the other. While not all expressions of Christian community have personal office holders called bishops, the consensus was that the ministry which episcopally ordered churches located through bishops could still be operative in churches with dispersed and communal governance forms.¹⁴ This key insight helped to moderate the knee-jerk reactions that structures of authority in different denominations and confessions were somehow less-faithful configurations of power because they take different names and forms.

(2) The work leading up to the 2001 *Waterloo Declaration* of full communion between the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada,¹⁵ which relied heavily on BEM. A Lutheran observer was added to the Anglican-United dialogue and not only did this Anglican-Lutheran relationship provide a new Canadian model for ecclesial communion, but some of the difficult friction-reducing work on the role of bishops and the ministry of episcopate was recognized. The Anglican and Lutheran churches both had bishops, but Anglican and Lutheran bishops were not understood uniformly, nor did they carry out their offices in the same ways. Why could not the same dialogue not happen elsewhere?

Anglican-United Dialogue Phase 3 – 2009-2016

The 2009-2016 years of Anglican-United dialogue were even more focused. Now the dialogue sought to define more clearly both the differences and commonalities between the two churches concerning the Scriptures, historic creedal doctrines, sacramental theology, and, of course, ordination and ministry. The overarching thrust of the final report, *Called to Unity in Mission* (CTUM),¹⁶ emphasized existing convergence in these

¹² SBR, 6.

¹³ *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982.

¹⁴ BEM, 19-21.

¹⁵ *Called to Full Communion: The Waterloo Declaration*, 2001.

¹⁶ *Called to Unity in Mission: A Report of the Anglican Church of Canada –*

areas and represented a substantial basis for cooperation and partnership in ministry and witness, without a formal declaration of full communion.

On the question of power and authority, CTUM sought to identify where the signs of ministry of oversight/episcopate could be seen in the two systems of polity. The dialogue recognized previously under-acknowledged parallels between Anglican synods and bishops and United Church presbyteries and conference presidents. While this did not eliminate all obstacles, it did advance the conversation to another level.¹⁷

It is also important to note that it was the CTUM report which named for the first time the potentially transformative impact that Indigenous expressions of church might have on these long-standing discussions about authority and power. As bodies such as the All Native Circle, Aboriginal Ministries Council, Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples, National Anglican Indigenous Bishop, and Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh all attested, the Anglican and United traditions were being called to expand their imagination in relation to matters of polity and governance. As the dialogue continued, this expansion would grow.

Based on these learnings, CTUM called for the formation of a new dialogue group with a specific mandate to describe how Anglican and United configurations of episcopate were both personal/episcopal and communal/conciliar rather than being simplistically and denominationally defined as either-or.¹⁸

Although not spelled out explicitly,—the legitimacy and authenticity in ecclesial exercises of power is one of the deepest issues. The Anglican tradition tends to be particularly concerned that there be identifiable personal authorities who are invested with systematic powers to efficiently render authoritative decisions. The main worry is that if this power is too dispersed and not embodied personally in a historic and successive office, it will be open to inauthentic operation that could harm cohesion and unity. The United Church tradition, on the other hand, is concerned that decisions made will be broadly received as authoritative. If this authority is too focused on an individual, it could lead to unilateral uses of power that render its authority illegitimate to the detriment of cohesion and unity. The key is for both communities to find ways to agree that there is validity to the other's emphases that are not necessarily contradictory to their own. Phase 4 built on this insight.

United Church of Canada Dialogue, 2016.

¹⁷ CTUM, 11-15.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

Anglican-United Dialogue Phase 4 – 2017-2020

A fourth iteration of the ACC-UCC dialogue took up the mantle during the years 2017-2020. Dialogue on episcopate continued, along with two further prominent developments.

In 2018, the UCC implemented a jurisdictional restructuring into a threefold system of communities of faith, regional councils, and the General Council. The duties of the governing structures previously known as presbyteries were either assumed by other levels of governance or eliminated. As a result, new oversight mechanisms were created—particularly the national Office of Vocation with jurisdiction for administration and care of clergy, and the regional council president, with what could be called a trans-local ministry of church leadership. These new structures maintained the United Church convictions regarding ecclesial power, but the situation of flux and adaptation presented some ecumenical opportunities.

Internationally, Anglican-Reformed/Anglican-Methodist relations in other parts of the world also had an impact. In particular, the move towards mutual recognition and reconciliation of ministries between the Church of England and the Methodist Church UK demonstrated how two churches with divergent polities could honour each other's convictions about legitimate configurations of power without having to give up their own. The proposal, outlined in the document *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*,¹⁹ describes how the conciliar/communal "connexionalism" of Methodism could preserve historic episcopacy in such a way that communion with the C of E would be possible. It also explores how Anglican episcopal polity could attend to Methodist concerns for the role of the whole church in coming to authoritative decisions.

These developments culminated in the study document *A Ministry of Unity: Further Reflections on Episcopate* in the Anglican and United Churches in Canada (MU).²⁰ This text seeks to elaborate two parallel truths: 1) Anglican mechanisms for the ministry of episcopate are not only expressed personally through a succession of individuals called bishops but are also synodal, and 2) United Church mechanisms for the ministry of episcopate (especially in the new structures) are not only communal/conciliar but also have personal and successive features. From there, it incorporates insights from the wider world of ecumenical dialogue on ecclesial authority and episcopate and suggests they could be adapted to

¹⁹ *Mission and Ministry in Covenant*, 2017.

²⁰ *A Ministry of Unity: Further Reflections on Episcopate in the Anglican and United Churches in Canada*, 2020.

the Canadian Anglican-United context. On this basis, MU outlines both shorter and longer term steps to gradually move the two churches towards greater mutual recognition of ministerial oversight.²¹ It seeks to see authentic and inauthentic configurations of power not as an “either-or”, but rather a “differentiated consensus” of two points of emphasis along a single spectrum.

Insights from Indigenous Expressions of Church

Although Phase 4 of the Anglican-United dialogue ended in 2020, new voices have entered these discussions about power and authority, one of which is the continued emergence of Indigenous expressions of church.

The responsibility of the churches to pursue truth, healing, decolonization, and justice in the wake of the sinful and destructive legacy of colonial Christendom in Canada is a critical issue for those who seek to follow the way of Jesus in this land today, and it is important not to instrumentalize that responsibility for other ends. However, the journey of confession and reparation which has begun within the Anglican and United churches opens doors for transformation within the churches as well.

Anglican and United Indigenous followers of the way of Jesus have continued to develop contextualized expressions of faith and self-determining structures of ecclesial life. In the ACC, this process has been underway since at least the 1980s. It reached a high point in 2019 with the canonical adjustments made by the General Synod to clear the way for the Sacred Circle and Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples to foster a Gospel-centred community that patterns its communal life according to the wisdom of Jesus and the cultural wisdom of First Nations, Inuit, and Metis Peoples of this land. While the leadership and decision-making mechanisms will undoubtedly bear some resemblances to other forms of corporate life influenced by the Anglican way, the goal is not to simply replicate forms inherited from the Church of England and the churches of European Christendom. There will be greater room to explore the best methods to pursue legitimacy and authenticity, unbound by former inflexibility.

