THE COVENANT

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Spring 2021

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Comment

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This issue of the *Quarterly* presents three studies. The first piece calls for careful interpretation of the Beatitudes. The next two essays examine some aspects of twentieth century Covenant history: its engagement with charismatic movements, and its rich heritage of women employing the arts in mission. While the topics are varied, a common thread may be found in each of these articles, as they encourage us to listen, with discernment, to voices other than our own. Indeed, in our calling to advance the cause of Christ, we benefit by engaging with the perspective of others who have taken up this work at different times and in different places.

Rebekah Eklund, associate professor of theology at Loyola University Maryland (Baltimore), offers a nuanced exploration of what reading the Beatitudes "in the company of others" might entail, rooted in her extensive research in the reception history of the Beatitudes. Eklund reminds us that descriptive and prescriptive approaches to these biblical texts have, too often, been hermetically sealed from one another. She carefully explores the benefits of reading with an interpretive ear attuned to those voices—past and present—that have fruitfully engaged in the multiple levels of meaning and significance these crucial texts have to offer the follower of Christ.

With his "Open to the Spirit: Covenant Dialogue with Charismatic Movements," José González, lead pastor of Northbrook Covenant Church (Northbrook, IL), shares from his research into the Covenant's responses to charismatic currents throughout the last century. In so doing, González first provides a helpful overview of the movements themselves. Further, by looking at key sources that have preserved a variety of statements and discussions, González highlights those Covenant voices that thoughtfully

engaged with these charismatic movements. The themes that emerge from his analysis remain relevant—with calls to be biblical, to be Christ-centered, to renew our sense of dependance on the Holy Spirit, and to continually be open to the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit.

In her article, Alicia Guldberg Reese, pastor at Burr Ridge Church of Christ (Burr Ridge, IL), looks at a specific period of Covenant Women ministry and their use of creative arts for successful mission fundraising. Drawing especially on her work in Covenant archives, Guldberg Reese provides a synthetic analysis of the 1950s, '60s, and '70s—decades during which Covenant Women were especially active in creative mission support work. Guldberg Reese helps us hear the voices of these past Covenant women who faithfully and artistically executed a series of mission projects. Hearing those voices anew ought to encourage us to creatively engage in ministry efforts in our current contexts.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge Hauna Ondrey, associate professor of church history at North Park Theological Seminary. Ondrey faithfully and ably served as the editor of the *Quarterly* from 2015 to 2020, managing this publication with editorial excellence, theological acumen, and a consistent awareness of relevant ministry issues. May her good work from these past years continue to bear much fruit. With this issue, it is my joy to step in as the interim editor for the *Quarterly*.

Reading the Beatitudes in the Company of Others

Rebekah Eklund, Associate Professor of Theology
Loyola University Maryland, Baltimore, Maryland

The Beatitudes (Matt 5:3-12; Luke 6:20-26) have captivated Christians for over two thousand years.[1] They are one of the most preached texts in Christian history. I have spent the past few years reading them in the company of the saints, poring over sermons, treatises, letters, artwork, commentary, and poems on the Beatitudes.[2] Books on the Beatitudes alone—not to mention the Sermon on the Mount as a whole—could fill a whole library.

Today, though, we tend to dismiss the insights of our past brothers and sisters. It is fairly common to claim that past thinkers got it wrong—that they misunderstood the Beatitudes as "entrance requirements into the kingdom," when the Beatitudes are really eschatological reversals promised to the last and the lost.[3] This view is relatively common in twentieth-century commentaries.

This modern lens proposes that the Beatitudes are either descriptions,

[1] Portions of this essay were delivered in slightly different form to a session of the Theological Interpretation of Scripture section at the Society of Biblical Literature (November, 2019). Other small portions of the essay have been adapted from Rebekah Eklund's book on the Beatitudes, *The Beatitudes through the Ages* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2021), used here with kind permission of the publisher.

[2] For an example of how artists have illustrated the Beatitudes, see Rebekah Eklund, "The Blessed," Visual Commentary on Scripture, http://thevcs.org/blessed.

[3] Robert Guelich, "The Matthean Beatitudes: 'Entrance Requirements' or Eschatological Blessing?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 95 (1976): 415–34. According to Mark Allan Powell, Hans Windisch was the first to call them "entrance requirements for the kingdom of heaven" (in *Der Sinn der Bergpredigt*). See Powell, "Matthew's Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 58 (1996): 470.

or they are commands. Do they describe undesirable conditions that God promises to reverse, or virtuous qualities that God promises to reward? Are they the entrance requirements of the kingdom, or eschatological blessings of the age to come? Usually, commentators narrate the two options as mutually exclusive categories. One must choose. The Beatitudes either prescribe, or they describe. They are a declaration of God's favor for the downtrodden and a promise of God's vindication of them, or they are the qualities to be pursued by all those in the community of faith. They cannot be both. How could they?

It seems sensible to propose that the Beatitudes are one or the other. After all, how could the same statement be both a positive quality to pursue and an undesirable condition to be overturned? How could the same beatitude both describe something and command something? "This is a pine tree" is not the same thing as "Be a pine tree!"

But the more I read my way through the history of interpretation, the more uncomfortable I became with this choice. After all, a beatitude is not merely a statement of fact; it is a value judgment.[4] A beatitude is more like the declaration "That is poison." This is a description that suggests a certain response, but one that cannot be specified without a context in which that response becomes intelligible. I may respond to that declaration by deciding not to drink something, or by putting a container on a high shelf so my children cannot reach it, or by buying it and bringing it home to put out for the rats in the alley.

A beatitude is less like "This is a pine tree," and more like "That is poison," or perhaps even more like "A pine tree is a good and beautiful thing to be," especially if it is spoken by someone who happens to be a great authority on pine trees. This is a description that invites a response, but one (again) dependent on context: if pine trees are good and beautiful, and I happen to be a pine tree, I may rejoice or take comfort in this. If I am *not* a pine tree, I might wonder what it is about pine trees that makes them good, or perhaps even how I could become like one.

Descriptive and Prescriptive Approaches to the Beatitudes

Over time, I came to believe that the dichotomy between prescriptive and descriptive approaches is ultimately false. One reason for this is that I had trouble recognizing which option premodern readers took. I found myself unable to sort them, neatly, into one category or the other. To be

[4] Jonathan T. Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2017), 49.

sure, premodern readers were more likely to understand the Beatitudes as implicit commands, or as invitations into a good life, but I had a nagging feeling that they would have been, on the whole, bewildered at the description of the Beatitudes as "entrance requirements into the kingdom."

That led me to examine this dichotomy more deeply. Jonathan Pennington helped me to see that the dichotomy is rooted in part in a disagreement over the genre of a beatitude.[5] Do the Beatitudes emerge from the Jewish wisdom tradition or the Jewish apocalyptic tradition? If they derive from the wisdom tradition, then they are likely to be prescriptive: to be about wisdom, flourishing, virtues, and the like. If they are rooted in the apocalyptic tradition, then they are descriptive: they are about the dramatic in-breaking of God to bring about the reversal of all the things that cause people to suffer.

Pennington, however, points out that the wisdom and apocalyptic traditions were not cleanly compartmentalized in the Second Temple era but had become "inextricably interwoven."[6] If this is true in the context from which the Beatitudes had emerged, it seems likely that this intertwining is also true of the Beatitudes. Simply on the matter of establishing what a beatitude is, then, the dichotomy seems unhelpful. Furthermore, it tends to lead to certain problems.

For example, one of the functions of the prescriptive/descriptive dichotomy is to drive a wedge between Matthew and Luke. Viewing the Beatitudes only through a descriptive lens works well for Luke's version, in which Jesus blesses the poor, the hungry, the weeping, and the despised. This approach is less helpful for the beatitudes that occur only in Matthew, especially the merciful, the pure in heart, and the peacemakers. It's hard to see how being merciful is an undesirable quality that will be reversed at the eschaton. This results in what initially looks like a clear division of labor: Luke's beatitudes are descriptive, and Matthew's are prescriptive.

A more complex option is to see Matthew's first four beatitudes as descriptive and his second four as prescriptive, as when George Hunsinger writes that the first four describe "the needy," and the second four "the faithful."[7] Hunsinger could be taking a cue from John Calvin, for whom the first four beatitudes are inward-looking (concerning one's

[5] Ibid., 43–54.
[6] Ibid., 63.
[7] George Hunsinger, *The Beatitudes* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2015), 1–3, 59–60.

relation to God), whereas the second four are outward-looking (concerning one's relation to neighbors). This two-part division mirrors Calvin's understanding (itself inherited from a longstanding Christian tradition) that the first "tablet" of the Ten Commandments (i.e., the first five commandments) relates to the love of God, and the second "tablet" (i.e., the second five commandments) relates to love of the neighbor. The first four beatitudes (the first stanza) are like the first tablet of the ten commandments; the second stanza is like the second tablet.[8]

In modern commentaries, however, the judgment that Luke's beatitudes are descriptive (whereas Matthew's unique beatitudes are prescriptive) is often related to another historical judgment, one about which beatitudes are more "original"—that is, which are closer to the teachings of Jesus, and which have been added or altered by one of the evangelists. The majority opinion of modern scholarship proposes that Jesus originally pronounced three or four beatitudes (blessings for the poor, the weeping, the hungry, and perhaps the hated), which represented hope in God's apocalyptic reversal on behalf of the suffering, whereas Matthew "spiritualized" and "ethicized" these more concrete blessings.[9] This, of course, values one side of the dichotomy over the other: the original beatitudes (as spoken by Jesus) really were (or are) descriptive, and it was only later redaction that modified them to be prescriptive.

This is, at the least, a historical judgment that is open for debate. There are other possible ways to understand the relationship between the two versions. Premodern scholars sometimes agreed with the modern view that Matthew added the words "in spirit" to Jesus's blessing on the poor, but they proposed that Matthew did so in order to clarify the meaning of the beatitude. A few modern scholars, like Mark Goodacre, point out that it is just as plausible to say that Luke has "concretized" the original blessing on the poor in spirit, in accord with his repeated emphasis on God's good news for the poor and the coming reversal of the rich and powerful (Luke 1:46–55; Luke 4:16–19).[10]

In my view, none of these judgments should be allowed to determine the "meaning" of the Beatitudes, because they are only good guesses,

[8] John Calvin, *Sermons on the Beatitudes: Five Sermons from the Gospel Harmony, Delivered in Geneva in 1560* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2006), 133, 247–49. Martin Luther offers a similar account of the Matthean beatitudes in Luther, *The Sermon on the Mount*, vol. 21 of *Luther's Works,* ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia, 1956), 45.

[9] Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, Hermeneia, trans. James E. Crouch (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress: 2007), 190, 199.

[10] Mark Goodacre, *The Case Against Q: Studies in Markan Priority and the Synoptic Problem* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 2002), 133–51.

impossible to verify with complete confidence one way or the other. Equally tenuous are reconstructions of a possible "original" text, whether that be the hypothetical text of Q or the authentic words spoken by the Jesus of history.

Instead, the value of these judgments is to draw our attention to the way the words run in Matthew and in Luke—and thus to the wider contexts of the two Gospels as the contexts in which the Beatitudes are set.[11] If meaning derives in part from context, and these two versions of the Beatitudes have been deliberately placed within a certain context and narrative flow (two things I assume to be true), then we might begin an exploration of how the Beatitudes function first of all in their respective narrative settings. One result of this attention to the wider context of the two Gospels is that it complicates the neat division of labor proposed between Luke's descriptive beatitudes and Matthew's prescriptive ones.

In Luke's Gospel, which modern scholars often see as more focused on material poverty, "the poor" is not merely a material category but has spiritual overtones.[12] Mary's song of reversal places the poor and hungry in parallel with "those who fear [God]"; their opposites are the powerful and the proud, who do not. The poor widow gives generously to God, while the scribes devour her house (Luke 20:47-21:4). The rich fool stores up treasures for himself but fails to be "rich toward God" (Luke 12:16–21). Another wealthy man will not follow Jesus because he cannot renounce his riches (Luke 18:18–25).

Likewise in Matthew the same audience who is told that poverty of spirit is blessed are also told that they cannot serve God and wealth (Matt 6:24), and that it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt 19:24). For both evangelists, the blurred line between spiritual and material—between poverty and humility—by implication blurs the line between prescriptive and descriptive approaches.

This brings me to an additional problem with the dichotomy, which is that it assumes the text means one thing—the Beatitudes mean *this*, or they mean *that*—always and for everyone. They describe, or they

[11] They can, of course, be abstracted from this context and set in a new context—e.g., in liturgy. But if meaning is drawn from context, the Beatitudes' first context is their setting in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.

[12] W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark, 1988), 1:444; see also Herman Hendrickx, *Ministry in Galilee: Luke 3:1-6:49*, vol. 2A of *Third Gospel for the Third World* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1997), 289.

prescribe. (Luke always *only* describes; Matthew always *only* prescribes.) This is what Steve Fowl calls "determinate" interpretation—a mode of interpreting that seeks to bring clarity and closure to a text's meaning. Fowl argues instead for "underdetermined" meaning: "Underdetermined interpretation is underdetermined only in the sense that it avoids using a theory of meaning to determine interpretation. Underdetermined interpretation recognizes a plurality of interpretative practices and results without necessarily granting epistemological priority to any one of these."[13]

Like Fowl, I want to make a case against "determinate" interpretation in relation to the Beatitudes, especially in relation to whether we need to choose one side of the prescriptive-descriptive dichotomy over another. To do so, I will explore two main challenges to determinate interpretation through the following claims: 1) Multiple meaning is a feature of the Word through which the Spirit speaks; and 2) Texts do not have meaning in the abstract, but only in contexts in which those meanings become intelligible.

A Text Strangely Open: The Polyvalence of the Biblical Text

Hans Dieter Betz writes, "The interpretation of the church fathers, although imposition, was carefully grafted onto a text that provides points of contact and that seems strangely open to such interpretation."[14] One might choose to disagree with Betz in his claim that the church fathers always imposed their interpretations on the text, but it made me wonder why the text seems "strangely open" to multiple interpretations. Premodern interpreters assumed that every text contained within it more than one meaning. This comfort with multiple interpretations may have been inherited in part from Jewish reading practices, since rabbinic interpreters also took for granted that "the Torah text contains an infinity of meanings, a plurality of interpretations."[15] As one rabbi taught, "Just as the hammer breaks up into many sparks, so, too, may one passage give rise to several meanings."[16]

Premodern Christian exegetes, like the rabbis, were not at all distressed by the idea that one passage could mean several things. Instead, they took it for granted that this was a basic property of the sacred text, one derived

[13] Stephen E. Fowl, *Engaging Scripture: A Model for Theological Interpretation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1998), 10.

[14] Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount,* Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 108.

