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# Is the Spirit Still the Dividing Line Between the Christian East and West? Revisiting an Ancient Problem of *Filioque* with a Hope for an Ecumenical Rapprochement

VELI-MATTI KÄRKKÄINEN\*

*Fuller Theological Seminary*

**Abstract.** This essay seeks to offer new perspectives on an ancient problem, namely how Christian West (Roman Catholics and Protestants) and East (Orthodox Churches) may confess the common trinitarian faith. In order to address that issue, the essay will first take a closer look at key postpatristic developments in the West, focusing particularly on the theology of St. Augustine. His theological work in general and Trinitarian reflection in particular has played critical role in the Latin-speaking church. Second, based on that discussion, the essay will focus on the question of the derivation of the Spirit.

**Key words:** Trinity, filioque, ecumenism, St. Augustine, Holy Spirit

## **Do East and West Confess the Same Trinitarian Faith?**

According to conventional theological wisdom, “in general, Greek theology—of the Christian East—emphasizes the divine hypostases (persons), whereas Latin theology—of the Christian West—emphasizes the divine nature.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, it is

\* VELI-MATTI KÄRKKÄINEN is Professor of Systematic Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, United States of America.

<sup>1</sup> Catherine Mowry LaCugna, “The Trinitarian Mystery of God,” *Systematic Theology. Roman Catholic Perspectives*, 170, ed. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and

claimed that the East begins with the threeness of the Trinity, the West with the oneness or unity.<sup>2</sup> While not without grounds, this kind of description is also a caricature.<sup>3</sup> A related issue, of course, has to do with the later *filioque*-clause and its ecumenically dividing results.

In order to address the question put forth in the title of the essay, I will first take a closer look at key postpatristic developments in the West. The reason for this choice is the common understanding that from St. Augustine, theological work in general and Trinitarian reflection in particular has its center in the Latin-speaking church. Furthermore, early Eastern contributions have been registered above quite extensively. Second, based on that discussion, I seek to focus on the question of the derivation of the Spirit. Finally, I attempt to offer some helpful ecumenical viewpoints toward a reconciliation and mutual acknowledgment.

So, what is the legacy of Augustine's Trinitarian thinking?<sup>4</sup> And how does it relate to the question in the subheading: Do East and West confess the same Trinitarian faith? At the mo-

John P. Galvin, vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991). LaCugna calls the Eastern view emanationist in terms of descending order from Father to Son to Spirit and finally to the world, whereas the Western can be depicted as a circle enclosing all Trinitarian members in which the whole Trinity relates to the world. *Ibid.*, 170-71.

<sup>2</sup> The classic work contrasting Eastern and Western views is Théodore de Régnon, *Études de théologie positive sur la sainte Trinité*, 3 vols. (Paris: Retaux, 1892-1898); see also Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Smith, 3 vols. (New York: Seabury, 1982), 3: xv-xxi.

<sup>3</sup> Gerald O'Collins, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1999), 140.

<sup>4</sup> "It is impossible to do contemporary Trinitarian theology and not have a judgment on Augustine." Michel René Barnes, "Rereading Augustine's Theology of the Trinity," *The Trinity. An Interdisciplinary Symposium on Trinity*, 145, eds. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, S. J., and Gerald O'Collins, S. J. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

ment, it is quite challenging to discern scholarly consensus in the interpretation of Augustine's view of the Trinity.<sup>5</sup> The older consensus is that because of his neo-Platonic leanings, Augustine put stress on the unity of the divine essence and had a hard time in accounting for distinctions. That would of course mean that his approach would be diametrically opposed to the Eastern view.<sup>6</sup> One of the most vocal contemporary critics of Augustine along this line, Colin Gunton, has argued Augustine did not correctly understand the tradition, certainly not the teaching of the Cappadocians, and ended up viewing the divine substance "behind" relations. For the Cappadocians, so this critic says, on the contrary, relations are "ontological" whereas for the Bishop of Hippo only "logical."<sup>7</sup> Thomas Marsh joins in and accuses Augustine of replacing the earlier Latin emphasis on the divine monarchy of the Father with "divine substance or nature which *then* is verified in Father, Son and Holy Spirit."<sup>8</sup> All of this has even caused some to speak of the "Theological Crisis of the West!"<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Rightly, Barnes laments that too much of Augustine's interpretation goes without actually reading the Augustine! Barnes proposes to offer a new reading of the Bishop of Hippo based on reading everything he wrote on the topic of the Trinity; however, while fresh, Barnes' reading is also somewhat idiosyncratic since he focuses so much on the earlier writings. *Ibid.*, 145-46.