In the UCC, a series of *Calls to the Church* were issued in 2018 coming out of the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the United Nations Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. These calls included a vision for a self-determining Indigenous church in relationship with the UCC, but with its own national and regional structures, gatherings, and spiritual initiatives. The dream

²¹ Ibid., 25-26.

continues to come into being as the details and interrelationships are defined and established. Yet again the UCC is being called into a time of transition in its ecclesial organisation as it seeks to be ever more faithful to the call of God.

These two journeys have shown how it is possible to critically examine inherited forms of organizing power and authority from late-Medieval Europe. Therefore, it may be that, in the great mercy of God, the long road towards the decolonisation of the churches will lead to ecumenical healing as well.

Conclusion

The misuse of power in communities of faith is a great evil that has done immeasurable damage. However, a power that is legitimately and authentically utilized for the sake of preserving the life and health of a community in the face of questions and challenges can be a real gift.

Churches have always wrestled with how to exercise authentic authority rather than mere power. This question has been a live issue in the Anglican-United dialogue. Looking at the history of that dialogue from the standpoint of the dialectic between power and authority provides a useful perspective from which to analyse its progress and to understand the questions involved.

Since the 1960s a lot has changed for both the ACC and UCC communities. While wanting to honour their own theological convictions and traditions, these disruptions have allowed them to see their traditional self-understandings and communal governance structures in a new light. In time they may discover that the distance between them is not as large as was once thought.

WOMEN OF INFLUENCE: A VOCATIONAL RESPONSE TO ONLINE HATE

By Kate Miller

I am an accidental homemaker. Although I was encouraged to be anything I wanted when I grew up, like many young people of my generation privileged to choose our own adventures, I found vocational fulfillment at home. Without a natural knack for housekeeping, nor any inclination that staying at home would be my life's work, the domestic arts have endured as my creative challenge. I especially like to do handicrafts; the traditionally-feminine needle arts like sewing and knitting and embroidery are activities for my creative self-expression.

Though neither resentful of the drudgery of domestic tasks, nor regretful of missing out on a career, I have often felt ashamed for wasting my potential, letting down a movement of women who fought to lift each other out of household bondage, and for staying home with my children when parents who wish they could, cannot. Perceptive to the dualism that it is at once laudable and loathsome to take pleasure in homemaking, I work to reimagine the home as the place that cultivates human flourishing for the sake of the world, rather than a separate sphere, a haven, or a retreat from it. This reframing has been necessary to live an integrated life, and resist the compartmentalization of work from faith, relationships, and personal character. Maintaining the home as a place for the creative activity of the Spirit to be realized is indeed my calling.

Since I do not know any other millennials who identify themselves as homemakers, as even my SAHM (Stay At Home Mom) friends have side-hustles or plans to return to the workforce when the kids are grown, it seems appropriate and easy to seek out vocational peers in a virtual space. Glimpses of other homemakers can be caught in the reviews on *allrecipes.com* and on Pinterest, where wisdom in the form of household hints, budget-friendly meal plans, parenting advice columns, is handed down and passed around in blogosphere; trusted mompreneurs in the trenches of domestic life, now with 1.5 million Instagram followers, affiliate marketing contracts, and podcasts, teaching us all how to DIY (Do It Yourself) with an e-course available for \$49.95 to uplevel our mundane lives! But my search was a quest for vocational encouragement to counter the societal shame of my role, and affirm that homemaking is valuable to more than just me and my family. Instead, I found the #TradWife movement.

#TradWife is more than just shorthand for "traditional housewife" on all social media platforms. It is a niche movement in the alt-right with

a mommy-blog facade. At first glance, entering #TradWife into the search field on Instagram, for example, will produce innocuous results: teacups and saucers with linens and flowers set on a table, women cradling their pregnant bellies, rush baskets of clean, folded laundry, an open Bible, women wearing aprons over long skirts, illustrations of white, heteronormative families from the 1950s, an apple pie. These photographs are fitting with the aesthetic of Instagram's reputation for staged snapshots of a desirable lifestyle, perfectly filtered. Yet many captions do not match the idyllic tone of the photographs, but proffer socially, politically, and theologically-conservative viewpoints:

-I don't need feminism because I am not a delusional, disgusting, hypocritical man-hater!

-Put your best effort into looking fit and attractive for your husband.

-Education does not give a woman value. Motherhood does.

-Make Traditional Family Values Great Again!

*-A husband can and must **enforce** his authority with his wife through Biblical discipline.*

-Strong families. Strong values. Strong nations.

The hashtags that riddle these posts are less for the purposes of indexing and cross-referencing content, but function to express alignment with the movement and to gather users together. As important as the purpose of a singular tag is to indicate a cause, a string of hashtags works to unify users, combining distinct interests for a broader audience. Taken together, an image, its caption text, and the way it is tagged, these #TradWife posts convey a specific message: Women are to reclaim their natural purpose to submit in marriage and bear children—a duty which was taken away from them by the sexual revolution—for the benefit and proliferation of white, Christian society.

This message is not exclusive to one particular medium; on other platforms like Twitter and YouTube, the content creators are “soft-spoken young white women who extol the virtues of staying at home, submitting to male leadership and bearing lots of children [. . . and] pepper their messages with scrapbook-style collections of 1950s advertising images showing glamorous mothers in lipstick and heels with happy families and beautiful, opulent homes.”¹ All of this online content is intended to recruit

¹ Annie Kelly, “The Housewives of White Supremacy” in *The New York Times*, 1 June 2018.

women, giving them a precise role in the white nationalist movement, and to make it palatable, benign, or indiscernible as outsiders scroll past. “Female-focused content [. . .] promoting a racist worldview through the trappings of home, family, and sisterhood—wholesome spheres of female influence. [. . .] Today, the savviest white nationalists are aware of the blind spot that observers often have when it comes to women, discounting their contributions to abhorrent causes because they prefer to think of them as humanity’s better angels.”²

This phenomenon, the “women-are-wonderful effect,” that women are gentle and harmless by nature, is to the advantage of the movement, both in the attractive veneer of its message, and for reinforcing the idea that women require the protection and domination of men.³ As social media influencers, #TradWives are “both a shield and a beacon, deflecting criticism and inviting curiosity,” protecting and projecting, concealing and revealing misogynist, racist, nationalist ideologies.⁴

This beacon appears in the fog of Christian culture wars as a familiar harbour in which conservative Christians can find shelter. The posts champion unequal complementarian theology, the view that men and women are not created equally by God but are given separate, essential, complementary gender roles according to the “natural” abilities of each sex; in other words, men are to lead and protect, and women are to nurture and serve. This teaching of female submission to male authority is justified by the subordination modeled by Christ the Son to God the Father, an unorthodox view of the Trinity, debated by degrees in certain denominations, and disregarded as heresy by others.⁵ Set on a foundation of scriptural interpretation that is used to suggest male headship and female submission to it, this patriarchal structure validates communities of faith that disallow women from preaching or leadership positions; by these rules, women are to display proper Christian living and to be right representations of Christianity by their obedience and submission to men. This ideal is biblical womanhood, performing femininity in order to maintain Christian patriarchal traditions and therefore declare the original intent of God for humanity. Domesticity, piety, purity and submission are

² Seyward Darby, *Sisters in Hate: American Women on the Front Lines of White Nationalism* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2020), 56-57.

³ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁵ Beth Allison Barr, *The Making of Biblical Womanhood: How the Subjugation of Women Became the Gospel Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2021), 194.

a kind of femininity that is recognizable and problematic in the wider culture, but signal virtue in Christian discipleship.⁶ Whether one's femininity is enacted as explicit adherence to complementarian theology or is simply reflected in the merchandising of pink ESV ladies' study Bibles and swag for women's ministries, biblical womanhood is an identity marker of devotion and holiness. Biblical womanhood is femininity, sanctified.

Interpretations of scripture that claim the infallibility of patriarchal authority often point to a few select verses that become the bedrock upon which biblical womanhood is constructed. But few scriptural interpretations capture the way that a sanctified femininity is to be dutifully transferred among women as explicitly as Titus 2. Among Paul's pastoral instructions to Titus, a letter which reminds all of Christ's followers to live integrated lives of faith, the particular descriptions of personal conduct, through a complementarian lens, become prescriptions for male and female behaviour.

Likewise, tell the older women to be reverent in behavior, not to be slandered or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be self-controlled, chaste, good managers of their household, kind, being submissive to their husbands, so that the word of God may not be discredited (Titus 2: 3-5).

This appears to be the final word on biblical womanhood.

Lifting this bit of Scripture out of its context to prescribe the scope of women's duties to her family, enlists women in perpetuating patriarchal power and female submission because it points out they are morally obligated to ensure that other women are following this instruction—not only so that the word of God may be discredited, but also so that patriarchy cannot be either.

The site #BiblicalWomanhood is therefore an acceptable way for theologically conservative Christian women to perform Christian virtue in the online space, evangelizing others while simultaneously keeping a wide berth from a pulpit. Users string together #BiblicalWomanhood, #Titus2, and #TradWife to align with the alt-right.

Lucky for #Titus2 housewives, Internet algorithms make it easier than ever to encourage biblical womanhood, showing and selling their perfect lives of submission on monetized social media and crowdsourced patronage platforms. But as these communities overlap, it is difficult to

⁶ Ibid., 165.

discern which posts are messages of hate and which claim to be in the spirit of Christ's love. Unintentionally, #TradWife is caught both by women seeking affirmation for their toxic ideologies, and those of us who are seeking scripturally-based guidance on parenting or partnership from online communities. Even if women are not recruited and radicalized into online hate groups, a user engaging with #TradWife content signals to the social media algorithms that the user wishes to encounter similar posts, thereby amplifying the misogynist, racist, and nationalist messages, and possibly making them seem common, true, and worth passing on.

Of course, encountering hate on the internet is not news, but rather is to be expected in an under-regulated space; we learn to cancel that with which we disagree, block trolls, and vow to never ever ever read through the comments section because hate is unavoidable online. For the Church to worry itself over such a tiny, virtual niche appears to give more credence to a few outliers than is deserved. The Church in Canada may well assume that the online hate problem belongs to our southern neighbours, which their 45th president condoned, fomented, and made standard. We seem savvy and well-practised in determining which information is too American and therefore not applicable to our national identity of politeness and acceptance of cultural diversity.⁷ Our national tolerance appears to eclipse any personal or congregational leanings to the far right. Unfortunately, we are implicated: called to be the Church, living respectfully in love and in service, seeking justice and resisting evil, we must have the eyes to see and scrutinize the online radical right's claims on Christian discipleship.

Increasingly, as the influence of parachurch expands in a culture of consumerism, brand alliance becomes more important than denominational or congregational relationships.⁸ Celebrity pastors,

⁷ Marci McDonald's treatment of Christian Nationalism is outdated in terms of the current political landscape, but provides insight into the eschatological motivations of the Christian Right in Canada. Marci McDonald, *The Armageddon Factor: The Rise of Christian Nationalism in Canada* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2010).

⁸ "Parachurch often reinforces bad gender tropes, outfitting and amplifying many of the divisions between men and women in the church. Men's and women's ministries have become a marketable enterprise for publishers, conferences, and websites. And it's interesting to note the contradiction between the individualistic culture in which the biblical manhood and womanhood movement is thriving with its Biblicist interpretive methods, and the traditional values of family and community that [some organizations are] trying to uphold." Aimee Byrd, *Recovering From*

thought leaders signing book deals with Christian publishers, organizations endorsed by political parties, political parties supported by Christian institutions, all meld homogeneously online and demand little more than a like, a share, a retweet, a follow. The average Christian woman may feel she does not need the hassle of a local congregation, when she can receive on her smartphone target-marketed messages that suit her. As the Church we need to confront this online hate, emphasizing accountability, redemption, and forgiveness, and recognizing that the power of the Church is in how we encounter, contend with, and love each other, by Christ's example and command.⁹

It is not that turning to the Internet for vocational encouragement was a poor choice on my part, but it was naïve of me to expect I would readily find a community of Christian, feminist homemakers trying to integrate their lives without encountering the abuses of power that allow for these identity markers to be distorted. The irony of #Titus2 is that Paul's letter to Titus was written to guide the community in negotiating the powers and principalities of a fallen world while living in the certain hope of Jesus. The letter implores the Church to recognize that belief and behaviour belong together, for the sake of God's kingdom on earth as in heaven.¹⁰ Now, I am committed to take part in a conversation of accountability, repentance, and forgiveness to both subvert the distortions of my self-representation and locate my identity in Christ.¹¹ I do this work at home, attempting to blur the public and the private, often by way of the domestic, traditionally-feminine needle arts.

One of my methods is through embroidery. Embroidery has a distinct legacy of negotiating a space of power and powerlessness, creating, perpetuating, and subverting femininity throughout history:

During the seventeenth century the art was used to inculcate femininity from such an early age that the girl's ensuing behaviour appeared innate. By the eighteenth century embroidery was beginning to signify a leisured, aristocratic lifestyle—not working was becoming the hallmark of femininity. . . . Moreover,

Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: How the Church Needs to Rediscover Her Purpose (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020), 169.

⁹ Joanne McNeil, *Lurking: How a Person Became a User* (New York: Picador, 2020), 184.

¹⁰ Steven Garber, *Visions of Vocation: Common Grace for the Common Good* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 98-100.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 222.

because embroidery was supposed to signify femininity—docility, obedience, love of home, and a life without work—it showed the embroiderer to be a deserving, worthy wife and mother. . . . Finally, in the nineteenth century, embroidery and femininity were entirely fused, and the connection was deemed to be natural. Women embroidered because they were naturally feminine and were feminine because they naturally embroidered.¹²

By the twentieth century, however, embroidery was employed in Suffragette and Women’s Liberation Movement protests to demonstrate “that personal and domestic life is as much the product of the institutions and ideologies of our society as is public life.”¹³ Now, in the digital age, embroidery can be used in a counter-cultural manner, subverting instant communication and electronic leisure, as well as the traditional imagery of the art—cross-stitched samplers of swear words ensure that this medium is not just used to reflect feminine virtue.