[15] Shubert Spero, "Multiplicity of Meaning as a Device in Biblical Narrative," Judaism 34.4 (1985): 463.

[16] *Sanhedrin* 34b; quoted in Spero, "Multiplicity of Meaning," 463.

from the character of Scripture as a living Word, as a text ultimately authored by God. The Gospel writers likely shared this comfort with multiple meanings. Dale Allison muses, "I have come more and more to think that this sort of nonexclusive interpretation often corresponds to how a text was intended to be heard and was heard from the beginning."[17]

Premodern readers often offer several interpretations of the same beatitude—even readings that appear to stand in some tension with each other. They seemed to find this multiplicity, those tensions, generative rather than troublesome, a signal of the inexhaustible riches of Scripture and its ability to speak anew into new situations. "This can be explained in three ways" is a common refrain in Thomas Aquinas's commentary on the Gospel of Matthew.

Augustine, for example, wrote a commentary on the Sermon on the Mount in which he connected each beatitude to a petition of the Lord's Prayer and to a gift of the Holy Spirit (as named in Isaiah 11:2).[18] He finds significance in these matches: this beatitude corresponds with that petition and with that spiritual gift. Yet despite the brilliance and originality of Augustine's interpretation, he does not seem especially committed to viewing it as the only or even the best way to understand the Beatitudes. Later, Augustine preached a sermon on the Beatitudes without ever mentioning Isaiah or the gifts of the Spirit. He does pair one beatitude with a line from the Lord's Prayer, but it is a different match from the one he made in his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount. He quotes "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt 6:10) in relation to the blessing on those who hunger and thirst for justice, rather than his original match: the blessing on those who mourn.[19]

This premodern comfort with multiple meanings lingers in some modern writings, especially among preachers (it is, not surprisingly, less common in modern academic scholarship). In the early eighteenth century, Matthew Henry's influential commentary presented multiple valid meanings for each beatitude (offering an especially complex and multi-layered read of the first beatitude). Billy Graham names five types

[17] Dale Allison, "The History of the Interpretation of Matthew: Lessons Learned," *In die Skriflig* 49 (2015): 10.

[18] Augustine, C*ommentary on the Lord's Sermon on the Mount: With Seventeen Related Sermons*, Fathers of the Church 11 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 1.4.11–12 and 2.11.38.

[19] Augustine, *Essential Sermons*, The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, ed. Boniface Ramsey, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2007), 80–81 (Sermon 53A).

of mourning, three kinds of mercy, three varieties of purity, and six types of peacemaking that are all blessed.[20]

Not only did premodern writers believe that the biblical text contained multiple possible meanings, they assumed that every jot and tittle of the text was bursting with significance. They believed that every word—every word, no matter how small—was a word of life for the church.

The Divine is in the Details

Most modern commentaries briefly note the setting of the Beatitudes in Matt 5:1-2, and they usually explain that the mountain echoes Mt Sinai, which Moses ascended to receive the Ten Commandments. (Unfortunately, this comparison has given rise to some particularly vicious anti-Jewish comparisons throughout history.) Premodern writers noticed this link with Moses, but they went much further in their exploration of the significance of Matthew's introduction to the Beatitudes in these two short verses. Two details captured their attention.

First, in Matt 5:2, Jesus "opened his mouth" (*anoixas to stoma autou*) before he began to speak. This phrase is present in the Greek but is often omitted in modern English translations. (Older English translations like the Geneva Bible and the King James Version retain the phrase despite its apparent redundancy.) For most modern interpreters, it is simply a Semitism: a common idiom borrowed from Hebrew or Aramaic that has no true English equivalent and is therefore left untranslated. Seventeenth-century Puritan preacher Jeremiah Burroughs, on the other hand, devoted one full sermon to Matt 5:1-2 and spent almost a full page meditating on the significance of Christ opening his mouth before he began to speak: he had something weighty to say (as in Job 32:20), and "his mouth was the door" to the rich treasury of his heart.[21]

Long before Burroughs, Hilary of Poitiers mused that Christ "opening his mouth" could indicate that "he had yielded the service of his human mouth over to the movement of the Spirit's eloquence." Ambrose of Milan suggested that it pointed to "the opening up of the treasure of the

[20] Matthew Henry, "An Exposition of the Old and New Testament," in vol. 5, *Matthew to John* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, n.d.), n.p. [commentary on Matt 5:1–12]; Billy Graham, *The Secret of Happiness: Jesus' Teaching on Happiness as Expressed in the Beatitudes* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1955).

[21] Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Saints' Happiness* (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1867; Beaver Falls, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1988, 1992), 7.

wisdom and of the knowledge of God, the unveiling of the sanctuary of His temple."[22]

Second, Jesus *ascended* the mountain (Matt 5:1). On the one hand, this could be an action meant to parallel Moses's action of going up onto Mt Sinai (Ex 19:20), a detail noticed by premodern and modern writers alike. Among premodern exegetes, an even more common view of the mountain saw it as a symbol of divine, heavenly things; that is, as Jesus ascended, he drew closer to God's heavenly dwelling place. Upward was literally heavenward. This was true for Chromatius of Aquileia as for Augustine; for Hilary of Poitiers, who claimed that Jesus climbed the mountain in order to "[situate] himself on the height of the Father's majesty" and to deliver "the precepts of the heavenly life"; and for the author of the *Opus Imperfectum*, who described Christ's ascent as toward "the height of virtues."[23] Thomas Aquinas, in his typically multifaceted way, wrote that Christ went up the mountain for no less than five reasons.[24]

In the Reformation era, Catholic humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam wrote that Jesus climbs up to a higher place in order both to recall Moses's example and to indicate that he is about to teach "all the things that are exalted and heavenly."[25] The Protestant Reformers followed the premodern impulse to find significance in every detail but tended a bit more toward the practical. Martin Luther found a more practical significance in Jesus's ascent: to show that preaching should be done in public and not in private.[26] John Calvin is among the Reformation-era interpreters who began to reject the allegorical reading of Scripture. He

[22] Hilary of Poitiers, *Commentary on Matthew*, Fathers of the Church 125, trans. D. H. Williams (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2012), 59; Ambrose of Milan, *Commentary of Saint Ambrose on the Gospel According to Saint Luke*, trans. Íde M. Ní Riain (Dublin: Halcyon, 2001), 133.

[23] Chromatius of Aquileia, Tractates on Matthew, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina 9A,Tractatus XVII, I.1–2.; Hilary, *Commentary*, 59; Augustine, *Commentary on the Lord's Sermon*, 1.1.2; *Incomplete Commentary on Matthew* [Opus Imperfectum], Ancient Christian Texts 1, trans. James A. Kellerman, ed. Thomas C. Oden (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 83.

[24] The five reasons were to "show his excellence" (Ps 68:15), the loftiness and perfection of his teaching (Isa 40:9; Ps 36:6), and the loftiness of the church (Isa 2:2); and to correspond to the law of Moses (Exod 19, 24). Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, Chapters 1–12,* Biblical Commentaries 33, trans. Jeremy Holmes (Lander, WY: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2013), 399 (C.5 L.1).

[25] Erasmus of Rotterdam, *Paraphrase on Matthew,* vol. 45 of *Collected Works of Erasmus*, trans. and annot. Dean Simpson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 83.

[26] Luther, Sermon on the Mount, 7–8.

[27] John Calvin, *A Harmony of the Gospels Matthew, Mark and Luke,* vol. 1, trans.

dismissed the idea that the phrases "he opened his mouth" or "went up to the mountain" are symbolic or have deeper meaning.[27] Burroughs wondered if Jesus going up on a mountain was meant to fulfill Scripture (Isa 40:9; Joel 3:18), but ultimately suggested it was probably just for convenience: there were less people there.[28]

Meaning is a Set of Relations

The second challenge has to do with how texts acquire meaning as particular readers read them. "Meaning," as my mentor Klyne Snodgrass always insisted, "is a set of relations." Texts do not mean in the abstract. As Susannah Ticciati writes, "If one is asked, 'What does this text mean?' one must ask in turn, 'mean for whom?'"[29] A beatitude might indeed sometimes be prescriptive, and it might sometimes be descriptive—but we cannot decide which it is in the abstract, without a social context in which that judgment might become intelligible.

Another scholar who helped me to see this is Dale Allison. When Allison writes about the lessons he learned from studying the reception history of Matthew, he says: "… when I studied the debate as to whether the beatitudes in Matthew 5 are implicit imperatives and so moral … or whether they are promissory and conciliatory … I saw no need to make a choice. Why not both at the same time, or one or the other depending upon a hearer's immediate circumstances?"[30]

The blessings on the hungry or the merciful might function as a message of hope, a declaration of God's favor, a warning, or an invitation to perform a certain action—depending on whether the hearers are hungry or full, merciful or merciless.

I want to be clear: I'm not proposing that texts mean whatever the reader brings to them. Texts can't mean *anything*. My context does not fully determine the function of the Beatitudes any more than my particular location in time and space determines the meaning of the words "That is poison" when someone utters them to me. That phrase does not turn into "Puppies like to chase balls," no matter what the context is. I take it this is more or less what Allison means when he writes that

A. W. Morrison, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 168.

[28] Burroughs, *Saints' Happiness,* 4.

[29] Susannah Ticciati, "Response to Walter Moberly's 'Theological Thinking and the Reading of Scripture,'" *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 10 (2016): 117–23, 118.

[30] Allison, "History," 9.

[31] Dale Allison, *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present* (Grand Rapids,

"the plain sense of a text usually guarantees some stability of meaning across the centuries."[31]

As Sandra Schneiders claims, "Although there is potentially an unlimited number of valid interpretations for a given text, not all interpretations are valid, and some valid interpretations are better than others."[32] But where do these boundaries lie? How do we judge whether an interpretation is valid or invalid, better or worse?

One possible guiding factor is the wider context of the two Gospels, which we have already seen might point us in a certain direction. One typical guardrail for theological interpretation is the witness of the canon of Scripture as a whole. Of course, that witness is enormously complicated, diverse, and in some cases stands in significant tension with itself. Still, I take it as the primary way that God has spoken to us—the foremost of God's gifts to God's people that reveals the divine life. Therefore, if an interpretation stands wildly at odds with the tendencies and trajectories of the Old and New Testaments, we should, at the least, pause and wonder why. Tendencies and trajectories can be challenged, but only with great care.[33]

Another common approach is Augustine's suggestion that any interpretation that does not lead to the greater love of God and neighbor is not a proper interpretation: "Whoever, then, thinks that he understands the Holy Scriptures, or any part of them, but puts such an interpretation upon them as does not tend to build up this twofold love of God and our neighbor, does not yet understand them as he ought."[34] So we might measure an interpretation by its fruitfulness—that is, by its ability to produce the good fruit of the two love commandments in the lives of those who seek to shape their lives around that interpretation.

MI: Baker, 2005), 62.

[32] Sandra M. Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1999), 164.

[33] See, e.g., Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (Harper: San Francisco, 1996), 399; and Luke Timothy Johnson, *Scripture and Discernment: Decision Making in the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983, 1996).

[34] Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 1.35.40. Augustine was also concerned about how the author's intention helped to determine the proper meaning of the text. He continues, "If, on the other hand, a man draws a meaning from them that may be used for the building up of love, even though he does not happen upon the precise meaning which the author whom he reads intended to express in that place, his error is not pernicious, and he is wholly clear from the charge of deception." Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R. P. H. Green, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1.35.40, 27.

[35] John Thompson's *Reading the Bible with the Dead* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans,

A final guardrail is reading in the company of others. If "meaning" is produced in the interaction between text and reader, then I must read with others so that the text is not held hostage to my own whims—my selfishness, my wounds, my joys. Who challenges my reading? Who shows me that I'm too trapped inside my own horizon to see otherwise? For me, past interpreters have been excellent company—enlivening, passionate, and sometimes completely surprising. They've challenged me to examine my own assumptions and biases, to consider and reconsider how I relate to the Beatitudes and indeed to God, to see things I would never have otherwise noticed.[35] Present-day interpreters who are not like me (in socioeconomic level, in citizenship, in ethnicity, and so on) have also been important company.

To illustrate this point, allow me to offer two brief examples: one from my study of the Beatitudes' reception history, and one from my own context.

Dr. Takashi Nagai (1908–1951) was a Japanese Christian who survived the dropping of the atomic bomb on Nagasaki. His wife died in the attack. Nagai was also a nuclear physicist and dean of radiology in the medical school of the University of Nagasaki. On November 23, 1945, he gave a funeral address for the 8,000 victims of the atomic bomb who died in Nagasaki that day.[36] He later developed his thoughts from the funeral address at greater length in a book called *The Bells of Nagasaki* (a reference to the bells of Urakami Cathedral, which fell silent for months after the attack).

In his book, Nagai quotes the second beatitude: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" (Matt 5:4). His quotation of the beatitude weaves together many strands of suffering: grief for the 8,000 dead, "whom we deeply mourn"; the shocking suffering imposed by the bomb's destruction and its aftermath; and the trauma of Japan's defeat. "We Japanese," he writes, "a vanquished people, must now walk along a path that is full of pain and suffering."[37] Nagai then makes a riskier move: he narrates Nagasaki as a sacrifice, chosen by God's providence "as a victim, a pure lamb, to be slaughtered and burned on the altar of

2007); and Bob Ekblad's *Reading the Bible with the Damned* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005) are two good places to start thinking about reading in the company of others, especially others who are unlike us.

[36] Takashi Nagai, *The Bells of Nagasaki*, trans. William Johnston (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1984), 106.

[37] Ibid., 108, 109.

[38] Ibid., 107.

sacrifice to expiate the sins committed by humanity in the Second World War."[38] For Nagai, it is precisely his city's status as an innocent victim that creates this painful and powerful resonance. The suffering survivors are the mourners of the beatitude, who continue to "walk this way of expiation," following in the footsteps of Christ on the way to Calvary.[39] Like Christ, they mourn; like Christ, they suffer; like Christ, they were innocent victims who were destroyed—but (also like Christ) they will be comforted.

I reflect on Nagai's example because it disturbed me (as a non-Japanese person, I would never have connected Nagasaki to an altar of sacrifice), moved me (his book is exceptionally beautiful), and convicted me (the events he recounts are, rightly, painful to read as an American). How does the beatitude function for me as a reader of Nagai's book? I may mourn, from a distance, for the 8,000 victims, but as an American I must also mourn with repentance for the devastation that my country wreaked on Nagai's city. Nagai's use of the beatitude, and my own distance from his context, helped me to see how a beatitude can take root and flower in a particular setting.

Finally, I want to explore briefly what function the first beatitude (Matt 5:3; Luke 6:20, 24) might have in a church in a neighborhood called Pen Lucy, in Baltimore. The neighborhood is about 88 percent Black; median household income is well below average. The church is about 40 percent Black, 40 percent white, and 20 percent the nations (Ethiopian, Brazilian, Sri Lankan, Chinese, and so on).