<sup>6</sup> So e.g., George L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London, Toronto: W. Heinemann, 1936), 237; and Bertrand de Margerie, *The Christian Trinity in History*, trans. Edmund J. Fordman (Petersham, MA: St. Bede's Publications, 1982), 110-21.

<sup>7</sup> Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 38-43 especially.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Marsh, *The Triune God. A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Study* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1994), 132.

<sup>9</sup> Colin Gunton, "Augustine, the Trinity, and the Theological Crisis of the West," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 43 (1990): 33-58.

Not all are convinced that this is a fair reading of Augustine.<sup>10</sup> Two foundational problems are found in the older interpretation of Augustine, the correction of which may change our picture of the view of the Trinity held by this most influential early Western theologian. First, it is doubtful whether the Cappadocians had as developed a social doctrine of the Trinity as is assumed, and second, whether Augustine really started with the unity of the divine essence rather than with the distinctiveness of persons. Rather, it has been suggested, Augustine could have built on the Cappadocians' view: "Augustine begins where the Cappadocians leave off: accepting their answer to the question 'why not three gods?' he proceeds to ask 'three *what?*'"<sup>11</sup> The best way to look at this debate is to discern key ideas in Augustine's Trinitarian teaching.<sup>12</sup>

Augustine of course affirms the tradition concerning consubstantiality as well as distinctions of the Son and Spirit.<sup>13</sup> Fur-

<sup>10</sup> The most vocal critic of the alleged neo-Platonic influence on Augustine is Barnes, "Rereading Augustine's Theology of the Trinity." A careful, cautious interpretation, quite critical of the old consensus, is offered by Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation. The Faith of the Early Church*, trans. Matthias Westerhoff, ed. Andrew Louth (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993), 167-85.

<sup>11</sup> Philip Cary, "Historical Perspectives on Trinitarian Doctrine," *Religious and Theological Studies Fellowship Bulletin* (November-December 1995): 9. A helpful summary of views pro and con can be found in Roger E. Olson and Christopher A. Hall, *The Trinity. Guides to Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 44-45.

<sup>12</sup> Main sources for Augustine's Trinitarian teaching besides the 15-volume "On the Trinity," written between 400 and 420 are "The City of God," "Confessions," "Tractates on the Gospel of John," "Letter 169 to Bishop Evodius," "Letter 11 to Nebridius," "On the Spirit and the Letter," "On the Soul and Its Origins," and "Sermons on Selected Lessons of the New Testament." Olson and Hall contains a comprehensive listing of Augustine's writings on the Trinity ("The Trinity," 46 n. 97).

<sup>13</sup> E.g., Augustine, "Letters 169," *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979), 540: "The



thermore, somewhat similarly to Eastern theologians, Augustine depicts the Father as the *principium*, primary or beginning of the deity.<sup>14</sup>

Well-known are the reflections of Augustine on the Spirit in the Trinity. He conceives the Spirit as communion (of the Father and the Son),<sup>15</sup> their shared love,<sup>16</sup> and a gift.<sup>17</sup> In book 8 of *De Trinitate*, he develops his thought on the Trinity with the help of the idea of interpersonal love in terms of filiation and paternity. The Father is Lover, the Son the Beloved, and the Spirit the mutual Love that connects the two. Here of course the obvious question arises whether this depersonalizes the Spirit: shared love can hardly be a "person."<sup>18</sup>

For Augustine, incarnation is a major Trinitarian event, and it shapes his view of the Trinity more fully than is often acknowledged by his interpreters.<sup>19</sup> He takes pains in convincing

Son is not the Father, the Father is not the Son, and neither the Father nor the Son is the Holy Spirit... [T]hese are equal and co-eternal, and absolutely of one nature... an inseparable trinity." For the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, see e.g., Augustine, "On the Trinity" 1.6.9: 21-22; and for the Spirit with the Father and Son, see e.g., *ibid.*, 1.6.13: 23-24; 7.3.6: 108-9.

<sup>14</sup> Augustine, "On the Trinity" 4.20.28-29: 84-85. See further, Basil Studer, *The Grace of Christ and the Grace of God in Augustine of Hippo. Christocentrism or Theocentrism?* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 104-5.