For instance, in 2018, artist Diana Weymar embroidered American President Donald Trump’s words “I am a very stable genius,” onto a vintage household textile and shared her work on social media. Encouraged by its reception, she instituted the Tiny Pricks Project (TPP) in which members stitched the President’s remarks, as well as the voices who supported and resisted him. Others joined in, stitching and posting the embroidered textiles to social media, and Weymar began curating a collection of Trump’s words, as well as the voices who support him and resist him, as participants mailed her their work. “The collection counterbalances the impermanence of Twitter and other social media, and Trump’s statements as president through the use of textiles that embody warmth, craft, permanence, civility, and a shared history. The daintiness and integrity of each piece stand in stark contrast to his presidency.”¹⁴ Weymar’s project holds embroidery’s historic complexity together with the polarizing contemporary content to invite viewers and participants to wrestle with the messages of hate and intolerance. By January 2021, the end of Trump’s presidency, Weymar had received over 4000 pieces from around the world. The project continues as a “Material Record of Current

¹² Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020), 11.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 201-205.

¹⁴ Weymar, Diana, “Tiny Pricks Project” Accessed September 1, 2021, <https://www.tinypricksproject.com>

Events, Desperate Times Stitching Measures” showcasing the echoes of his presidency, even after his 2020 election loss.¹⁵ I participated in Weymar’s project when Trump tweeted the following on August 12, 2020: “The ‘suburban housewife’ will be voting for me. They want safety & are thrilled that I ended the long running program where low income housing would invade their neighborhood.” Critics were quick and correct to point out this message as misogynist, racist, and discriminatory, and merely another bit of content that fits with the personal brand of bigotry that we have been accustomed to seeing from him —sleazy, but unsurprising. It is just like the tweet from exactly three weeks earlier when he called together the “Suburban Housewives of America” and the laugh of the day was that his tweet was so out-dated he could “win the 1956 presidential election.” But the president was not joking. I bought a vintage tea towel from an Etsy seller, who advertised it as a part of a bride’s “hope chest,” on which I cross-stitched his words and wrote in my submission letter:

I think this dog-whistle of a tweet is true, aiming to rally together the votes from women who identify with an increasingly normalized white nationalism being exercised in social media as the #TradWife movement. In my expressions of gender, race, religion, and vocation, this tweet demands that I reflect on the ways that I may unintentionally participate in a system designed to perpetuate misogyny and hate, and take action to dismantle it.

When Weymar posted my “#TradWife Trousseau” on the TPP Instagram page, reactions were similar to the incredulity to the original tweet. Several comments exclaimed, Not me! Not this housewife! The emojis of a face with tears of joy riddles the comment section. Someone reminded us of the Women’s March that followed his inauguration, another sarcastically asked what a housewife was, reassuring readers that this tweet was just a reflection of Trump’s terrible character, and not a reality. These comments suggested that the sexual revolution was too successful for Trump’s statement to be true. But this tweet was not a threat to those who only saw it merely as Trump’s chauvinistic babbling; it was a promise of a political victory among those who hold anti-feminist and segregationist views. This tweet was a signal clear enough for the alt-right to see and

¹⁵ Weymar, Diana @tinypricksproject, “Not so submissive submission from @kviimiller, Vancouver, BC,” 28 October 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CG5BFIKHnCK/?utm>.

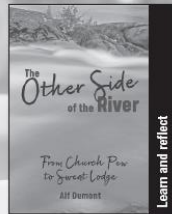
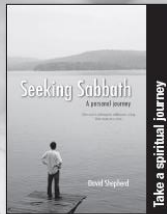
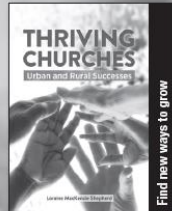
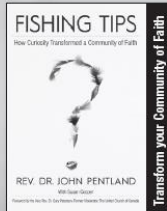
ponder but dim enough to miss when quickly scrolling past. Being hospitable to these words, inviting them into my home, painstakingly stitching them, and slowing them down, makes them more ponderable, less ephemeral, and therefore disempowers them. The subversion of the message with this homey medium is one of my responses, a tiny one indeed, but powerful enough to counter hate with a whole lifetime of care.

Read more. Grow more.

Explore the United Church Publishing House

Did you know that United Church Publishing House has published over 250 titles, with many selling thousands of copies?

We take pride in publishing titles that support, challenge, and inspire. We love to share our Christian faith and values and hope these books will spark curiosity and insight!



@Faith_in_our_Books



Explore UCPH titles: scan the QR code.



United Church Bookstore
Shop at ucrdstore.ca • 1-800-288-7365

**A WANDERER WITH AN OPEN MIND:
FROM RUSSIA TO CANADA – A REFLECTION ON THE
JOURNEY OF SANG CHUL LEE**

By Hae-Bin Jung



In the process of preparing for retirement my wife and I took a day and went to the York Cemetery where we purchased a plot of land suitable for two graves. It was the first real estate transaction of our lives. I had conducted funerals for many church members with a sad heart. The thought of being buried beside them gave me a sense of gratitude and it seemed fitting. In my funeral sermons I had often preached, “As immigrants, when we bury our beloved in this strange ground with the pain of loss we are putting down roots.” For a wanderer like me to find a place to be buried is something to be grateful for. How much more the thought that I am sending down a root among the many others that Korean immigrants have put down here.¹

Sang Chul Lee, in *God, Humanities’ Hope*, 1989

The first moderator of Asian heritage of The United Church of Canada, a chancellor of Victoria University in the University of Toronto, an honorary Rainbow Chief of the All Native Circle conference in The United Church of Canada, a spiritual leader of Korean Canadian society, a minister of Toronto Korean United Church, a leader of North America Coalition for Human Rights in Korea, and a pioneer for justice and peace: we can call him by many names. Yet among many honourable titles, none of these names would better describe The Very Reverend Dr. Sang Chul Lee than the title of “a wanderer with an open mind.”

From Russia to South Korea

Sang Chul was born on February 29, 1924 as the son of Korean immigrants in a small farm house near Vladivostok, Siberia, Russia. According to his

¹ Sang-Chul Lee, Hananim, Inryueui Heuimang *God, Hope of Humanity* (Toronto: Grover Printing, 1989), 12.

autobiography, his family began by farming in North Hamgyeong Province on the Korean Peninsula which was near the border with China and Russia. However, in 1910, the Japanese imperial regime occupied the Korean Peninsula and began to take the lands by force from the farmers to whom it had belonged for generations. In response to this oppression his ancestors crossed the border to Siberia, Russia. His parents settled in the Siberian “Darver” area, cultivating the wasteland and beekeeping, which allowed Sang Chul to remain in Russia until the age of seven. The political fluctuations in Siberia, however, shook his family a second time. The Russian Revolution of 1917 reached the eastern end of Russia in the 1930s. Upon hearing that the Soviets were sending many young children to a concentration camp to educate them as communists, Sang Chul’s parents made a difficult decision to move again from Russia to China to protect their children.²

The life of a migrant who has to start over in a strange country is painful and limited. Eventually, his parents were forced to make a living as peasant farmers. At that time, on the Chinese farm, landlords and peasants distributed the harvest at 7:3 respectively, so Sang Chul’s family had to endure hunger and lived a difficult life. Despite these hardships, Sang Chul entered an elementary mission school established by Korean immigrants and encountered the Christian faith there for the first time. Although he was baptized in the chapel, he did not know what it meant at that time. After finishing elementary school, he moved to Longjing city³ to study at EunJin (Grace and Truth) Secondary School that was founded by the mission unit of the Western Division of the Canadian Presbyterian Church and later, following church union, part of The United Church of Canada Korea Mission.