In my experience, the first thing that would typically happen if one sat down with a group of people in this church to study the Beatitudes is that the two versions in Matthew and Luke would be put into conversation with one another. This will immediately launch an interesting conversation about what poverty is, what poverty of spirit is, whether they are the same thing or different or related, and why Jesus would declare both of these states to be blessed.

The declaration that the poor are blessed takes on a new layer when one is reading that verse in a neighborhood where a significant percentage of the residents live below the poverty line, and when members of the Bible study are struggling to pay their rent on time.

It becomes clear that poverty in and of itself is not a good to be pursued—at least not in this particular context—because one can see close at

[39] Ibid., 109.

[40] Richard Watson, *Exposition of the Gospels of St Matthew and St Mark* (London:

hand the suffering that results, the way it cripples people. It also becomes clear that whatever Jesus means by saying they are blessed because the kingdom of heaven is theirs, this cannot simply mean that they will be rewarded in heaven. I would not dare to look my hungry sister in Christ in the eye and tell her that when she is sitting at the same table as I am.

The person who struggles to pay their rent might talk about whether being poor has made them more poor in spirit, that is, more dependent on God. I might talk about whether my relatively comfortable social status has made it harder for me to depend on God, and how I might be more humble. Those of us who have any income above what we need for food and housing might wrestle together with how much of our wealth we should give to the poor, and the best ways to give. How do we treat the panhandlers and squeegee boys on the street corners? How do we love them as our neighbors?

In this context, the declaration that the poor are blessed is an implied exhortation in much the same way that the preferential option for the poor functions not only as an explanation of God's preferences but also as a job description for the church. If I read the beatitude and am led to believe that I can be as rich as I like, with no obligation to my poor neighbor, I've stepped out of bounds, because my interpretation has turned me away from loving the neighbor who is sitting right across the table from me.

Another place I find myself, in this particular Bible study, is in Luke's *Woe to the rich!* Or to put it another way, I might consider whether I will be on the receiving end of that woe when I balance my checkbook at the end of the month. The beatitude might function to cause me to give more generously, or to wonder whether I am in solidarity with my poor neighbors in Baltimore in any meaningful way. In Augustine's terms, it might press me toward more wholehearted love of God (displacing the stubborn hold the love of mammon has in my heart) and more concrete love of these neighbors here, at this kitchen table and in Pen Lucy.

Conclusion

Now is probably the time to notice, as I have so far ignored, that each beatitude has a second half: the "for"-clause. *For* they will inherit the kingdom of heaven. *For* they will be comforted. Perhaps it is best to call this neither the reversal nor the reward, but the divinely assured result: the meek *shall* inherit the earth, because God's plan cannot be thwarted. But when? The earth remains the inheritance of the short-tempered, the arrogant, and the powerful. The mourn still mourn. We still pray "Your

kingdom come."

For readers of the Beatitudes throughout history, the "when" is always a matter both of the "now" and the "not yet"—glimmers now, fullness then—or, as one interpreter writes, "Grace here, and glory thereafter."[40] The "not yet" does not absolve us of the responsibility to wonder how we might contribute to the glimmers in the now—comforting mourners, showing mercy, making peace.

John Mason, 1833), 68. John Farrer uses a very similar phrase in Farrer, *Sermons on the Mission and Character of Christ, and on the Beatitudes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1804), 252.

Open to the Spirit: Covenant Dialogue with Charismatic Movements

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Throughout its history, the Evangelical Covenant Church has interacted with various Christian movements that place significant focus on the operation of the ongoing gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially those which might be considered the more visible or miraculous gifts, such as tongues, healing, and prophecy. In this article, I survey the extent and substance of the Evangelical Covenant Church's response to charismatic movements.[1] Generally speaking, the Covenant's Pietist roots, and its identification as a renewal movement, have encouraged a measured assessment that seeks common ground with charismatics with regard to theology and practice. Rather than an outright critique or denial of charismatic experiences, one finds in Covenant engagement an affirmation of the ongoing nature of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, accompanied by a call to remain biblical in teaching and practice, and to keep Christ

[1] Though admittedly an over-simplification, for the purposes of this article I will use the term "charismatic" to refer to the kind of Christian faith that places a significant focus on the Holy Spirit's operation, particularly what might be considered the more visible or miraculous gifts in the life of a Christian. It is also worth noting that while such movements have occurred around the world, Covenant dialogue has generally interacted with the movements that originated in the United States. See Alan Heaton Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) for a helpful treatment of the history and theology of these movements. Note Anderson's treatment of the complexities involved in defining terms in his introduction (Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 1-6) and his chapters exploring the different histories by continent and region throughout the work. Anderson however prefers "Pentecostal" as the more general term.

central. Covenant publications, resolutions, and consultations that have engaged with charismatic movements reveal a consistent commitment to the Covenant affirmation of the Christian's continual dependence on the Holy Spirit, while also challenging the church to seek and receive whatever gifts or methods God might offer to empower its mission.

I begin with a brief overview of the three historical "waves" of the larger Charismatic movements (Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Neo-charismatic or "Third Wave") and Covenant responses to each. This provides a framework for then exploring more fully the substance of those responses, integrated around four themes: a call to be biblical, a call to be Christ-centered, a renewed sense of Spirit-dependence and Spirit-heritage, and a challenge to be open to the Spirit's work.

Charismatic "Waves" and Covenant Response: An Overview

While the terms "Pentecostal" and "charismatic" are often used interchangeably, they more accurately designate distinct movements. Most Pentecostal denominations that formed within the United States find their roots in the turn of the twentieth century, when, in 1906, William Seymour began pastoring a small African American Holiness church in Los Angeles. Seymour led the church into revival, and when the movement outgrew its location, it relocated to a storage building at 312 Azusa Street. The "Azusa Street Revival" soon became multicultural and was marked by manifestations of the Holy Spirit, such as speaking in tongues and collapsing under the power of the Spirit (i.e., being "slain in the Spirit").[2] The movement quickly gained national and international attention and influence. While many churches trace their roots to this movement, the denominations that have the most direct descendance include the Assemblies of God, the Church of God in Christ, and the Foursquare Church.[3] As such, the designation "Pentecostal" most precisely refers to churches identified with this historical phase of the movement.

The Holiness movement, out of which the Pentecostal movement emerged, has roots in Lutheran Pietism through the Moravian revival's impact on John Wesley. Shared emphases include the importance of the Spirit's work and the emphasis on emotion in the Christian experience.[4] Regardless of how practices and theologies may differ or align today, one may identify Covenanters and Pentecostals as cousins in this regard,

[2] Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 41–42.
[3] Ibid., 52.
[4] Ibid., 25–26.

since both traditions have common roots in Pietist revivalism. This may contribute to understanding why, historically, Covenant pastors and scholars have not generally refuted the manifestations of the Spirit that charismatic Christians claim, and at times have even stated their own openness to, or belief in, such manifestations. At the same time, Covenant ministers insist upon a biblical and Christ-centered foundation for teaching and practice.

The movement commonly known as the "Charismatic movement" is usually identified with the process of charismatic ministries entering mainline denominations in the 1960s.[5] This represents a culmination of many events spanning several decades and involved ministers and laypeople of different traditions who were exposed to charismatic ministries.[6] Various ministers of older denominations in the 1940s and 1950s had received "Spirit baptism" or a "second blessing," that is, a post-conversion experience wherein one is overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit's power.[7] The most public encounter was that of Episcopal rector Dennis Bennet, also in Los Angeles. Bennet experienced Spirit baptism along with a colleague and several church members in November 1959. He made the event public in an April 1960 sermon at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Los Angeles, leading to a controversy that resulted in his resignation. When Bennet's story was reported by *Time* and *Newsweek*, a sympathetic bishop in the state of Washington appointed Bennet to St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Seattle. Bennet shared his experience with this struggling parish, and the congregation grew rapidly. It reached two thousand in weekly attendance at its height and became a destination for those seeking Spirit baptism.[8]

Bennet's published testimony became a bestseller, and his ministry led many Christians from various denominations to join the burgeoning Charismatic movement, including Methodists, Reformed, Baptists, Lutherans, and Presbyterians.[9] During the 1960s, the movement spread

[5] Ibid., 157.

[6] Ibid., 158–61.

[7] There is disagreement regarding the nature of and appropriate label for such an encounter. See for example Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism,* 29, and his identification of the three main views and labels interacting with the Holiness roots of American Pentecostalism.

[8] Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 162.

[9] For his published testimony, see Dennis J. Bennet, *Nine O'clock in the Morning* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International Fellowship, 1970).

throughout the United States and Canada.[10] In 1967, it made its mark on the Roman Catholic Church, primarily through two theology professors from Duquesne University: Ralph Keifer and William Storey. When Keifer and Storey read *The Cross and the Switchblade* and *They Speak with Other Tongues*—two of the most influential publications in expanding the charismatic movement—they received Spirit baptism and passed it on to students at a retreat.[11] The movement then spread rapidly throughout the Roman Catholic Church.[12]

The "Third Wave" refers to the third primary phase of the broader Pentecostal/Charismatic movement in largely nondenominational settings, which arose out of the Church Growth Movement of the 1970s and 1980s.[13] It was so named by C. Peter Wagner, professor of church growth at Fuller Theological Seminary. In particular, Wagner identified the movement with John Wimber, who came to lead the Association of Vineyard Churches in 1982 and who, with Wagner, taught the course "Signs, Wonders, and Church Growth" at Fuller from 1982 to 1986.[14] This Third Wave moved away from the idea of a "second blessing," and instead applied the label "Spirit baptism" to events occurring at conversion itself. Also, it emphasized the use of charismatic gifts in evangelism and viewed them as a natural part of daily Christian life.[15]

Covenant leaders and theologians entered into dialogue with all three of these historical "waves." C. V. Bowman, president of the Covenant from 1927 to 1933, addressed the issue of speaking in tongues in response to the Pentecostal revival and, more specifically, the "Latter Rain" movement. This movement taught "evidentiary tongues," a view affirming that the gifts of tongues would be manifest in all who were baptized.[16] While Bowman affirmed the gift, he refuted the notion that it is necessary to

[10] Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism,* 162.

[11] David R. Wilkerson, *The Cross and the Switchblade* (New York: Random House, 1963); John L. Sherrill, *They Speak with Other Tongues* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964).

[12] Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 165.

[13] Charles H. Kraft, "'The Third Wave' and the Covenant Church," *Narthex* 5.1 (1985): 3. Available at http://collections.carli.illinois.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/npu_narthex/id/1464/rec/8; Anderson, *Introduction to Pentecostalism,* 66-67.

[14] Ibid., 67; Bill Jackson, *The Quest for the Radical Middle*, *A History of the Vineyard* (Cape Town: Vineyard International, 1999), 110, 124.

[15] Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 67.

[16] C. V. Bowman, "Speaking in Tongues," trans. Vernon B. Westerburg, *Covenant Quarterly* 53 (1995): 49. Bowman writes sometime between 1910 and 1920. The movement is distinct from the post WWII movement with the same name.

evidence faith, or that its manifestation is somehow indicative of deeper or more genuine spirituality.[17]

The charismatic renewal of the 1960s elicited a fairly prompt response from the Covenant denomination. Even before the renewal made its most notable break into the Roman Catholic Church, the 1963 Covenant Annual Meeting passed a resolution on spiritual gifts, recognizing "the commendable renewal of interest in the third person of the Holy Trinity, the Spirit of God, in many historic denominations … accompanied by reported instances of speaking in tongues, divine healings, and other phenomena."[18] In 1968, the *Covenant Companion* ran a series of four articles on the work of the Holy Spirit written by North Park Theological Seminary faculty. Biblical studies faculty members Frederick Holmgren and Henry Gustafson Jr. addressed the themes of the Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments, respectively.[19] Professor of theology Donald Frisk discussed the Holy Spirit and the Church.[20] Pastoral theologian Wesley Nelson concluded the series with a discussion of the Holy Spirit as the "Holy Innovator."[21] While the articles do not reference the Charismatic movement explicitly, Frisk alludes to it with his suggestion that the Holy Spirit "seems to be calling his church to new and often strange forms of ministry in our day."[22]

Larger Protestant denominations were already issuing official reports on the charismatic renewal occurring in the 1970s, by the time the Covenant held its first consultation in 1970, focused on the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's work. A second consultation, on "Spiritual Gifts and Covenant Polity," followed in 1976. In fact, the 1978 Covenant Midwinter Conference was devoted to the subject of the Holy Spirit.[23] The *Narthex* issue of September 1982 also offered a discussion on the gifts of the Spirit.[24]

[17] Bowman, "Speaking in Tongues,"49.

[18] *Covenant Yearbook 1963*, 242.

[19] Fredrick Holmgren, "The Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament," *Covenant Companion*, April 19, 1968, 8–9; Henry A. Gustafson Jr., "The Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the New Testament," *Covenant Companion*, May 3, 1968, 12–13.

[20] Donald C. Frisk, "The Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit and the Church," *Covenant Companion*, May 17, 1968, 10–11.

[21] Wesley W. Nelson, "The Holy Spirit: The Holy Innovator," *Covenant Companion*, May 31, 1968, 4–5.

[22] Frisk, "The Holy Spirit," 11

[23] Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 164; Robert K. Johnston, "The Ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Covenant Today," *Covenant Quarterly* 44 (1987): 49–50.

[24] *Narthex* 2.2 (1982). The full issue is accessible through the *Narthex* digital collection of the Covenant Archives and Historical Library at http://collections.carli.illinois.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/npu_narthex/id/1201/rec/1.

Philip J. Anderson, Covenant historian and journal editor, introduced the issue by summarizing two decades of Covenant engagement with the Charismatic movement.[25] The central article of the issue was written by Lars Sandstrom, pastor of Christ Covenant Church in Florissant, Missouri, and was entitled "The Gifts of the Spirit: Optional Features or Standard Equipment?"[26] The issue featured responses by Randall D. Roth, Theodore D. Nordlund, Craig A. Nordstrom, Thomas F. Sharkey, Jane K. Koonce, Phillip J. Ladd, and R. Dan Simmons.

The May 1985 issue of *Narthex* addressed the impact of the Third Wave within the Covenant.[27] In the leading article, Charles H. Kraft, then professor of anthropology and intercultural communication at Fuller and member of the Pasadena Covenant Church, recounted his interaction with Wimber and Wagner's "Signs, Wonders, and Church Growth" course and the subsequent formation of healing ministries at Pasadena Covenant Church.[28] Responses to Kraft's article were written by Klyne Snodgrass, William L. Peterson Jr., Richard W. Carlson, Young Ho Chun, Gwynn Lewis, and John S. Bray.