<sup>15</sup> Augustine, "On the Trinity" 5.11.12: 93; 15.27.50: 226-27. See further, Joseph Ratzinger, "The Holy Spirit as *Communio*. Concerning the Relationship of Pneumatology and Spirituality in Augustine," *Communio* 25 (1998): 325-39.

<sup>16</sup> Augustine, "On the Trinity" 15.17.27: 215; Augustine, "Homilies, Tractates on the Gospel of St. John" 105.7.3, *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1978), 396.

<sup>17</sup> Augustine, "On the Trinity" 5.12.13: 93-94; 5.15.16: 95.

<sup>18</sup> Bernd Jochen Hilberath, "Pneumatologie," *Handbuch der Dogmatik*, 446-47, ed. Theodor Schneider, et al., vol. 1 (Dusseldorf: Patmos, 1992).

<sup>19</sup> See further, Barnes, "Rereading," 154-68; Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation*, 168-85 especially.

his readers that incarnation is a unique event. For example, in expositing the gospel story about Jesus' baptism, Augustine argues that while the manifestation of the Spirit in the form of a dove and the Father's voice from above were temporary and symbolic, the incarnation is a permanent assumption of humanity in a real union of two natures.<sup>20</sup>

Pannenberg, who otherwise is somewhat critical of the Augustinian legacy,<sup>21</sup> has shown convincingly that "Augustine took over the relational definition of the Trinitarian distinctions which the Cappadocians, following Athanasius, had developed. He made the point that the distinctions of the persons are conditioned by their mutual relations."<sup>22</sup> For Augustine the relations are eternal.<sup>23</sup> The Eastern idea of *perichoresis*, mutual interpenetration, is no stranger to his views.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, Au-

<sup>20</sup> Augustine, "Letters" 169.2.5-9, *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979), 540-41.

<sup>21</sup> Pannenberg is critical of the entire Western tradition up until Barth which employs a mental or psychological analogy of the Trinity, which in Pannenberg's view leads to the primacy of a divine single mind rather than the idea of divine unity in terms of relationality. Pannenberg calls this approach a "pre-trinitarian, theistic idea of God." Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Father, Son, Spirit. Problems of a Trinitarian Doctrine of God," *Dialog* 26.4 (August 1987): 251.

<sup>22</sup> Pannenberg here refers to Augustine, "On the Trinity" 8.1; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 284. In his "Sermon on Matthew 3:13," Augustine speaks of a distinction of persons, and an inseparableness of operation. Augustine, "Sermon on New Testament Lessons. Matthew 3:13," 2.1-23, especially 2.15, *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979), 259-66 (262). See also Augustine, "On the Trinity" 5.11.12: 93 for an important statement about relationality in Trinity.

<sup>23</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1: 284.

<sup>24</sup> Augustine in "On the Trinity" says it strongly: "in that highest Trinity one is as much as the three together, nor are two anything more than one. And They are infinite in themselves. So both each are in each, and all in each, and

gustine was also building on the Cappadocians' idea mentioned above of the unity of the three persons in their outward works, the consequence of which is that from the creaturely works we may know the divine unity.<sup>25</sup>

It is often claimed that the psychological analogies are key to the Trinitarian teaching in Augustine. It is true that the latter part of his *On the Trinity*<sup>26</sup> employs images such as *mens/notitia/amor*—mind, mind's knowledge of itself, and the mind's love for itself—an illustration of Father as Being, Son as Consciousness, and Spirit as Love.<sup>27</sup> His logic is compelling: if the human mind knows love in itself, it knows God since God is love. These illustrations are of course biblically sustainable based on the idea of humanity as *imago Dei* (Genesis 1:26-27). However, it is important to note that Augustine did not try to derive the Trinitarian distinctions from the divine unity. The psychological analogies that he suggested and developed in his work on the Trinity were simply meant to offer a very general way of

each in all, and all in all, and all are one." Augustine, "On the Trinity" 6.10.12: 103.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.4.7: 20; 4.21.30: 85; see further, Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1: 283-84.

<sup>26</sup> In addition to "On the Trinity" 8-15: 166-228, analogies are also discussed in "Homilies. Tractates on the Gospel of St. John" 23: 150-57, as well as in "Letters" 11: 228-30 and 169: 539-43, among others.