While learning the Christian faith from both the school and the Canadian missionaries, Sang Chul gradually began to think about his future and what he should do for his homeland under colonial rule. He recalls in his autobiography that one of his greatest joys back then was teaching children in the church. When he graduated from secondary school in 1943, the Japanese imperial government forced all the young people to enter the army and join the effort to win the Pacific War. He was able to avoid forced conscription by applying to a teachers’ college run by the Manchurian government. In August 1945, a month after graduating from the college at the age of 21, Japanese imperialism was finally defeated and

² Sang Chul Lee, *열린 세계를 가진 나그네, A Wanderer with an Open Mind* (Seoul: The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea, 2010), 13.

³ Also known at that time as Yongjeong (Dragon’s Well).

the joy of liberation spread throughout Manchuria.

Anticipating new life after World War II, Sang Chul wanted to work at a school as a teacher and to serve a church where his family lived. However, he soon found himself swamped by a wave of communism coming from Soviet Russia and overwhelming northern China. Similar to his experience in Russia at the age of seven, he witnessed the Chinese Communist Party oppressing Christian teachers. This experience made him decide to leave Chinese Manchuria and move south to the Korean Peninsula. On the day after Christmas in 1945, at the age of 21, he escaped alone to Seoul, South Korea, avoiding the Communists who were trying to arrest him. After that painful and heartbreaking day, he never saw his parents again.

In Seoul, he met Rev. Dr. Jae Joon Kim, who would become Sang Chul's lifelong mentor and father-in-law. Sang Chul entered the Chosun Theological Seminary that Dr. Kim had helped to found in 1940, and later became known as Hanshin University. Dr. Kim's vision for the seminary was to raise Korean church leaders through high-level theological education, freedom of academic research, and acceptance of biblical criticism. This goal was surprising considering that Korean Christianity at that time was very conservative and influenced by American fundamentalist missionaries. However, The United Church of Canada actively supported Dr. Kim's theological stance. Sang Chul was also able to continue his relationship with Canada through the teachings of United Church missionary William Scott.

Although settled in Seoul, Sang Chul's life as a wanderer did not stop there. The Korean War, which took place for three years from 1950 to 1953, forced him to flee a third time to avoid capture and quite possibly death at the hands of the Communists. The Korean War was a war of bone and flesh battles (骨肉相殘). It pitted erstwhile friends and family members against each other in a feverish war, encouraged and fed by the US and the Soviet Union. Over two million Chinese, North Koreans, South Koreans, and UN coalition forces were killed or wounded, and on the whole peninsula over four million Korean civilians were killed or wounded in the war. Although Sang Chul was able to find refuge in Busan and Jeju Island to escape the war, he could not turn a blind eye to the needs of orphanages and secondary schools suffering there. So he took care of them with sincerity until the end of the war.

After the war, and until he left Korea, Sang Chul participated in the founding of The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK).

The PROK continues to have a special relationship with The United Church of Canada. Although the PROK had persecuted his father-in-law Dr. Jae Joon Kim for his teaching of modern biblical criticism, the new progressive denomination started its journey anew. Sang Chul supported this movement right at its beginnings in the 1950s and worked as a PROK minister. He actively joined the movement for Korean democracy and opposed the dictatorship in South Korea. He continued to be a part of this democracy movement until his death.

From South Korea to Canada

In 1961, Sang Chul was offered the opportunity to study at Union College in Vancouver. He also had the opportunity to meet a small number of Korean and Japanese immigrants living in Vancouver. During his three years in Canada, he was able to deepen his academic understanding and become more open minded as he saw people of various backgrounds coexisting in one city. He was invited by Steveston United Church, a half white-Anglo and half-Japanese congregation, to preach for six months. He preached in English and Japanese each week and this experience led him to settle in Canada later. The relationship between Koreans and Japanese could not be good, due to the history of Japanese imperialism, which had forcibly ruled the Korean Peninsula for thirty-five years. However, Sang Chul was learning from his ministry in Vancouver that Japanese people in Canada were also being discriminated against because of the fact that they were associated with a criminal state. This experience made him realize the importance of an open mind and a universal love for humanity that transcends ethnic exclusivity. During this time, he was also invited to Europe for six months by the Bossey Ecumenical Institute in Switzerland.

After three years of studying abroad, Sang Chul returned to South Korea and worked at the Christian Academy, which was established with the support of the German Church. This organization had decided to foster a dialogue between people from all walks of life and Sang Chul was put in charge of this task. He believed that these meetings could help resolve the conflict that continued to divide South Korean society following the end of Japanese rule and the division of the peninsula. But God's calling did not allow him to settle down to this work in his home country. Steveston United Church in Vancouver called him again to come and serve as their ordained minister since he was the only person they knew who was able to preach in both English and Japanese. After much deliberation, Sang Chul accepted the call and began his ministry again in Canada. Recognizing that thousands of South Koreans were emigrating to Canada from South Korea, in 1966 he founded Vancouver Korean United Church. He became a

famous minister in the Vancouver area, preaching in three languages every week.

The ministry in Vancouver was meaningful and rewarding. But God's calling led him to move again, taking another step into an ever-widening world. Three years later, Sang Chul was asked by the headquarters of The United Church of Canada to minister to Korean immigrants who had begun to settle in Toronto. Toronto Korean United Church (TKUC) had been founded as the first Korean church in Ontario in 1967 by retired missionary Wilfred A. Burbidge, who had served in Korea. In 1969, this small new congregation was looking for a minister. Sang Chul accepted the request of the denomination and the church and moved to Toronto, beginning a twenty-year ministry that lasted until 1989.

During this period, Sang Chul was known as a leader of not only the Korean Canadian communities, but of all visible minorities, advocating for social justice and diversity in the Canadian society. First, he laid the groundwork for Korean Canadian communities through his work with TKUC. Through his dedication and support, many organizations such as the Korean-Canadian Orchestra, Choir, Senior Citizens Society, Radio Station, and Newspaper were formed. One of the highlights of this ministry was Sang Chul's weekly radio address to the Korean community in Toronto, which gave great comfort to Koreans who had to work at a convenience store or drycleaners all week and therefore could not attend a regular Sunday worship service.