In 1986, the Covenant held a consultation on "The Covenant and the Charismatic Movement," the proceedings of which were published in the *Covenant Quarterly.*[29] An introduction by Robert K. Johnston, then dean of North Park Theological Seminary, provides a helpful summary of much of the Covenant's responses to charismatic movements.[30] Johnston stated that the movement served as a catalyst for discussing renewal in the Covenant Church.[31]

Overall, Covenant dialogue with these three movements provides formational insights for any ministry, and is worth considering by Christians who identify as Covenant, charismatic, or both.

[25] Philip J. Anderson, "Comment," *Narthex* 2.2 (1982): 52–57.

[25] Erasmus of Rotterdam, Paraphrase on Matthew, vol. 45 of *Collected Works of Erasmus*, trans. and annot. Dean Simpson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 83.

[26] Lars Sandstrom, "The Gifts of the Spirit: Optional Features or Standard Equipment?" *Narthex* 2.2 (1982): 58–72.

[27] *Narthex* 5.1 (1985). The full issue is accessible through the *Narthex* digital collection of the Covenant Archives and Historical Library at http://collections.carli.illinois.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/npu_narthex/id/1464/rec/8.

[28] Kraft, "'The Third Wave' and the Covenant Church," 5–15.

[29] See the second issue of volume 44 of the *Covenant Quarterly*, from 1987.

[30] Johnston, "The Ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Covenant Today," 49.

[31] Ibid., 50.

Themes in Covenant Engagement

A Call to Be Biblical. Covenant responses to charismatic Christians and charismatic ministries overwhelmingly foreground the call to be biblical. This represents the primary grounds for almost all of the critique one finds in the dialogue. This does not imply that in these discussions, charismatic Christians are accused of being in error in experience or analysis. Rather, Covenant responses emphasize the need to root teaching and the interpretation of experience in Scripture, in order to prevent error in teaching and practice. In this regard, Bowman's early response to the Latter Rain movement is characteristic of much of the Covenant dialogue with charismatic ministries. Bowman opens his article affirming that no one familiar with biblical truths would question that speaking in tongues occurs today. At the same time, he cautions that not all such manifestations are of the Spirit—nor are twentieth century manifestations unique, citing instances as far back as the fourteenth century. Also, Bowman notes how seldom the gift of tongues is mentioned in Scripture, taking Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 to place the gift last in rank. He also calls it the least necessary and the least useful.[32] At the same time, he critiques the Latter Rain movement's expectation that everyone "baptized in the Spirit today … speaks in tongues." To the contrary, he insists that the apostle Paul's words demonstrate that "not every Christian will possess the gift of speaking in tongues," nor should the lack of the gift trouble the Christian.[33]

The four-article *Covenant Companion* series on the Holy Spirit from 1968 offers a helpful example of the Covenant emphasis on the need for a biblical foundation in teaching and interpreting the work of the Holy Spirit. Together, these articles provide an exegetical and theological introduction to the work and person of the Holy Spirit. This was particularly helpful as a framework for processing the phenomenon of the Spirit's gifts finding fresh expression in the Charismatic movement of that period. For example, in his treatment on the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, Gustafson identifies the Spirit's gifts as a means of equipping the church, intended to promote unity and to be used for the good of the whole body. In doing so, Gustafson names preaching, teaching, healing, administration, and interpretation of tongues as examples of the

[32] Bowman, "Speaking in Tongues," 48, 50.
[33] Ibid., 49-50.

diversity of the Spirit's gifts.[34]

The conversation within the 1982 and 1985 issues of *Narthex* also emphasizes the need for a biblical foundation in understanding the Spirit's work. In his response to Sandstrom's article on spiritual gifts, Sharkey, then assistant pastor of North Park Covenant Church, stated that a firm grounding in Scripture was one of the greatest needs of the charismatic movement.[35] Snodgrass, professor of biblical literature at North Park Theological Seminary, echoes a similar sentiment in his response to Kraft's article on the impact of the Third Wave within the Covenant. Snodgrass is critical primarily of what he sees as "little in [Kraft's] explanation that is particularly biblical or, for that matter, Christian."[36] Snodgrass raises concerns regarding language that does not derive from Scripture, and asks what is specifically Christian within the Third Wave, as distinct from similar phenomena espoused by non-Christian movements.[37] Despite these critiques, Snodgrass affirms some of the by-products of the movement as desirable for Covenant churches, including the expectation of God's working and re-vitalized worship.

A Call to Be Christ-Centered. The reminder to maintain focus on Christ stems naturally from the call to be biblical. This does not discount the work of the Spirit, but rather recognizes the object of that work and seeks to avoid glorifying the gifts over the God who gives them. Referencing John 7:39 and 20:22, Gustafson, for example, notes that the Spirit's work presents the truth as it is in Christ and so follows the ministry of Christ. He states that the Spirit "necessarily fulfills a secondary and subsequent position in relation to Jesus."[38]

In their response to Sandstrom's *Narthex* article, Roth and Nordlund (then pastors of West Hills Covenant Church in Portland, Oregon) advocate for the proper use of all God's gifts, which they offer as an antidote to potential abuse. Roth and Nordlund identify "proper use" as "always in the context of love, for the purpose of upbuilding the body of Christ, and continuing his life and ministry in the world."[39] Sharkey affirms Sandstrom's article for pointing out the scriptural basis for Spirit baptism,

[34] Gustafson Jr., "The Holy Spirit," 13.

[35] Thomas F. Sharkey, "Response," *Narthex* 2.2 (1982): 85.

[36] Klyne Snodgrass, "Response," *Narthex* 5.1 (1985): 16.

[37] It is worth noting that, while Snodgrass's concerns are valid, Kraft's article reads more like a descriptive account rather than a fully developed theological argument.

[38] Gustafson Jr., "The Holy Spirit," 13.

[39] Randall D. Roth and Theodore V. Nordlund, "Response," *Narthex* 2.2 (1982): 79.

and for the acceptance of the Spirit's gifts in the church. He concludes his response by stating that it is imperative that in all things we listen to "the message of the revealed Christ: 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches.'"[40]

In his introduction to the proceedings of the 1986 Covenant consultation on "The Covenant and the Charismatic Movement," Johnston, then dean of North Park Theological Seminary, notes that one of the four questions for the final discussion of the 1986 consultation was, "What ought to characterize our posture with respect to the special gifts (e.g., healing, exorcism) so that our common life can be enhanced?" Among the observations recorded is the statement that "we need to build our church around Christ alone," rather than the demonstration or lack of a particular gift.[41] Similarly, the 1963 resolution had resolved that the Spirit's gifts be exercised in love for edifying and unifying the body of Christ rather than as a badge of spiritual attainment.[42] Peterson, then pastor of Vision of Hope Evangelical Covenant Church, Eagan, Minnesota, concludes his contribution to the 1986 Consultation with an anonymous quote that states, "We should seek to imitate no one but Christ, but neither should we refuse anything that Christ offers."[43] Paul Larsen, then president of the Covenant, states directly that the Covenant has not been centered on signs and wonders but on Jesus Christ. He further notes that waiting in Christ-centeredness will fill our sails with the Spirit.[44]

A Renewed Sense of Spirit Dependence and Spirit Heritage. Engaging with charismatic movements has led Covenanters to recognize and recall the Spirit's work within the Covenant throughout its history. This has led most naturally to a renewed recognition of the denomination's dependence on the Holy Spirit. This is perhaps most directly seen in the 1963 Annual Meeting resolution's reaffirming the Covenant's continuing dependence on the "illuminating, regenerating, and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit," in all labors, while also recognizing the Spirit's prerogative to divide such gifts according to the Spirit's will.[45] It is also explicitly

[40] Ibid., 88.

[41] Johnston, "The Ministry of the Holy Spirit," 51–52.

[42] *Covenant Yearbook 1963*, 242.

[43] Carleton D. Peterson, "The Charismatic Movement in Covenant Churches, 1986," *Covenant Quarterly* 44 (1987): 60.

[44] Paul E. Larsen, "Signs, Wonders, and Covenant Theology," *Covenant Quarterly* 44 (1987): 99, 101.

[45] *Covenant Yearbook 1963,* 242.

mentioned in Nelson's *Covenant Companion* article on the Holy Spirit as the Holy Innovator. In that article, Nelson ties the denomination's future to its dependence on the Holy Spirit, recognizing that it would have been dead long ago without the Spirit's life-giving work.[46]

Part of the Covenant's recognition of Spirit-dependence has taken the form of recalling the Spirit's work throughout the denomination's history. In his response to Sandstrom's article on spiritual gifts, Nordstrom, a systematic theology student from Evanston Covenant Church, highlights his perception of great similarities between Covenanters and charismatics, especially the emphasis of life over doctrine in response to impersonal scholasticism.[47] Johnston recognizes the Covenant's roots as a renewal movement in Sweden and its openness to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit from the beginning. He ties this reality to the language of the reaffirmed Spirit-dependence in the 1963 resolution and its caution for the Spirit's gifts to be exercised in love to edify the church.[48]

In his contribution to the 1986 consultation, Peterson, then pastor of First Covenant Church in St. Paul, states his experience in reading that Pentecostal churches grow primarily because of an emphasis that God seeks us out, and that the Holy Spirit acts powerfully through ordinary Christians. He recognizes that these characteristics sound like strains of the Pietist movement in Sweden.[49] In his engagement with the work of Wimber of the Vineyard, Larsen cites the Covenant's Pietist heritage, recognizing it as a protest against western Christianity's over-rationalistic orientation. This is an orientation that he argues Wimber rightly critiques. He also recognizes power as being the essence of Pietistic proclamation, as he notes that "miracles, signs and wonders, and victories of Satan have been, are, and shall be a part of the life and faith of the Evangelical Covenant Church."[50]

A Challenge to Be Open to the Spirit's Work. In addition to a renewed sense of dependence on the Holy Spirit, Covenant authors have raised the question of continued openness to the Holy Spirit's work. An openness to the Spirit's work is a significant challenge presented in Nelson's 1968 *Covenant Companion* article on the Holy Spirit as Holy

[46] Nelson, "The Holy Spirit," 5.

[47] Craig A. Nordstrom, "Response," *Narthex* 2.2 (1982): 81.

[48] Johnston, "The Ministry of the Holy Spirit," 49.

[49] William Peterson Jr., "The Evangelical Covenant Church and the Ministry of Healing: Reclaiming the Ministry of Healing Today," *Covenant Quarterly* 44 (1987): 74.

[50] Larsen, "Signs, Wonders," 99.

Innovator. Nelson concludes, in part, by encouraging his readers not to set limits on the Spirit's ability to lead to new areas of fruitfulness.[51]

Openness to the Spirit's work is also a central question in the dialogue of the September 1982 issue of *Narthex*. For instance, in response to Sandstrom's article, Sharkey states that what is necessary in the face of renewal is the courage "to examine the Scriptures in the confidence of the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit, to see if there is a possibility that we may have missed something or that our own faith can be enriched."[52] Roth and Nordlund also identify the need to be in control as an issue with openness to "all the Spirit's gifts."[53] They recognize that some gifts are seemingly more controllable and less threatening, but they also affirm from Scripture that healing should be prayed for (Acts 4:30), prophecy earnestly desired (1 Cor 14:1), and the gift of tongues commended to all (1 Cor 14:5). In his response to Kraft, Snodgrass further affirms that the Church has a healing ministry that has too often gone neglected.[54] Peterson's response to the same article echoes this sentiment, as he notes that too often evangelical churches have neglected the healing ministry of Jesus. Peterson's paper for the 1986 consultation was written on reclaiming such ministries of healing.[55]

The material compiled in the *Quarterly* from the 1986 consultation reflects a great desire for openness to the Spirit's work. Johnston's introduction to the material recalls a September 24, 1970, letter from denominational leaders and North Park Theological Seminary faculty to the ministerium suggesting a deeply felt need for renewal of the church by the Spirit.[56] Johnston also recalls a November 8, 1976, presidential newsletter from Milton B. Engebretson, who states that it seems the Covenant should accept a more embracing posture on the issue of the Holy Spirit's presence and ministry within the whole church of Jesus Christ.[57] After recounting an episode of demonic exorcism and deliverance, Margaret Swenson, at that time a missionary to Colombia, poses the question of what we want for the Covenant. She continues with a

[51] Nelson, "The Holy Spirit," 5.
[52] Sharkey, "Response," Narthex 2.2 (1982): 86.
[53] Roth and Nordlund, "Response," 76, emphasis original.
[54] Snodgrass, "Response," 18.
[55] Peterson Jr., "Response," 19; And generally, see Peterson Jr., "The Evangelical Covenant Church and the Ministry of Healing."
[56] Johnston, "The Ministry of the Holy Spirit," 49.
[57] Ibid., 49–50.

challenge not only to be a people who believe in miracles, but also, to be "a people that do what needs to be done to see miracles happen."[58]

One of the few indicators of a closed-off posture to charismatic ministries within the Covenant denomination can be found in Peterson's overview for the 1986 Consultation. After recognizing the spiritual fruit born from these ministries—including a wider range of worship practices, increased frequency of the Lord's Supper, and wider use of healing services—Peterson also relays anonymous impressions of the perceptions of denominational leadership. Several respondents reveal their perceptions that some denominational leaders were not as open to charismatic leaders or ministries as they would have preferred, likely out of caution for the difficulty such ministry might cause.[59] Regardless, these sentiments are expressed in the context of a desire for greater openness to the Spirit's work.

Concluding Considerations for Ministry

Engaging the Covenant's historical dialogue with charismatic movements calls to mind characteristics of the denomination that continue to stand as healthy foundations for teaching on the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's work, and for encouraging Christians to learn about the Spirit's gifts and about putting them into practice. Johnston saw the caution of the 1963 resolution as an example of a gentle, biblical, and pastoral admonition, which has allowed the Covenant to benefit from renewal movements without being trapped in dogmatism or excess.[60] Similar sentiments could be extended to much of the Covenant's responses to charismatic movements. The centrality of the word of God, the focus on Christ, recognition of the denomination's Spirit-dependence and the Spirit's work throughout the denomination's history provide healthy foundations for ongoing ministry practice. They are conducive to helpful assessments of experience and practice; they also protect from abuse with regard to the Spirit's gifts. Such a foundation is particularly useful in charismatic environments, where clergy and laity alike are comfortable with the more visible or miraculous gifts. Indeed, many charismatic pastors share the aforementioned concerns of Covenant ministers.

[58] Margaret Swenson, "Consultation on the Covenant and the Holy Spirit," *Covenant Quarterly* 44 (1987): 69.

[59] Peterson, "The Charismatic Movement," 58–59.

[60] Johnston, "The Ministry of the Holy Spirit," 49.

At the same time, the dialogue also challenges Covenant churches today to grow in their understanding of the Holy Spirit, generally, and of the Spirit's gifts more specifically, and to grow in their openness to whatever the Spirit would do. It is one thing to be reminded of one's dependence on the Holy Spirit; it is another to self-reflect and consider whether one's life, church, or ministry is missing out on the Spirit's activity in some capacity. To appropriate the language of Sandstrom's article, it is worth asking the tough question of whether we treat some of the Spirit's gifts or activity as "optional equipment."[61] If we find such activity in Scripture but not in our church, are we depending on the Spirit as we should? Within this dialogue, the apostle Paul's treatment of the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12-14 has rightly been employed to assure Christians that they are no less spiritual for lack of any gifts, particularly those that may be emphasized in charismatic communities.[62] For example, if one does not speak in tongues, prophesy, or heal, that is not an indication, in and of itself, that one is negligent or less spiritual than someone who does, for the Spirit distributes "just as the Spirit chooses" (1 Cor 12:11). Paul asks rhetorically whether all work miracles, have gifts of healing, or speak in tongues (12:29-30); the answer he expects, as indicated by the passage's context and language, is no, not everyone does.

But Paul's questions can equally lead us to consider the opposite: does no one work miracles, have gifts of healing, or speak in tongues? If no one does, why not? Does no one have these gifts, or have we not made space for them? Are there gifts we should seek that we have not? Before we conclude that God is not operating in these ways in a given context or season (which one could assert while simultaneously affirming that God does operate in these capacities in principle), we might consider Paul's exhortation to strive for "the greater gifts" (12:31) and his encouragement to eagerly desire the gifts of the Spirit, "especially that you may prophesy" (14:1).[63] If certain gifts feel unfamiliar or absent in

[61] Sandstrom, "The Gifts of the Spirit," 58.

[62] See especially Bowman, "Speaking in Tongues," 47–50; Sandstrom, "The Gifts of the Spirit," 66, 68, 78.

[63] While the consideration for seeking gifts is important, there can be complexity and disagreements on the specific definitions of the gifts Paul refers to, and sometimes there is recognition of overlap for some terminology. For helpful treatment of the specific gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12, see Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 591-99, and also Craig Keener, *Gift Giver: The Holy Spirit for Today*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 114-127.

our context, or make us uncomfortable, then affirming the centrality of the Word of God should lead us to honestly ask why, and to consider if some gifts should be sought. If they are present, it is worth asking if they are a focus unto themselves, or if they are properly employed in Christ's service with a practice that is biblically rooted. The Christlike love that Bowman recognizes in Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 13 should encourage Christians to consider these questions and strive for the greater gifts, always with the motivation of sharing the love of Christ.[64] It is also worth considering Swenson's challenge of whether we are doing what needs to be done to see miracles happen.[65] The importance of a posture of openness to the Spirit extends beyond the scope of an individual's gifts. We may also consider whether we are responding to God's "innovations," as Nelson describes the new work God may seek to do.[66]

At the 2019 Midwinter Conference, President John Wenrich called Covenanters to recognize the Holy Spirit as the "blazing center" for our mission. This call came with an invitation for Covenant churches and pastors to commit to a renewed focus and conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit.[67] Furthermore, at the 2020 Midwinter Conference, Make and Deepen Disciples introduced the Blazing Center resource suite, making available several resources intended to help renew the affirmation of conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit in our lives and churches.[68] Such an emphasis and such resources may help Covenanters grow in openness to the work and person of the Holy Spirit. Nelson has helped us understand what such openness may look like:

> Think of [our churches] all waiting on God, all forgetting any "good old days" when things seemed better, and remembering only that the Spirit is free to move in directions we have never seen before, all prayerfully engaging in new experiments, all seeking the mind of the Spirit to lead them to new innovations, all asking the Spirit to renew them for service in their own communities! There is no limit to what the Spirit may innovate under such circumstances.[69]

[64] Bowman, "Speaking in Tongues," 50.
[65] Swenson, "Consultation on the Covenant and the Holy Spirit," 69.
[66] Nelson, "The Holy Spirit," 5.
[67] "2019 Midwinter, President's Update," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d0SB5x59iFc&t=1252s, accessed February 12, 2021.
[68] https://covchurch.org/blazingcenter/blazing-center/
[69] Nelson, "The Holy Spirit," 5.

In the end, Covenanters should be encouraged to consider how our conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit ought to manifest itself in our lives and in our churches, and whether we really are open to all the Spirit would like to give us. As we strive to live our lives in conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit, we may find ourselves all the more empowered to carry out God's mission—however the Spirit chooses.

Covenant Women Embody Mission through the Arts: 1958-1978 as a Case Study

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Since their inception in 1916, Covenant Women (CW) have focused on equipping and empowering lay women to participate in the life and work of the church. These ministry efforts were based on a mission to support what were then Swedish Evangelical Mission Covenant institutions, and began around a coffee table. In 1915, a social gathering of women in the home of David and Louisa Nyvall led to what would become Covenant Women. Louisa Nyvall[1] asked the women present from various Covenant churches if their church sewing societies could band together to help support North Park College. The young school had many needs, in particular a dormitory. Mrs. Nyvall thought that more help could be provided "by a united effort" than by any one church or sewing group.[2]

Eventually, this led to over one hundred women from Chicago churches gathering at North Mission Covenant Church on January 21, 1916, where they formally organized the Covenant Women's Auxiliary (CWA), the original name of Covenant Women. They were established with the following mission: "To further the kingdom of God by uniting women of our Covenant Church in promoting greater interest for all mission-

[1] When possible, women in this article are identified by their given first name. However, some historical sources only list a particular woman as "Mrs. [husband's first name, husband's last name]." At times, the attempt to further identify a given name was unsuccessful. In these cases, the identification of any woman by her husband's first name, instead of her own given name, is not intended to deprive her of her own identity or honor.

[2] Ruth Johnson, "CWA President Looks Back with Thanksgiving, Ahead with Faith," *Covenant Companion*, January 20, 1961, 8.

ary endeavors, such as home and foreign missions, benevolences, and educational work carried out by the Evangelical Covenant Church of America."[3]

Ninety-three women signed the charter that day and the women of the Auxiliary began their service by providing "bedding, curtains, rugs, dishes, tableware," and more to North Park College and Covenant Home.[4] Women in other Covenant churches around the country learned about the newly formed CWA in Chicago and desired to engage in similar ministry efforts. A national organization was formed in 1933 and, eventually, the CWA expanded its mission efforts overseas as well as on the home front.

Between the years 1925 and 1929, the CWA undertook its first major project, fundraising the $56,000 needed to build Caroline Hall, a much-needed girl's dormitory, on North Park's campus.[5] The 2021 equivalent of this figure is $851,662.[6] To raise the funds, the CWA held bazaars, concerts, lectures, rummage sales (still a favorite of many churches today), and luncheons; they also gave out savings banks, and took up free will offerings.[7] They even used drama to help with their efforts. A skit was written depicting two roommates bemoaning their lack of storage space and trying to stuff all of their belongings into one wardrobe. The skit concluded with the housemother exclaiming, "There, there, girls, someday the Covenant Women's Auxiliary will build us closets."[8] Caroline Hall still stands today on North Park's campus as a testament to the strength, determination, heart, and creativity of our denomination's women.

As an arm of the Covenant, CW has not merely participated in ministry efforts, it has often led the way by drawing the church's attention to important issues of the day. Throughout its history, CW has found many avenues to communicate its mission and fundraise for its projects. The Covenant noted that each year CW raised funds for a national project. One early study of the ministry reveals that "some local groups hold a

[3] Ibid., 8.

[4] Ibid., 8–9.

[5] Karl A. Olsson, *By One Spirit* (Chicago: Covenant, 1962), 636–37.

[6] This and all subsequent calculations were made by comparing the buying power for December of a given historical fundraising year with the buying power for January, 2021, via the CPI Inflation Calculator. Figures have been rounded to the nearest dollar (United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm; accessed February 26, 2021).

[7] Johnson, "CWA President Looks Back," 9.

[8] "Pantomime of Caroline Hall Closets," 1953–1960, 1. Record Series 2/2, Box 14, Folder 3, Covenant Archives and Historical Library (hereafter cited as CAHL).

fund-raising tea, while others present a Sunday evening church service and receive an offering. The results of these yearly extra efforts are impressive."[9] Perhaps one of the most impressive efforts was the ministry's ability to fundraise using the arts during a span of two decades. Indeed, from about 1958 to 1978, CW were particularly creative in their fundraising, connecting a drama or skit, a poem or story, to their special project for the year, in an effort to educate churches on the need to mobilize around the fundraising projects. Although CW used skits prior to this time, and afterward as well, the period of 1958 to 1978 represents a particular time of interest in using the arts to mobilize for mission. As such, the women of what is now the Evangelical Covenant Church have a history of leading the way in creatively engaging the church for mission both at home and abroad. As I currently observe Covenant women carrying on this heritage, my goal in this essay is to demonstrate that by better connecting with our past, we might be encouraged to engage and embody mission in imaginative and innovative ways in our current contexts. Indeed, the the women of the Covenant have shown us how God can move powerfully through our creativity, by allowing people to connect to mission in a more embodied fashion. In what follows, I look at three main periods of ministry between 1958 and 1978, before concluding with some observations for Covenant women today.

1958–1961: Dramatic Skits Further Mission

In 1958, the president of CWA was June Anderson, overseeing a membership of approximately 14,000. CWA was supporting seven missionaries, three abroad and four at home, as well as giving $1,000 annually to North Park College and Seminary and to the Covenant Pension Fund for widows of ministers.[10] At this point, CWA had also begun fundraising for an annual National Project. The leadership of CWA would propose a recipient for their National Project for a given year, which would then be voted on and approved at the CWA Annual Meeting.[11] Their National Project for 1958 was raising $10,000 for Covenant Youth Work, which was to be divided equally between a Christian Academy in Japan and Covenant Youth Work, including raising $2,500 for a Volkswagen for the latter organization. They met their goal and raised $10,970.25

[9] *Covenant Women: 50 Years, 1916–1966* (Chicago: Evangelical Covenant Church, 1966), 7.

[10] *Covenant Yearbook 1959*, (Chicago: Evangelical Covenant Church), 138.

[11] Covenant Women Stewardship Committee, "Letter #6–July 1966," 1966. Record Series 2/2, Box 2, Folder 4, CAHL.

(2021: $99,295).[12] That year, they wrote a dramatic service to be used in churches around the country on Sunday morning. It was entitled "We Belong to a Great Company." The purpose of the service was described as follows: "For inspiration, for challenge to our missionary task, for getting the feel of belonging to a great company who are believers and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ in the world."[13] The service was set up as a liturgy of prayers, Bible passages, readings, and songs, reminding believers that they are a part of a much larger body and mission.

In 1959, CWA elected a new president: Ruth Johnson. The ministry still supported seven missionaries along with North Park College, the Widows' Pension Fund, and the Covenant Church Extension Fund. For their 1959 National Project, they sought to raise $20,000 to pay for the transmitter of radio station KICY in Nome, Alaska.[14] CWA had the director of the radio station, Arthur Zylstra, write a forty-minute radio skit to be sent to all CWA groups, which has a "sampling of the type of programs to be aired over this station and uses this year's CWA theme song … as the background."[15] The skit contained mock-ups of programs such as: a history of a chosen hymn, a bush pilot's report, a woman's program entitled "Designs in Living," a book review program, and Sunshine Club for children. The material concluded with a special announcement detailing the CWA project and thanking the women for their support.[16] Through this skit, churches could experience what their fundraising efforts might provide for Alaskans. In the end, CWA raised $21,330.52 for the project (2021: $198,785).

The 1960 National Project for CWA was to raise money for Christian literature for Covenant missionaries. The program was referred to as "Filling the Bookshelves," and the goal was to raise $15,000. In recognition of CWA's forty-fifth anniversary, January 22, 1961, was designated as "CWA Sunday." CWA President Ruth Johnson noted that on that Sunday, many churches "presented a program to emphasize our current special project to gather funds for Christian literature for our home

[12] "National Projects of Covenant Women," n.d. Record Series 2/2, Box 69, Folder 10, CAHL.

[13] "We Belong to a Great Company," 1959, 1. Record Series 2/2, Box 53, Folder 8, CAHL (emphasis original)

[14] *Covenant Yearbook 1960* (Chicago: Evangelical Covenant Church), 189–90.

[15] "Radio Skit to Assist Women in Current Special Project," *Covenant Companion*, October 16, 1959, 14.

[16] Arthur R. Zylstra, "Call of the Arctic," 1959. Record Series 2/2, Box 1, Folder 5, CAHL.

and world mission fields."[17] The program featured a skit called "Filling the Bookshelves," written by missionary LeOla Johnson.[18] The skit depicts a Christian woman in a bookstore with missionaries discussing the importance of, and the need for, Christian literature. In the drama, one missionary notes: "Investing in Christian literature means investing in the Word that will not return void!" Another woman adds: "Isn't it a pity that we Christians in general are often guilty of feeling that just anything is good enough for the mission fields and that they ought to be mighty grateful for whatever we give them?"[19] Thus, through drama, the CWA was able to offer a gentle critique, without being overly harsh. Skits can function like parables as they invite us into the story and then offer us a mirror for further introspection. The piece ends with instructions on how to contribute to the CWA project. Mrs. Johnson notes that the offerings received for this exceeded $16,000.[20] Overall, the project that year brought in $22,975.44 (2021: $201,677).[21]

In 1961, the National Project focused on its home missionaries and raised funds for both a parsonage at the Wallens Creek Covenant Church (a part of Covenant Mountain Mission in Virginia), and a home for missionaries serving the Covenant Mexican Mission in La Villa, Texas.[22] Two skits were written to support the fundraising for this project. The skit, "You All," written by Francis Anderson, presents mock interviews with people who had been affected by the work of Covenant Mountain Mission, including people from Wallens Creek Covenant Church (Virginia) and Mulberry Gap Covenant Church (Tennessee). The piece explains the work of Covenant Mountain Mission and calls for women to pray for, and give financially toward, the mission.[23] Esther Elving also wrote a skit entitled "Unto Thee Also," which details the work of the Covenant Mexican Mission.[24] The fundraising goal was $20,000 and $21,531.64

[17] *Covenant Yearbook 1961* (Chicago: Evangelical Covenant Church), 191.

[18] "Women Raise Funds for Missionary Literature," *Covenant Companion*, January 20, 1961, 6–7.

[19] LeOla Johnson, "Filling the Bookshelves," January 1961, 4, 6. Record Series 2/2, Box 16, Folder 7, CAHL.

[20] *Covenant Yearbook 1961*, 191.

[21] It should be noted that during this time, as well, the CWA Canada Conference produced a skit entitled "Unto Him" written by Lorraine Quarnstrom for "use in presenting the 1960–1961 Canada Covenant Home Missions Project to the Canada Conference CWA." In it, women discuss 2 Corinthians 8:5 as it relates to CWA. See "Unto Him," 1, Record Series 2/2, Box 12, Folder 12, CAHL.