As more and more Koreans began to emigrate to Canada during his ministry, TKUC was asked to serve a special role at the center of the Korean Canadian community in Toronto. They set up an outreach mission team to welcome those who arrived at the airport every week and help them settle in the Greater Toronto Area. His manse often became a temporary residence for immigrants, and his wife, Shin Ja Lee, as the hostess, greeted them with food and shelter. Sang Chul understood his ministry broadly. He set out to serve his people not only as a church minister but also as guide and advocate. Among early immigrants, there were some who struggled in settling in Canada. He defended the rights of early immigrants so that they were not discriminated against by the government and society due to cultural and racial barriers, or language. Sang Chul's vision of ministry was not limited to Canada. He continued to devote himself to human rights, justice, democracy and, later, to re-unification on the Korean Peninsula. From the 1970s to the 1980s, South Korea was dominated by a military dictatorship. Sang Chul founded the North America Korean Coalition for Human Rights in Korea, and of course his church became the center of the Korean democracy movement in Canada. They hosted South Korean

dissenters who had to escape their country or who came to speak and raise awareness for their cause in Canada. During this period, Rev. Sang Chul Lee and Toronto Korean United Church faced various kinds of surveillance and interference from the Korean military regime operating from within the South Korean consulate in Toronto because of their active part in the democratization movement. This was one of the hardships that he and his church endured as advocates for democracy in Korea even as they worked from Canada.

Serving Canada with an Open Mind

Sang Chul's multicultural ministry in Vancouver and activities for social justice in Toronto became increasingly known in wider circles outside the Korean community. This gradually led him to work for the whole United Church of Canada and Canadian society in general. He participated in various committees, served as the president of Toronto Conference and, in recognition of all his achievements, was elected Moderator of the United Church in 1988, the first person of Asian heritage to hold the denomination's highest office. Rev. Fred M. Bayliss, former missionary to Korea and former Executive Secretary to the Division of World Outreach valued his achievements this way:

[T]he two years during which Dr. Lee was moderator from 1988 to 1990 were perhaps the most difficult years in the history of The United Church of Canada. The decision in 1988 to consider for ordination of any candidate for ministry regardless of sexual orientation, threatened at times to tear the church apart. It did result in some people leaving the church. Through it all, our tireless moderator travelled to small communities and large with his message of "unity and diversity." He urged people to recognize some of the other great challenges our church was facing—one of which he embodied in his own person, multi-culturalism—and to see that our pluralism was a gift from God with great potential to enrich our common life. His rich deep faith, contagious hope, ever-present laughter and obvious love for all won him passage into the hearts of many, wherever he went.⁴

⁴ Fred M. Bayliss, "The Man I know." in *The Path of a Wanderer: His Dream and Vision: Celebrating the 70th years of life of the Very Reverend Sang Chul Lee*, 한 나그네의 삶: 그의 꿈과 비전, 심류 이상철 목사 고회 기념 글모음 (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society of Korea, 1994), 566.

Although feeling personally unfamiliar with the issue of sexual orientation, Sang Chul handled the issue with grace and compassion, urging church members to “live together, struggle together, and grow together.” With his Asian background and appearance which was similar to that of an Indigenous chief, as well as his leadership with humour and diverse experiences, Commission members may have glimpsed wisdom in resolving the conflict. When he died peacefully at his Newmarket, Ontario home, on January 28, 2017, at 92 years old, then Moderator Jordan Cantwell commemorated his achievements: “He provided leadership for the church in a time of great division and nastiness in the church. I remember someone telling me that when he was asked how he felt about leading the church through such a fraught time, he responded that he had lived through occupations, revolutions, and brushes with death, so he thought he could handle some church controversy.”⁵

On one of his visits as Moderator, an audience member asked him a harsh and prejudiced question as to how he could lead a mainline denomination, when his first language was not English and he wasn’t white. Sang Chul’s answer showed why he became an indispensable leader in the denomination: “I don’t speak English as my first language and I’m not tall. But I have one thing others don’t have. I have an extra-large size heart that can hold everyone.”

Conclusion

Whenever he had a chance to meet United Church people, Sang Chul encouraged ethnic minorities to open their hearts and actively approach and engage with people of the majority, while at the same time urging so-called white people to abandon their sense of superiority and accept racial minorities as their equals and as neighbours. His vision was for all humankind to live with respect for one another in God, regardless of race, gender, background, or class. After experiencing imperialism, war, and oppression, he witnessed how many divisions and conflicts arise when humankind lose their openness and affirmation of diversity. Sang Chul Lee lived his whole life as “a wanderer with an open mind” to overcome these sufferings and show us how beautiful the life of a wounded healer could be. May God bless his wonderful life and his new journey in the presence of God!

⁵ *Newsletter*, Emmanuel College of Victoria University in the University of Toronto, 31 January 2017.

The Canada Crisis: A Christian Perspective

Douglas John Hall. Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2019. Pp 123.

Between “the winter of our discontent” and “winter light,” Douglas Hall assesses the crisis facing his native country at a particular point in time, as well as the intimations of hope which can be seen in remembering and recovering a cultural heritage which was too soon eclipsed by the blandishments of technocratic mastery. The title of the book references the report by the Task Force on Canadian Unity (1979) which did not mince words in its assessment that Canada as a nation was facing an existential crisis. The report itself was a response by the federal government to the election of the separatist *Parti Québécois* under René Lévesque, presenting Canada with a momentous choice regarding its future.

The time and place afford Hall the opportunity to examine the polarities of sin and redemption, hope and despair in a time of crisis. The result is a “Christian Perspective” in a particular place and time, but also a way into the larger challenge of living as Christians, and caring for the world today.

Early on in his writing, Hall began examining the quality of hope in the biblical witness versus the manufactured hope which has been so pervasively purveyed on this continent. The latter kind has its own power, hence its popularity. It is not unaware of the darkness, of danger, of real obstacles, but not having been forced by history to consider them deeply, it drives over them, and for a time seems to be rewarded with success. But, this seeming success—growth in industry, wealth, and the subjugation of nature—is bought at very steep price: the denial of reality! A reality which inevitably crashes in and turns this hope to dust, to cynicism in the present or even to outright despair for the future. It can finally freeze the very drive which this ersatz form of hope fed in abundance.

And yet, nations, people, cultures, languages, histories, land and places matter, and Canadians remain alive to this in good part because of their history and geography. Canada is an immigrant nation, a nation of refuge, with a land stewarded with love and care by native peoples, with an intimate relationship with the flora and fauna of the land.

As a Canadian, Hall argues that we have been far too hesitant, and perhaps fearful, of articulating an indigenous theology which meets our own particular reality. Far safer to borrow the “crisis” theology of the European continent which urgently sought for a “word from the Lord” amidst the slaughter of the First World War, and later on the threat posed by the rise of National Socialism. These realities had demanded a naming

of the overt despair which these historical moments engendered, as well as a radically different theological response than was on offer at the end of the nineteenth century.

But what of Canada? Was it enough to import this theological articulation as our own? Hall has argued for over half a century that it was not, and he has worked tirelessly to understand and to describe the North American context, and even more particularly, the Canadian context, and to listen for what is “a word from the Lord” for us. With few exceptions, our own despair, says Hall, has remained largely unacknowledged. It is a despair which will not name itself. It is a despair which does not know it is despair.