[22] *Covenant Yearbook 1962* (Chicago: Evangelical Covenant Church), 188.

[23] Francis Anderson, "You All," 1963. Record Series 2/2, Box 33, Folder 7, CAHL.

[24] Esther Elving, "Unto Thee Also," n.d. Record Series 2/2, Box 53, Folder 10, CAHL.

was raised (2021: $187,743).[25]

1962–1968: A New Name and a Fiftieth Anniversary Drama

The year 1962 brought a new structure and a new name for the ministry. Indeed, a plan for a unified woman's organization was approved, and CWA was renamed "Covenant Women" in 1963.[26] The 1962 National Project was to raise $25,000 for Christian education, to be divided equally between the Covenant Youth Department's publication fund and the Congo Polytechnic Institute, and also, to begin a CW scholarship endowment fund at North Park College.[27] CW raised $19,429.64 toward these projects (2021: $167,186). A skit connected to this effort may have existed but has not been found to date in the records. In 1963, CW elected a new president: Pearl Green. Covenant High School in Unalakleet, Alaska, became the beneficiary of its National Project.[28] Assisting the World Missions Department, CW raised $16,598.84 (2021: $140,516) to help build a boys' dormitory at the high school.[29] To assist in this fundraising, CW produced a skit named "Covenant High School Takes a Long Step." The skit depicts a conversation between a retired pastor's wife, a lay woman from the village, and a couple who just graduated from Covenant Bible College, who will leave soon for their first pastorate in the village of Koyuk. The couple recounts how they met at Covenant High School, got married, and felt called to the pastorate. Finally, the skit discusses the need for a boys' dormitory.[30] In this way, the skit helped personalize the needs in Alaska.

In 1964–1965, CW embarked on a special, two-year golden anniversary project to commemorate its fiftieth anniversary in 1966. The two-year project focused on Christian education and hoped to raise $50,000. The first half was to provide a Grant-in-Aid endowment fund to benefit the children of Covenant missionaries and ministers. The other half was meant to establish a fund for Christian Education in the Covenant, so as "to launch a new course of study for the use of Covenanters in every age bracket, from the youngest to the senior adult classes, including

[25] "National Projects of CW," n.d. Record Series 2/2, Box 69, Folder 10, CAHL.

[26] *Covenant Yearbook 1963* (Chicago: Evangelical Covenant Church), 197.

[27] *Covenant Yearbook 1962*, 188.

[28] *Covenant Yearbook 1964* (Chicago: Evangelical Covenant Church), 165.

[29] "National Projects of CW."

[30] "Covenant High School Takes A Long Step," 1963–1964. Record Series 2/2, Box 16, Folder 7, CAHL.

women's study groups."[31] A creative skit was also developed to support these fundraising efforts. Its purpose was to "help arouse interest and promote giving to the anniversary project," and "mimeographed copies of a dialogue presented" at the Annual Meeting in 1964 were made available for local CW chapters to use.[32] The dialogue was written by Dagmar Gustafson of Villa Park, Illinois, and she and Mrs. Robert Wilson (also of Villa Park) acted out the dialogue at the Annual Meeting. The hope was that other women would do the same at their local churches.[33] CW raised $48,641.72 (2021: $400,120) for the anniversary project.[34] However, Hazel Anderson notes in a letter to the stewardship committee that as of July 1966, over $55,000 had been raised.[35]

Additionally, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of CW in 1966, a skit was written by Dora Anderson of Wausa, Nebraska. The goal was for the skit to be presented at local churches on Covenant Women Sunday that year—January 16, 1966—in hopes of informing "all Covenanters and to interest women of all ages in our on-going programs."[36] The skit creatively describes a building of stones representing CW: the foundation of the structure is described as Scripture, its design as inspired by the Holy Spirit, its materials as furnished by God, and its walls as representing living stones, that is, human beings. As such, this building "stands as a monument of all the things that our Covenant Women have done and are still doing."[37] Each room in the building is further described and represents a different CW project. Near the end of the skit, one of the characters states: "Our great task for the future is to provide avenues of interest and work that will touch the heart, life and ability of every woman, young and old, in the Covenant, and draw her into active service for God."[38] The skit concludes with an opportunity to give toward the anniversary project. In this way, the skit allowed the women of the Covenant to see themselves in this ministry work and to

[31] *Covenant Yearbook 1965* (Chicago: Evangelical Covenant Church), 171. Note also the document detailing the special anniversary project: "1964-1966 Special Golden Anniversary Project," n.d. Record Series 2/2, Box 6, Folder 6, CAHL.

[32] "With Gratitude, We Give!" *Covenant Companion,* November 20, 1954, 11.

[33] Ibid., 11.

[34] "National Projects of CW."

[35] Letter from Hazel Anderson to the Covenant Women Stewardship Committee, July 1966. Record Series 2/2, Box 2, Folder 4, CAHL.

[36] Dora Anderson, "A Building of Living Stones," January 1966, 1. Record Series 2/2, Box 16, Folder 7, CAHL.

[37] Ibid., 2.

[38] Ibid., 7.

experience the fruit of their mission come to life.

In 1966, Hazel Anderson was named as the first executive director of CW, a role described as taking "creative leadership in the total program of Covenant Women."[39] That year CW focused their giving on two areas: their missionary budget, which supported eight female missionaries, and their National Project to raise as much as they could to augment the Covenant Ministers Widows' Pension Fund.[40] Although their fundraising for these efforts technically began in 1963-1964, CW raised a total of $62,161.84 (2021: $494,238) toward missionary support and the pension fund for 1966.[41] Hazel Anderson often wrote to missionaries or to those involved with the project, asking them to write a skit for CW each year. In one piece of correspondence, she explained: "Sometimes when women can take part in a skit they become enthusiastic and interested."[42] A skit was indeed written for the 1966 National Project. Hazel Anderson wrote to the stewardship committee to tell them: "A skit is being prepared to be used to promote our new Project and this could perhaps be used in connection with Covenant Women's Sunday which will now become an annual date in the Covenant calendar—the third Sunday of January."[43] That year a liturgy was written entitled "Because We Care … We Share." This material consisted of prayers, readings, and hymns centered on the importance of sharing generously with others. Intended to be used for Thanksgiving, this liturgy reminded women of needs in the world. They are also called to actively fundraise for those needs in the context of their local churches.[44]

In 1967, CW continued the work of fundraising for the Covenant Ministers' Widows' Pension Fund as their National Project. They raised $20,745.28 (2021: $160,076) toward the fund.[45] CW President Pearl Green notes in her annual report that between the special project and funds from memorial and honorary memberships, $27,000 (2021: $208,340) had been netted that year for the pension fund.[46] Violet John-

[39] "Women's Board Names First Executive Director," *Covenant Companion*, March 25, 1966, 21.

[40] *Covenant Yearbook 1967* (Chicago: Evangelical Covenant Church), 168.

[41] "National Projects of CW."

[42] Hazel C. Anderson to William and Virginia Rigmark, March 3, 1972. Record Series 2/2, Box 69, Folder 10, CAHL

[43] Hazel Anderson to Covenant Women Stewardship Committee, July 1966. Record Series 2/2, Box 2, Folder 4, CAHL.

[44] "Because We Care … We Share," 1967. Record Series 2/2, Box 29, Folder 2, CAHL.

[45] "National Projects of CW."

[46] *Covenant Yearbook 1968* (Chicago: Evangelical Covenant Church), 150.

son also composed a skit that year entitled "These Wonderful Women," which portrayed a group of older women discussing their lives and the lives of ministers' widows.[47] This helped create a more palpable connection to the beneficiaries of the pension fund, the focus of the fundraising efforts that year.

The 1968 National Project for CW was to fundraise $28,000 for a Mobile Clinic for Congo. A decision was also made to partially support all Covenant missionaries, rather than the select few who had been receiving support to that point.[48] Hazel Anderson wrote to Marian Enos and asked her to write a skit for the project, to be presented on CW Sunday that coming January 21, 1968.[49] The record shows that Enos responded by stating that she was not sure if she could write a skit, but would try to develop something.[50] Anderson responded further, by noting that something other than a skit would be "most acceptable," if that is what happened, and perhaps they could speak at the annual meeting if Enos would be there.[51] It is unclear whether Marian Enos ended up being the actual author or not, but a skit was in fact produced for the project. The skit, entitled "Mobile Clinic for Congo," dramatizes a mother recalling a letter from her friend serving in Congo, while also remembering when a Congolese man preached about his experience of the gospel at her church in the U.S. The time of recollection is juxtaposed with the mother's young children yelling that they need a bike or a car or some other thing. This leads to the skit highlighting the need for a dispensary on wheels.[52] Once again, we observe how the dramas of the CW function as embodied parables.

Hazel Anderson also wrote to missionary nurse Barbara Johnson, who was serving in Congo, asking if she would write something as well. She agreed to write a poem, which she entitled "From Out of the Dark Jungle."[53] This poem vividly details life in Congo and the needs present

[47] Violet Johnson, "These Wonderful Women," 1966–1967. Record Series 2/2, Box 12, Folder 12, CAHL.

[48] *Covenant Yearbook 1969* (Chicago: Evangelical Covenant Church), 130.

[49] Hazel Anderson to Marian Enos, May 24, 1967. Record Series 2/2, Box 16, Folder 7, CAHL.

[50] Marian Enos to Hazel Anderson, June 14, 1967. Record Series 2/2, Box 16, Folder 7, CAHL.

[51] Hazel Anderson to Marian Enos, June 16, 1967. Record Series 2/2, Box 16, Folder 7, CAHL.

[52] "Mobile Clinic for Congo," October 1967. Record Series 2/2, Box 16, Folder 7, CAHL.

[53] Barbara Johnson to Hazel Anderson, July 24, 1967. Record Series 2/2, Box 16, Folder 7, CAHL.

there, as well as the need for a mobile clinic. One line highlights the benefits the mobile clinic would bring:

> At last they'll have hope that there's help on the way
> And know that tomorrow's a far brighter day.[54]

The poem concludes with the call to give:

> Don't give just from extra that you've got to spare
> But dig down where it hurts and give that to share…
> And so, for this project for '68—GIVE,
> That generous gifts might cause others to LIVE![55]

Anderson wrote to all CW reminding them that Covenant Women Sunday was coming up in January of 1968 and that they would soon be receiving a skit and poem to use that Sunday in conjunction with presenting the CW national project for that year.[56] CW raised $28,496.94 (2021: $209,980) for the mobile clinic.[57]

1969–1978: Growing beyond Gleaners

In 1969, Erma Chinander was elected CW president, and a new type of fundraising was introduced: "Thank Offering Banks." These banks replaced the Gleaner Envelopes that had previously been used for annual, month-long fundraising efforts, instead of the year-round effort the banks would now provide. The reason given was that "The significance of the 'Gleaners' program had dulled over the years, and the new program emphasizes a worship experience as well as an opportunity for stewardship."[58] Many churches indicated that this led not only to an increase in giving, but also to an increase in enthusiasm. The success of this effort is clear, as the banks program raised $19,394.65 (2021: $134,570) above what the envelopes did the previous year.[59]

A service was also written by Elsa Magnuson to be used for Thanksgiving that year in conjunction with the Thank Offering Banks. Erma Chinander noted that: "Another first in our CW work will be the Thank Offering Service this fall. Our Thank Offering boxes have been in our

[54] Barbara Johnson, "From Out of the Dark Jungle" 1967, 2. Record Series 2/2, Box 16, Folder 7, CAHL.

[55] Ibid., 3.

[56] Hazel C. Anderson to Covenant Women, October 1967. Record Series 2/2, Box 16, Folder 7, CAHL.

[57] "National Projects of CW."

[58] Erma Chinander, "We're Rejoicing," *Covenant Companion*, March 15, 1970, 15–16; see also *Covenant Yearbook 1970* (Chicago: Evangelical Covenant Church), 137–38.

[59] Chinander, "We're Rejoicing," 15–16.

homes—on our dressers or kitchen tables or wherever—since CW Day in January of this year."[60] The service was a dramatic liturgy that used a series of readings posing questions such as: "Have you ever been hungry? Have you ever been poor? Have you ever been rejected [because of your skin color]? Have you ever been lonely [like an elderly woman in a retirement home]?" The liturgy calls for thanksgiving to God for good fortune as well as repentance for not helping those who experience these circumstances. The liturgy then asks: "How often have you said: 'I wish there was something I could do…?'"[61] The response was to accept that Jesus loves us and that we should stand not in guilt but in thanksgiving and devotion for God's goodness, which should then motivate us to bring our Thank Offering Banks (containing our financial gifts) up front.[62]

The National Project for 1969 was to raise $15,000 for a new denominational hymnal. To support these efforts, Mrs. Paul Olson of Ridgway, Pennsylvania, created a worship service to be used in churches that included some of the new hymns featured in the hymnal. Also, the liturgy included a poem entitled "I Am Your Hymnal," a responsive reading entitled "What Is Worship," and an explanatory statement for the needed revision of the hymnal.[63] That year, however, there were women who did not approve of the 1969 National Project for new hymnals. In one letter, a CW member described her (and others') disapproval; she believed they should be focusing their fundraising efforts on missions. She went so far as to ask what the missionaries in the Congo would think to learn money that could have been sent to them was spent on new hymnals instead. She thought it was "a slap in the face" to Evangelical Covenant Church missionaries.[64] Despite the protest, the project was oversubscribed, and the women raised $18,346 (2021: $127,294) for the new hymnals. A "Playlet for Reading at Covenant Women's Teas" was also written that year, which detailed the past work of CW and their projects.[65]

[60] Erma Chinander, "To All Women, By All Means," *Covenant Companion*, September 1, 1969, 15.

[61] Elsa Magnuson, "Gratitude to God," 1970. Record Series 2/2, Box 1, Folder 2, CAHL.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Hazel Anderson to Esther Hallock, November 11, 1968. Record Series 2/2, Box 16, Folder 8, CAHL; Mrs. Paul Olsson, "Worship Service from the New Hymnal," 1968. Record Series 2/2, Box 16, Folder 8, CAHL.

[64] Hazel Anderson to Mildred Holmberg, November 22, 1968. Record Series 2/2, Box 16, Folder 8, CAHL (among many other letters).

[65] "Playlet for Reading at CW's Teas," in "To All Women, By All Means," 1970–1971. Record Series 2/2, Box 10, Folder 1, CAHL.

At the opening of the 1970s, CW membership grew, but President Erma Chinander also noted in her annual report that, "We are not as interested in a membership figure as in encouraging our local C.W. organizations to reach all the women in their churches and communities. When God has touched our lives and made them whole, we want to share his love and grace, and in his name to help alleviate some of the needs and hurts of the world."[66] CW was about the business of mobilizing women for the mission of the Evangelical Covenant Church. 1970 brought another exciting first: Covenant Women brought in more than $100,000 in total receipts during their fiscal year, specifically $112,675 (2021: $740,547). The National Project for 1970 was named "Project Appalachia." The goal of this project was to raise money to build additional buildings for the Cumberland Mountain Mission in the Appalachian Mountains of southwestern Virginia.[67] To encourage these efforts, a filmstrip was created with slides from Cumberland Mountain Mission. The narration was written by Frances Anderson, at the request of Hazel Anderson.[68] The project was successful, as CW raised $25,000 (2021: $164,310), which allowed a clothing center and a community center to be built in the Virginia mountains.[69]

In 1971, Jane B. Nelson was elected president of CW and Erma Chinander took over as executive director. The National Project for that year was dubbed "Operation Concern." The goal was to raise $30,000 to "supplement the personal allowances of residents in need" at Covenant retirement homes.[70] Hazel Anderson (who was still executive director during the preparations for the 1971 project) wrote to both Lorraine Quarnstrom and Ebba Arell, asking them to consider writing a skit for Operation Concern to emphasize the needs for the project.[71] However, the record bears out that the script was eventually written by Ruth Lundberg and Aggie Johnson.[72] Still, the following note from Hazel Anderson

[66] *Covenant Yearbook 1971* (Chicago: Evangelical Covenant Church), 127.

[67] *Covenant Yearbook 1970*, 138.

[68] Hazel C. Anderson to Winnifred Swenson, July 17, 1969. Record Series 2/2, Box 16, Folder 8, CAHL; Hazel C. Anderson to Frances Anderson, September 2, 1969. Record Series 2/2, Box 16, Folder 8, CAHL.

[69] *Covenant Yearbook 1971*, 127.

[70] *Covenant Yearbook 1972* (Chicago: Evangelical Covenant Church), 128.

[71] Hazel Anderson to Loraine Quarnstrom, June 30, 1970. Record Series 2/2, Box 16, Folder 8, CAHL; Hazel Anderson to Ebba Arell, July 1, 1970. Record Series 2/2, Box 16, Folder 8, CAHL.

[72] Hazel Anderson to Ruth Lundberg, September 21, 1970. Record Series 2/2, Box 16, Folder 8, CAHL.

was handwritten on the front of the letter from the two women (within which the script was enclosed): "These women did not know of the membership theme 'Let's surround them with our love.' I stuck it on a couple places at the end. Could it be used rather often in the pulpit—or what do you think?"[73] The skit was named "Surround Them with Your Love," and it was introduced with the goal of showcasing "how far this small amount of money will go to take care of the personal needs of those who took such good care of us when we were young and need our help now."[74] The skit contained a conversation between an elderly woman and a young lady, followed by vignettes of elderly people receiving financial help and how it had impacted them.[75] Hazel Anderson, in an effort to tie in the theme, added "Surround Them with your love" at the end of the skit.[76] $30,000 was raised that year for the project (2021: $190,936).[77]

The 1972 National Project for CW focused on raising funds for the World Mission Department, specifically towards the Fuji Dorm Fund, which would aid in the completion of a men's seminary dormitory at the Covenant Seminary in Tokyo, Japan.[78] Hazel Anderson wrote to Covenant missionaries in Tokyo, Virginia and William Rigmark, and asked if they might consider writing a skit, or some kind of promotional material, for the National Project that year. Virginia Rigmark responded that she thought a skit could be easily developed.[79] It is unclear what the final skit actually was, but CW raised $25,000 (2021: $153,872) for the project.[80]

The National Project for 1973 was entitled "The Library Lift." With this effort, the goal was to provide monies to update the North Park College library.[81] A skit entitled "Library Lift" was written, which portrayed two librarians discussing the current problems with the library and ends with one of them exclaiming: "I believe it is our Christian responsibility to

[73] Ruth Lundberg and Aggie Johnson to Hazel Anderson, October 14, 1970. Record Series 2/2, Box 16, Folder 8, CAHL.

[74] Ruth Lundberg and Aggie Johnson, "Surround Them with Your Love," 1971, 1. Record Series 2/2, Box 16, Folder 8, CAHL.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid.

[77] "National Projects of CW."

[78] *Covenant Yearbook 1974* (Chicago: Evangelical Covenant Church), 125.

[79] Hazel Anderson to Virginia and William Rigmark, March 3, 1971. Record Series 2/2, Box 69, Folder 10, CAHL; Virginia Rigmark to Hazel Anderson, March 11, 1971. Record Series 2/2, Box 69, Folder 10, CAHL.

[80] "National Projects of CW."

[81] *Covenant Yearbook 1974*, 125.

provide the best, academically excellent libraries possible for students and faculty."[82] CW raised $25,000 (2021: $141,549), which they presented to Betty Jane Highfield, the North Park College librarian at that time.[83]

In 1974, Christian education was the focus of the National Project, aptly named "Outreach—Teach!" The project hoped to provide "training and resources for those who will lead children to a richer and fuller experience of faith."[84] A skit, also named "Outreach—Teach!" was written with the purpose of portraying the importance of Christian education in the local church. The skit portrayed a number of church members discussing which areas of ministry the church should focus on (a familiar scene for any church), when a Sunday school teacher shares how she would reach a whole family for Christ through their young son who was attending her Sunday school class.[85] Overall, CW efforts raised $25,000 that year (2021: $126,003) for Christian education.

In 1975, CW embarked on an ambitious, three-year national project that would be the National Project for 1975, 1976, and 1977. The campaign was entitled "Giving for Growing," and sought to raise $100,000 over three years to benefit all the departments of the denomination.[86] In its first year, the project raised $30,000 (2021: $141,396).[87] By 1976, the membership of CW had grown to over 30,000 and the group also celebrated its sixtieth anniversary.[88] The anniversary was recognized on Covenant Women Sunday—January 18, 1976—when the triennium project was also emphasized.[89] To aid in their appeal, a skit was created for use in local churches around the country on Covenant Women Sunday for that year. The skit was named "Help! Help! Come Help!" and featured youth and people who were aging calling for help, as well as people serving in dormitory construction and medical missions. The skit then demonstrated how women had heard and answered the call, by presenting a series of vignettes of projects CW had done over the years. The skit ended by highlighting the "Giving for Growing" campaign.[90]

[82] "Library Lift," 1973, 2. Record Series 2/2, Box 16, Folder 9, CAHL.

[83] *Covenant Yearbook 1975* (Chicago: Evangelical Covenant Church), 138.

[84] Erma Chinander, "Ministries through C.W. National Project," *Covenant Companion*, February 15, 1974, 14.

[85] "Outreach—Teach!" 1974. Record Series 2/2, Box 69, Folder 10, CAHL.

[86] "National Project for the Triennium, 1975–1977," n.d. Record Series 2/2, Box 16, Folder 9, CAHL; see also *Covenant Yearbook* 1975, 138.

[87] "National Projects of CW."

[88] *Covenant Yearbook 1976* (Chicago: Evangelical Covenant Church), 142.

[89] Ibid.

[90] "Help! Help! Come Help!" 1976. Record Series 2/2, Box 69, Folder 10, CAHL.

To celebrate its sixty years, CW also produced an anniversary pageant entitled "God Gave Us This Day," which was performed at the annual meeting in June 1976, on Pacific Lutheran University's campus in Tacoma, Washington. Written by Mary Almer, the pageant was presented by the CW of the North Pacific Conference, and according to President Jane Nelson's annual report:

> About 1,200 persons filled the auditorium to review the past, look at the present, and listen to some dreams for the future of our organization. Thirty tapes with script were made available to local units on a rental basis so that all might hear and share in the accomplishments of our group.[91]

The pageant progresses through the entire history of CW, beginning with singing the hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." The opening scene depicts a group of suffragettes declaring their political allegiances, contrasted with Covenant women calling out for women to unite around the mission of the church. After the history is presented, the pageant ends with a new song, "God Gave Us This Day," set to the tune of "To God Be the Glory."[92] At the end of the second year of the campaign, CW had raised another $40,000 (2021: $179,781), bringing the total to $70,000 out of the $100,000 goal.[93]

The year 1977 brought a number of milestones for CW: Triennial, a new magazine (Covenant Women Magazine), a new pin to wear, and the end of the three-year project, as well as a new president, Betty Carlson.[94] The third phase of the "Giving for Growing" campaign brought in $30,000 (2021: $126,368), thereby reaching the $100,000 goal set for the project.[95] That is the equivalent of raising over $400,000 in three years today. Looking forward to 1978, CW decided to focus their efforts on providing help to the women of Zaire. This brought new possibilities for service, using the arts to mobilize the women of the Covenant for the mission of the church.

Overall, this review of the period ranging from 1958 to 1978 demonstrates the vitality and creativity of the ministry of CW. Through the use of the arts, particularly drama, CW helped women embody the mission of

[91] *Covenant Yearbook 1977* (Chicago: Evangelical Covenant Church), 145.

[92] Mary Almer, "God Gave Us This Day," 1976. Record Series 2/2, Box 6, Folder 2, CAHL. See Appendix B to read the opening scene.

[93] *Covenant Yearbook 1977,* 145.

[95] *Covenant Yearbook 1978* (Chicago: Evangelical Covenant Church), 145.

[95] Ibid.

the Evangelical Covenant Church, and then fundraise to make that mission a reality. While drama was certainly used before 1958 and continued after 1978, this particular time in the history of the Evangelical Covenant Church reveals itself as a rich period of ministry connecting the arts to the mission of the gospel for CW. These women harnessed the power of the arts to reach people in ways that mere recitation of facts probably could not. Further, they used that power to mobilize the women of the church to meet the needs of a hurting world. The fruits of their efforts are still seen today and, perhaps, they can teach us something about the intersection of art with ministries of mercy and justice.

The Women of the Covenant Today

Through its history, Covenant Women's Auxiliary/Covenant Women have gone through a number of transitions and structural changes. Covenant Women became the "Department of Covenant Women" by vote at the Annual Meeting of 1982. In 1990, the name changed to "Covenant Women Ministries," and then to "Women Ministries" in 2004.[96] Recently, the department has transitioned out of its traditional centralized structure and has been restructured as a mission initiative called "Fostering the Flourishing of Women" that will interact with all five of the Evangelical Covenant Church's mission priorities.[97] However, CW circles at local churches can still be found, such as at my previous church—Trinity Evangelical Covenant Church in Oak Lawn, Illinois. Trinity Covenant maintains a CW group that holds annual fundraisers for various missions and causes. Although they are no longer fundraising in a united, national effort, women of the Covenant continue to find ways to band together to make a difference in their communities and in the world around them.

For example, the chair of Trinity's CW group is the leader who brought a men's recovery shelter to the church's attention. She, with the help of some other faithful women, began soliciting church members for clothing and toiletry donations to help the men at this shelter. Each week, she collects the donations, washing and folding the clothing donations, organizing the toiletries, and using any monetary donations to find bargains at local thrift stores. She brings them to the shelter and sets them up in

[96] The Evangelical Covenant Church, "History of Women Ministries," *Covenant Newswire Archive*, January 31, 2006, http://blogs.covchurch.org/newswire/2006/01/31/history-of-women-ministries.

[97] More information on Fostering the Flourishing of Women and the Evangelical Covenant Church's mission priorities may be accessed at https://covchurch.org/ffw-2.

a room, organizing them by size and type, where the men can come pick out whatever items they need. She continues to remind the congregation of the importance of this work by sharing stories and posting thank you letters from the men on a bulletin board in the church.

Each December, Trinity's CW puts on a wonderful event for women called Jul Fest (Christmas Festival). This event (housed at the church) includes a craft bazaar, a musical entertainment program, and a luncheon complete with a Swedish smorgasbord. I experienced my very first Jul Fest in December of 2018 and was delighted to meet women who came from all over our community. I even tried my first pickled herring! Trinity's CW use the proceeds from the tickets they sell for Jul Fest to make donations to several charities that they decide upon each year.

These brief examples from a local church setting highlight the fact that the tradition of connecting the arts to fundraising is still alive among some of our CW groups. I hope to see that tradition continue as we consider how the arts might be used to bring awareness to, and to fundraise for, other mission priorities. In the last few years, Michelle Clifton-Soderstrom, Academic Dean and Professor of Theology and Ethics at North Park Theological Seminary, led the efforts to establish the School of Restorative Arts (SRA), a unique educational program inside Stateville Correctional Center, near Chicago, Illinois. I have observed an amazingly talented and creative group of women join Clifton-Soderstrom in this work. This work was inspirational for me. Having an arts background myself, I wondered how I might partner with the mission of the SRA. Out of that wondering and partnership with the SRA, "[re]story" was born, a redemptive storytelling cohort using theater and improvisation as a way to tell the stories of our incarcerated brothers and sisters, and to increase awareness to mass incarceration. More than just awareness, [re]story's goal is that hearts might be changed in support of reforms in the justice system, through the sharing of embodied stories. The Covenant Women of our past and present have taught me and inspired me. As I've attempted to demonstrate in this article, our CW predecessors have shown us the importance and effectiveness of embodying our mission through the arts. In the end, my hope is that we would continue to walk in their footsteps.

Book Reviews

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Jonathan M. Wilson, *God on Three Sides: German Pietists at War in Eighteenth-Century America* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2019), 312 pages, $38.

In *God on Three Sides: German Pietists at War in Eighteenth-Century America*, Jonathan M. Wilson describes the diverse experiences of Pietists during the colonial and revolutionary eras from his perspective as both a historian and a pastor. This study, he believes, is an opportunity to test the "axiom" that one's religious identity predicts one's political loyalties. The axiom, he concludes, however often it may be used, is patently false.

After contextualizing the narrative in chapter 1, Wilson offers snapshots of various people, historical situations, and religious communities, all of which illuminate the experiences of Pietists as they navigated a turbulent world. Chapter 2 spotlights the meandering career of Conrad Weiser, the colonial interpreter and political mediator who experimented with Pietist spirituality. Weiser's life serves as a window into the complex

world of frontier politics and the messy landscape inhabited by many of Pennsylvania's Pietist groups. Chapters 3 and 6 respectively examine members of the Mühlenberg family: Lutheran patriarch Heinrich Melchior Mühlenberg, and his son, Peter. The senior Mühlenberg's ministerial career allows Wilson to flesh out the theological tensions that many Christians, Pietist or otherwise, no doubt felt during the period. What was the role of government? Did loyalty to Christ lead to one side of the revolution or the other? How was a minister to serve during such a divisive time? The career of the younger Mühlenberg, also an ordained minister, likewise illustrates these shifting tensions—dramatically embodied in his decision to shed his ministerial garb for an officer's uniform in the patriot army. Fittingly, the Moravians also figure prominently. Two chapters are devoted to these Pietists and their settlement at Bethlehem. Like the Mühlenbergs' careers, the experiences of Moravians help accentuate the dilemma that German Pietists felt. Moravians were heavily invested in mission work on the North American frontier, which put them in a politically difficult situation. Few felt this more than missionary and linguist David Zeisberger, whom Wilson spotlights in chapter 7. Moravian missionaries, determined as they were to love both friends and enemies, worked hard to remain neutral amidst the political unrest and despite the acts of violence perpetrated against them. Moravians were unique in the fact that they had strict pacifists among their ranks, such as Bishop Johann Ettwein, as well as realists like Bishop August Spangenberg, who allowed for limited militarization in the service of self-defense. This is explored in chapter 4.