Hope in the face of covert despair calls for a remembering, a creative recovery of a cultural heritage, which predates the massification which has conditioned us to expect quick solutions to our problems, and easy answers to the question: what are human beings for? Genuine hope grows in those who have the courage and patience to “love the questions” (Rilke) and out of this deep reflection to begin our own search for responses—sometimes in resistance to what dehumanizes us and alienates us from the whole of which we are only one part, as well as solidarity with protesting movements which struggle for the recovery of lost relationships with one another, to our First Nations people, to our fellow creatures, as well as the air, water, soil, and plant life to which we are bound on this spiralling blue planet.

The questions remain. What is despair, Canadian style, and what can be hoped for though not yet seen? The book is a worthy read for this exposition alone. But even more, Hall presents a template for considering the crises of today in which Canada participates as a nation, but which are global in scope. There is still a covert despair, but there is also a blatant fear that the climactic future is not bright; that we are reaching, if we have not reached already, a point from which we cannot return. Our own North is the proverbial canary in the coalmine, though perhaps the time for canaries has passed. Canadian Christians can no longer afford to borrow the facts of despair, nor mouth others’ intimations of hope.

Nicholas Athanasiadis

The Way of St. Benedict

**Rowan Williams. Bloomsbury Publishing: London, 2020.
Pp.132.**

Little did I know what I was getting into when I began this little journey of some 130 pages into what I believe is the heart of a modern saint. Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams and most recently master of Magdalene College, Cambridge has published a truly significant book in the depth of the worldwide pandemic. Here in a time where we have learned by force to live in isolation largely without community (Church or otherwise), without loved ones close by, is it possible that there is something quite profound for us to learn from the ancient monastic orders?

Williams' work explains with a certain clarity the core beliefs and understandings of the Religious life and in particular of the Benedictine Order. However, what is enormously refreshing is how Williams is able to reveal how a work penned by St. Benedict in the early 6th century could have so much relevance for us in the 21st.

While providing a thorough historical panorama of the rise and essence of early and medieval monasticism, this book is ultimately about transformation, not just of the individual but of communities both sacred and secular. Most practical for the modern Church is the chance to learn from inwardly digesting the gentle and flexible disciplines of The Rule of St. Benedict. To quote Williams, "I have, in these pages, sought to show that the quest for monastic renewal in the early Middle Ages is inseparably connected with the development of different conceptions of the Church's relation to the world; and so, finally, with the problem of the nature of the Church itself, and of authority in the Church" (104).

The deep need for those of us trying to survive in a modern and rapidly changing world is learning how to resist the "creeping functionalization" of our daily existence and acquiring the skill, to quote St. Benedict, to "*Ausculat. Listen!*". This is not something one does effectively in isolation but within the context of authentic, transparent, and stable community. Williams is arguing that *The Way of St. Benedict* is a practical guide on how such communities are developed and maintained. In the opening chapters Williams lays the foundation of how in fact we "Shape Holy Lives" and even shape "The Future of Europe." The leadership of the monastery and, to Williams point—the local Church—must above all create and maintain stability by role modelling "transparency", being a "peacemaker" and providing healthy "accountability". These Christian virtues are meant to seep into the very culture, allowing the individual and community to hear what the Spirit is

saying not just to the Church but the wider society as well.

But Williams makes it clear that this is not for the faint of heart, for he reminds us that this is difficult work and usually produces inner conflict. A healthy and authentic community is a place where there is a hard won peace—or as St. Benedict outlines, a transparency and honesty that does not give way to a “false peace”:

I think this has something to do with the way in which we can protect ourselves as a community or society by failing to face conflict, failing to admit the brokenness of our togetherness by making little of it, ignoring it, denying it. It is damaging if we refuse to admit the reality of conflict, or to seek a resolution that leaves [one] feeling secure without healing the breach or the offense that others feel. So if we are transparent and honest as part of our growth into communal stability, we have to confront the uncomfortable fact that we’re not actually and instinctively at peace with everyone” (31).

It is Williams’ hope that as the Church grows in this maturity, it will in time “converge in a new configuring of political ethics”. The Benedictine tradition offers a way of shaping the life of the Church in an attempt to model ways of living together—ways of exercising authority, ways of conducting public debate that can shape western society.

Certainly this is an ambitious goal and possibly the great doctor is hoping for too much, but if it is true “that there is nothing new under the sun” possibly re-visiting The Rule of St. Benedict could well have something to teach us for the future.

Although this reviewer thinks this little gem is best suited for clergy and lay people in local and even civic leadership, the lessons learned apply to all: “A monk is not a special kind of Christian; every Christian is a special kind of monk” (94).

As one might expect from Rowan Williams the book requires some intense reading, but like all good things of merit, patience and serious solitude will glean their rewards. Read it slowly, and expect to be blessed.

D.V. MacDonald
Toronto

Misguided Love: Christians and the Rupture of LGBTQI2+ People**Charles Fensham. Journal of Pastoral Publication, Inc., 2019.
Pp. 250.**

The title could be misleading. Charles Fensham, professor of Systematic Theology at Knox College, Toronto, has offered a book that is highly affirmative of sexual and gender minorities, including Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Gender Queer and Questioning, Intersex and Two Spirited, plus others.

We find here a scholarly and deeply passionate defence of all these minorities. He speaks of a spectrum of possibilities in which people experience sexual attraction and/or gender identity which differ from majority cultural norms, and understands that sexual experience is shaped by “a process that involves both biology and socio-cultural factors” (11).

In chapter 2 we find a valuable discussion of moral discernment in community, which seeks a Christian ethical compass based in Scripture, but does not engage in superficial reading of proof texts. Scripture is paramount to his method, emphasizing the teaching of Jesus about the love of God and neighbour. Jesus is the embodiment of radical Christian love, and provides the lens for a Christian interpretation of Scripture (24-25). Jesus’ attitude to the “others,” e.g., Samaritans and others on the margins of society, is normative for Christian life including sexual ethics (28-29). Fensham also recognizes that erotic sexual drive is a healthy dimension of our humanity created by God, and is to be affirmed for all as a source of great joy. In the teaching of the prophets, love of neighbour cannot be separated from justice. Just and consenting erotic relationships glorify the Creator when they are faithful, honest, equal, and joyful. Thus Christian moral discernment on matters of sexuality is grounded in Christ and in Scripture.

At the same time, he argues that moral discernment needs to take seriously scientific knowledge about the nature of sexual orientation. Contemporary psychology and psychiatry no longer regard same sex erotic love as sick or twisted. Rather, the scientific evidence shows that sexual orientation is complex, and should not be understood in terms of a simple dualism, but is better represented “on a scale between two ends” (22). A scriptural and christological hermeneutic must proceed in conversation with science and human experience, for the sake of just and loving action. In fact, this book is valuable generally as a teaching resource for Christian theological and ethical thought.