While much of what is described above is known well, Wilson includes two lesser-known figures in his study: Friedrich Valentin Melsheimer, described in chapter 5, and Christoph Friedrich Triebner, the focus of chapter 8. The life of Melsheimer, who began his career in North America as a chaplain to German auxiliary forces under British command and finished it as a Lutheran minister in the new American nation, is a fascinating account that illustrates the way Christian piety transcends temporal political alignment. Equally fascinating is the career of Triebner, who was sent to the Ebenezer settlement in Georgia from the Pietist center at Halle, endured controversy and false accusations, served as a Lutheran minister under British occupational forces, and finished his career serving German speakers in London. All the strands in this tapestry, Wilson believes, not only illustrate the diverse political convictions among Pietists but also demonstrate that God was present and active among Christians on each

of the three political "sides"—patriot, loyalist, and neutral.

If our evaluation of this book were limited only to its contributions to the field of historical understanding, then we may say that it lacks a significant measure of originality. That the American Revolution fractured the religious landscape of colonial America, tested religious communities, and even divided devout families is familiar—even well-worn—territory. The messy realities of war and violence have been probed by any number of denominational histories and journals. Though Wilson has made use of many of these, as his citations attest, this study largely fails to move the conversation into new areas of interpretation. Some of this might have been achieved by more thoroughly plumbing extant manuscript collections, such as those still housed at the Moravian Archives in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The author seems to have been most concerned about original research in the sections devoted to Melsheimer and Triebner, but less so throughout the rest of the book, relying heavily on dated treatments such as those by Wallace (*Weiser and the Mühlenbergs*) or Hamilton (*Moravians*), to give two examples. This illustrates what seems to be Wilson's reliance on published sources instead of original archival work.

If, however, we consider other factors, the strengths of this study are readily apparent. Wilson successfully brings a cautionary tale for his contemporary readers, which allows us to see the author's pastoral sensibilities. While it is easy to make assumptions about people based purely on religious categories or denominational affiliation, clusters of like-minded believers can exhibit considerable political diversity. This pastoral message is especially relevant for our age, Wilson contends, as categories have become laden with political baggage—just as the word "evangelical" has become almost synonymous with support for Trumpian partisanship in the popular imagination. "This has implications," he says, "for those who find it convenient to tar all evangelicals with broad strokes, and it has implications for those evangelicals … who find those broad strokes convenient for their own purposes" (p. 5). Labels, after all, gloss over nuance and obscure differences in our time, just as they did for the eighteenth-century "proto-evangelicals" in this study. Wilson effectively draws out this lesson in the conclusion:

> These ethnic German Pietists and their indigenous proselytes together manifest the paradox that through the spiritual power of "heart religion," God was personally present and active on all sides of America's partisan struggles in the eighteenth century. The stories of these ethnic German Pietists

> collectively are evidence that shared faith does not predict shared agreement on social and political issues…the axiom [that one's religion predicts one's politics] should have no place in popular discourse (p. 283).

Though historians may be left wanting more original analysis within the pages of *God on Three Sides*, lay readers will find a fascinating tapestry of narratives that illuminate individuals and communities as they navigated the spiritual and political landscape they inhabited. Readers will also find challenging words that can be carried into our current era of ongoing culture wars.

JARED S. BURKHOLDER

Dennis R. Edwards, *Might from the Margins: The Gospel's Power to Turn the Tables on Injustice* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald, 2020), 198 pages, $17.

If you are a Christian and a person of color, this book was written with you in mind. A New Testament scholar and a pastor, Dennis Edwards has gifted us with a book that centers people of color. He identifies the dual needs of resisting the lies that people of color encounter by virtue of living in a racialized society, while also providing a constructive and hopeful message from which to build. To those at the margins of society, Edwards proclaims that they do not need the permission or empower-ment of dominant-culture Christians to live out their faith because they already possess the power of the gospel of God.

Edwards weaves Scripture and experience throughout his book, begin-ning with a call to a biblical understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He urges his readers to remember that the gospel of Jesus is not good news if it is not good news for *everyone*. The gospel of Jesus—his life, death, burial, and resurrection—has something to say to marginalized peoples everywhere and is the power of God to bring change in the world. Rather than being "reduced to a set of ideas," the gospel is the story of the Jewish Jesus that includes his life, teaching, and ministry. A community faithful to Scripture not only proclaims the good news of liberation from sin through the death and resurrection of Jesus, but it also embodies this truth.

Marginalized people are uniquely situated to embody the gospel and to teach us how to follow Christ. Christians who are presumed to be

powerless in society—people of color, women, and people who are differently abled, to name only a few examples—are in fact those whom God has empowered to act as agents of transformation for the Church: "We don't just change the complexion of Christianity; we change its operation" (20).

Diaspora Christians have a history of demonstrating resilience and of effectively resisting injustice through nonviolent means. God works through the so-called prophets from "the bottom" of society who are often ignored but are faithful messengers against powerful and oppressive structures. The lives of trailblazers such as Frederick Douglass, Martin Luther King Jr., and Ida B. Wells attest to the reality that prophetic figures are anything but warmly embraced by those in positions of power and are easily dismissed because they are perceived as "too angry."

While warning that not all anger is redemptive, Edwards validates anger as an appropriate response in the face of injustice. Expounding on Ephesians 4, he notes that the right and wise response to anger is to use its power to address its cause and to prevent further damage. There is also power in solidarity when Christians at the margins unite to embody the gospel—imitating Christ who also was marginalized—as they collectively live and work together. Because worship is a reorientation of our values, it is a way of life, a witness to the work of God in the world, and is reflected when followers of Jesus gather. Black spirituals show the power of worship to protest and subvert the status quo. Through spirituals, enslaved Christians found a way to express their grief and hopes, and to affirm what W.E.B. Du Bois called a "faith in the ultimate justice of things" (127). In these and other ways, people of faith are empowered with God's spiritual resources for faithful and hope-filled lives characterized by a love that is both patient and just.

Edwards's book is a timely and needed resource for Christians of color who have in many ways felt ignored or overlooked by the North American Church. It comes at a time when our country is marked by deep divisions due to racial tensions and hate crimes and Christianity is in some spheres indistinguishable from Christian nationalism.

We need and benefit from Edwards's direct and plainspoken truth-telling today, yet the book may come with challenges for some, perhaps most, white readers. It is unapologetic about the right that Christians at the margins of society have to contribute to Christianity and shape it for the future without having to ask for permission from majority-culture Christians. This can be a disequilibrating truth for some who will have

to rethink their relationship with minoritized people—shifting from "empowering others" to listening to and taking their cues from them (48).

This book centers, and is written to, Christians of color, but it is also *for* all pastors, seminary students, and church lay leaders alike. It is an excellent example of a resource that is sensitive to the needs and perspectives of Christians of color in the United States. Majority-culture readers who serve or minister to marginalized communities can find in its pages a gospel message that is both relevant and hopeful to those who contend daily with realities that devalue or disempower them.

I recommend *Might from the Margins* wholeheartedly and without reservation, taking special note from Edwards that "[w]e become better humans when we heed the prophets that God graciously sends our way. Even though their words might sting those with prestige and power, they can also be a balm for the suffering" (83). May it be so.

ARMIDA BELMONTE STEPHENS

Beth Seversen, *Not Done Yet: Reaching and Keeping Unchurched Emerging Adults* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 256 pages, $18

We are called to grow God's family, to build God's kingdom. As American society secularizes, we face an increasing challenge in reaching the unchurched. Studies show that if unchurched people are going to convert to a committed life following Jesus, it will likely happen during their young adult years. Yet, churches have been increasingly struggling to reach this large, essential population.

Enter *Not Done Yet*, by Beth Seversen. If I could make it so, I would require every church in the nation to read this book and work to implement its wisdom.

Most churches are anemic in reaching unchurched young adults (those aged 18-29), though some buck the trend. Seversen calls these congregations "bright spot churches" and explores what they are doing that succeeds in attracting and retaining this population.

Young adults of today are different than past generations. They take much longer to adopt an overall identity viewing it as something akin to shopping for the right fitting clothes. They may try on many different styles to find the best fit. They often view the Church as judgmental and out of touch, and they are often more drawn to belonging and doing good than to believing.

Bright spot churches adapt to this reality by doing the following: 1) They actively *initiate* relationships with the unchurched (most churches fall short at this step, as their members overwhelmingly spend their relationship time with fellow believers). 2) They intentionally *invite* their friends to attend church, often by talking about the great things happening there or by emphasizing that they need not have a particular set of beliefs to attend. 3) They prepare to *include* young adults so that when unchurched people do visit, bright spot churches have prepared a way for faith to take root by welcoming the guests warmly and without judgment, demonstrating a family-like atmosphere. 4) They *involve* the young adults in the life of the body through serving the larger community. 5) They *invest* in the young people through mentoring, counseling, coaching, and leadership development.

Seversen stresses that bright spot churches do something else vitally important: they take these steps *immediately*, not waiting weeks or months. Such churches understand that the path to belief in, and commitment to, Christ is, for this population, first through belonging to something bigger than themselves and then engaging in actions to serve the larger community (e.g., racial and economic justice, reducing hunger). Bright spot churches know these steps must be done immediately. Through belonging and behavior, belief and commitment will eventually come over time. This is "within-church" evangelism, the most effective form for our contemporary times.

Wonderfully researched, this book is written with churches in mind—churches that want to reach unchurched young adults. Each chapter concludes with a short, helpful summary, a section called "Starting the Conversation," which allows your church body to explore where it is on the topic, and "Action Steps" that offer clear, practical means to move forward.

I cannot help but reflect on a possible paradox. Young adults—especially those who are unchurched—are in many ways relativistic (Seversen shares a story of teaching Bible class at North Park, discussing the biblical conception of sin, and a student commenting, "Isn't sin just a social construction?"), yet they are at the same time fundamentalist on some issues (there is no right or wrong in sexual mores, for example, and those who hold a different view are bigots).

This raises an interesting and important tension point in reaching unchurched young adults, and a tension point flowing through many congregations: does belief matter at all? As the larger culture dictates to

churches what is acceptable, must churches fully adapt and adopt? What if unchurched young people actively belong and participate, but never actually believe and commit to Christ and Christ-like lives? Are there any limits to their involvement in the church?

These are issues churches must wrestle with, even as we work to reach the unchurched in an ever-changing world. To do that, we need *Not Done Yet*.

MICHAEL O. EMERSON

Sandra L. Richter, *Stewards of Eden: What Scripture Says About the Environment and Why It Matters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 168 pages, $22.

I remember when I realized the magnitude of our world's environmental crisis. It dovetailed with one of the most celebratory times of life, marriage. In the midst of a celebration was the packaging. Piles and piles of plastic and nonrecyclable Styrofoam. I began to receive gifts with a sadness weighing down my newlywed joy. "What are we doing to God's world?" I wondered, as we set up a kitchen full of new appliances while the boxes stacked up in the hall.

This conviction I experienced twenty years ago has continued to guide my thoughts and choices about the environment today. "Is this good for the earth?" is a question I frequently ask, and one I've taught my children to ask. My care for the earth comes not out of a panentheistic theology, but from a Christian theology that affirms: "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it" (Ps 24:1, NIV).

It's with this conviction that I was delighted to pick up Sandra L. Richter's short biblical theology on creation care, *Stewards of Eden*, because she demonstrates why caring for God's creation is an ongoing biblical mandate.

Richter is clear about her reasons for writing this volume. First, she invites Christians to disassociate environmental concern from political partisanship. Second, she encourages Christians to include creation care with our concern for justice, especially for the poor and marginalized. Finally, Richter critiques the commonly held Christian belief that care for souls, especially a conversion-centric soul care, should be the only priority for the church, as the rest is "bound only for destruction" (3). Richter disagrees with this presumption, noting: "The church, particularly the evangelical wing of the church, has inadvertently dismissed the

issue of environmental stewardship as peripheral (or even alien) to the theological commitments of the Bible" (3).

Richter uses the rest of the book to unpack this statement. As one might expect, she begins with the creation narratives (Gen 1-2; Ps 8). But she rapidly turns to lesser-emphasized texts, spending chapter 2 examining the nation of Israel's call to stewardship. She emphasizes the biblical teaching that Israel is not the "owner" of Canaan, but simply the tenants. "In the language of ancient international diplomacy, the land of Canaan was ... a 'land grant' given by a suzerain to his vassal. And, of course, land grants could be recalled" (16).

Richter also explores the call to care for domestic and wild animals and trees. She emphasizes the commandment for a Sabbath rest for domestic animals (Deut 5:14-15), and the celebration of wild animals throughout Scripture (Ps 104; Job 28). She also highlights Deut 20:19, which instructs the warring Israelites not to destroy fruit trees in order to build siege works. This law allows people to benefit long-term from fruit planted generations before them. Creation care is long-term generational work.

Each chapter concludes with contemporary case studies, demonstrating crises that have been exacerbated, at least in part, by humanity disobeying creation care guidance in Scripture. These include: systemic land overuse, the economic unviability of small family farms, loss of habitat for endangered indigenous species, mountaintop removal coal mining, and long-term effects of war on local environments.

Richter ends the book by addressing her primary concern of prioritizing saving souls over saving the planet. She addresses this by discussing New Testament passages (including 2 Pet 3:10-13 and 1 Thess 5:2-3) and then rehearsing God's mission: "The goal has always been God's people living in God's place with full access to his presence" (98). This is why we care for souls through invitation to find and follow Jesus Christ. And this is also why we are called to actively care for creation. These are tandem calls.

As Christians who care about God's creation, we can be ambassadors of hope to secular environmentalists. I'm reminded of environmental activist David Buckel, who died by suicide in order to call attention to pollution and climate change. What if Christians in this life demonstrated care for God's world while providing eternal hope in the promises and purposes of God?

As Covenanters, we can receive this guidance from Richter with joy. We affirm the whole mission of the church. We believe that the mission of

creation care is linked to the Great Commandment, to mercy and justice for our fellow human beings, and to mercy and justice for the created order we are called to steward. This is a great book for a local church book club or an adult discipleship/formation class. It has discussion questions at the end of each chapter and is short and accessible.

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