Fensham asks: “Why do people bother to attack a group of people who really do them no harm” (40)? Why did the gospel of love and charity

become so hateful toward sexual and gender minorities? Chapter 3 is about the Role of Disgust, i.e., a gut reaction on a pre-rational intuitive level toward people who are different. Regarding the hatred of male homosexuality, he refers to misogynist concepts in late antiquity and early Christianity. The killing, maiming and torture of homosexuals—involving beatings, live burnings, torturing on the wheel, drowning in barrels of water, and on and on—were hate crimes encouraged by Christian clergy. Psychologists, Freud among them, speak of the “abjection,” or casting off of those who seem to endanger the social order, and especially those who may threaten our own sense of sexual identity. This phenomenon includes the tragedy of “internalized homophobia,” of self-disgust and frequent suicide among sexual orientation minorities.

Chapter 4 includes a treatment of biblical texts often used to justify the persecution of homoerotic relationships: the creation texts of Genesis 1 and 2, Leviticus 18 and 20, Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6, 1 Tim. 1. He points out that the translations of some of these texts wrongly reflect later cultural attitudes, and their interpretations also often reflect notions of manliness in Greco-Roman culture. He finds a shift from the earliest Christian period to the post-Constantine era, when major figures like Chrysostom and Augustine, followed by Aquinas, prescribed the death penalty for same-sex relations. Their erroneous use of the Sodom and Gomorrah text (Gen 19), and the fear of divine retribution on a whole community, had great influence on the severe punishment of “sodomy” in subsequent Christian history.

The second section of the book deals especially with the shameful history of “theological homophobia”—of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and Reformation, and the modern period. The author spares us none of the horrendous details of the torture and execution of millions of victims by both Protestants and Catholics. It is sobering to hear of “a correlation between rising religious zeal and convictions for sodomy,” reminding us how harmful “religion” can be (188). We learn that the execution of lesbian women was less common; women were more often burned or drowned as witches. We do hear of a woman drowned for the crime of lesbianism in Calvinist Geneva in 1568.

Theological homophobia is by no means dead in our time. The author rightly calls the churches to repentance, and to transformation of attitudes and practices toward a minority that is still suffering from exclusion and injustice. An excellent book that deserves to be widely read.

Harold Wells,
Emmanuel College, Toronto.

Tender to the World: Jean Vanier, L'Arche, and the United Church of Canada

Carolyn Whitney-Brown. Monreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2019. 264 + xviii pages.

There is perhaps no better place to begin a review of *Tender to the World* than in its fourth chapter, entitled “Secret Agency and Surprising Subjects.” In this chapter, Carolyn Whitney-Brown introduces a 2009 letter to Jean Vanier from Julia Kristeva. The influential post-modern theorist challenged Vanier’s understanding of pleasure as “the principal motivation” of the L’Arche movement he founded, questioning “whether Vanier is aware of how pleasure is linked with desire in all its multiple and ambiguous dimensions” (163). In the context of the study, published in October 2019, this exchange provides a useful opportunity to clarify elements of Vanier’s vision, as well as to highlight the fact that Kristeva “ultimately commends” his ideals (166). The critic becomes a kind of convert. Reading the same account now, however, in the wake of L’Arche’s disclosure in February 2020 of Vanier’s sexual abuse of at least six women, Kristeva’s critique stands out for its stark clarity and prescience. Kristeva understood something about desire that Vanier never admitted to the Canadian public or to the members of his own movement—or, likely, even to himself. What a difference 4 months can make.

Certainly, had Whitney-Brown known about Vanier’s record of abuse, she would have written a different book; but I think it is also possible to say that the book she published *is* a different book, in light of these revelations. The work plays creatively with different meanings of the *tender* of the title, read nominally as a ship’s dinghy or a locomotive’s fuel source; verbally, as an act of recompense; and adverbially, as a disposition of gentle care. Chapter 1 focuses on Vanier himself as a kind of *tender* between the United Church of Canada and a new path of solidarity with the marginalized, beginning with his 1972 presence at the church’s 25th General Council. Chapter 2 shifts attention from Vanier to a range of creative partnerships between the United Church and L’Arche from 1973 to 2018. From this broad history, chapter 3 narrows its focus to gather the narratives of various L’Arche collaborators with links to the United Church. Chapter 4, finally, explores the agency of “core members”—the persons with disabilities that form the nucleus of each L’Arche house or extended community—through the lenses of prayer, of action and embodied “being” (144), of the inversion of power, of weakness, and of intentional community and responsible care. If Vanier is a *tender* of connection, it is the *tender* of core members’ joy and shared living that

gives L'Arche its unique dynamism.

The interpretive arc of *Tender to the World*, then, can be read as tracing a movement from Vanier as an inspiring, saintlike movement initiator—chapter 1 begins with the now darkly sinister claim that, “If you don’t worship him, you don’t know him” (16)—to the far more quotidian, complex tapestry of L'Arche communities themselves. One temptation for the reader might be simply to marginalize the figure of Vanier, while retaining one’s high regard for L'Arche. Indeed, Whitney’s previous publications divide neatly in this way: her *Jean Vanier: Essential Writings* (Orbis, 2008) paved the way for a wider survey of various L'Arche community founders worldwide, in the edited collection *Sharing Life* (Paulist, 2019). One could simply let the former go out of print, and keep the latter as a more authentic witness.

Precisely as an account of human connection, the narratives of *Tender to the World* do not permit such an easy resolution. It is hard to imagine anything like the international L'Arche movement absent from the distinctive charisma of Jean Vanier and, behind him, his spiritual mentor Père Thomas Phillippe—the latter of whom, we now know, was also Vanier’s mentor in using spiritual direction as a means for sexual exploitation (see 190-91n10 of the present volume). And L'Arche, as well documented in this volume, has always been a place of both joy and dysfunction. This point is underscored, in chapter 3, by a new assistant’s candid assessment that she had “never been anywhere where the exemplary and inspirational stories bore so little relationship to what she was seeing day to day!” (119). We are, it would seem, left with the deep ambiguity identified by Kristeva, extending from the distorted spirituality of the founder to the movement springing, at least originally, from this same spiritual foundation.

It may be helpful at this point to recall that *Tender in the World* is not just about L'Arche, but also about The United Church of Canada. And the deep ambiguity of the United Church is simply presumed, across the whole study. Notwithstanding the fact that Whitney-Brown cautions against romanticising L'Arche (183) and insists that its relationship with the United Church has always been “reciprocal,” with gifts “tendered” on both sides (80), it is the former rather than the latter that is described as a “catalyst” of transformation (9). What precisely does L'Arche catalyze?—a joyful practice of self-emptying introspection, confrontation with hurtful legacies of the past, and solidarity with those on the margins. Whitney-Brown illustrates such a reflective process, at the conclusion of her study, with difficult conversations about racism in the United Church at its 43rd General Council in 2018 (180-88). The charisma of L'Arche, she contends,

provides a lens for understanding this meeting as a “pivot” for the Church, made possible by a shared experience of “tenderness and vulnerability” (187). This may be accurate, as far as it goes. But the enduring contribution of the book may be the invitation it offers to reverse this interpretive lens, to assist L’Arche in facing its own, newly discovered ambiguities and legacies of harm, in hopes of building a new future.

Reid B. Locklin
Williams Treaty Territory (East York, ON)
reid.locklin@utoronto.ca