<sup>27</sup> Augustine, "On the Trinity" 8.10.14: 124; 9.2.2: 126-27. The idea of Mind, of course, has its legacy in early Christian theology beginning from the Apologists, who taught that as the Word the Son is the Father's thought/idea. Augustine also developed further the idea of the "vestiges of the Trinity" with the help of the tripartite constitution of the human soul, *memorial/intelligentia/voluntas*: memory, intelligence, and willing. Augustine, "On the Trinity," 9.8: 131; 10.10.14-16: 141-42; 11.10-11.17-18: 153-54.

linking the unity and trinity and thus creating some plausibility for trinitarian statements.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, the bishop of Hippo was aware of the limitation of the images.<sup>29</sup> The potential weakness of this analogy of self-presence, self-knowledge, and self-love—widely used in subsequent tradition—is that it leans toward a “monopersonal, modalistic view of God.”<sup>30</sup> This is interesting in that in principle Augustine’s analogies grow out of an interpersonal, thus communal and relational context, especially when it comes to love. Richard of St. Victor in the Medieval era picks up the relational aspect of Augustine’s emphasis on love and develops it into a communion theology.

He considers the origin of the Spirit in a nuanced way. The Spirit proceeds “originally” from the Father and also in common from both the Father and Son, as something given by the Father.<sup>31</sup> In other words, Augustine is careful in safeguarding the Father as the primary source of the Spirit.<sup>32</sup> And even when the Son is included in the act of procession of the Spirit, it is not from two sources but rather from a single source in order to protect divine unity.<sup>33</sup> I think it is important to notice here that again Augustine’s legacy is somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, there is no denying that Augustine’s idea of the Spirit as the shared love between Father and Son and his teaching about the double-procession of the Spirit helped the Christian West to ratify the *filioque* clause. On the other hand, had the West been

<sup>28</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1: 284; see also 287: “Augustine’s psychological analogies should not be used to derive the trinity from the unity but to simply illustrate the Trinity in whom one already believes.”

<sup>29</sup> Augustine, “On the Trinity” 15.23.43: 222.

<sup>30</sup> O’Collins, *The Tripersonal God*, 137.

<sup>31</sup> Augustine, “On the Trinity” 15.26.47: 225.

<sup>32</sup> See *Ibid.*, 4.20.29: 84–85.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.14: 94–96.

more sensitive to the shared tradition and to the sensibilities of the East, Augustine's idea of the procession of the Spirit from the Father through the Son and thus in a secondary way, possibly could have helped avoid the conflict between East and West. Eastern theologians are not necessarily against the idea of the Spirit proceeding from the Father (who is the source after all) through the Son. And for Augustine, unlike so much of later Western tradition, the Spirit's derivation also from the Son did not necessarily mean inferiority in status any more than the Son's generation from the Father does (this was of course the affirmation against the Arians).<sup>34</sup>

Now, in light of key ideas of Augustinian teaching, we are in a place to try to address at least tentatively the question of the subheading, namely, do East and West confess the same Trinitarian faith? I think it very important to make the distinction between Augustine's own ideas and his legacy as carried on by later (Western) tradition.<sup>35</sup> Looking at Augustine's own writings, "[i]t hardly appears that Augustine had little interest in the distinctions of the persons, or that he was averse to the full import of the Incarnation."<sup>36</sup> Nor is it true that Augustine developed his Trinitarian theology abstractly based on analogies; he did not. He is thoroughly biblical as a quick look, for example, in the first half of the *De Trinitate* clearly shows, let alone his biblical expositions. Nor is it right to say that—in contrast to the Cappadocians and Athanasius—Augustine neglected spiri-

<sup>34</sup> See further, O'Collins, *The Tripersonal God*, 139.

<sup>35</sup> For a balanced judgment, see Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity in Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2004), 198-200.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 195. So also Gerald O'Collins, *The Tripersonal God. Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1999), 135.

tuality and salvation.<sup>37</sup> His focus on incarnation alone would counter-argue this charge.

In light of these considerations, a more nuanced and sophisticated way of looking at the differences between the Christian East and West is in order.<sup>38</sup> I think it is best done by trying to discern the key characteristics and unique features in each without trying to artificially reconcile those nor make them more dramatic than they are.<sup>39</sup> Almost everyone agrees that for Eastern theologians the significance of the *hypostatic* distinctions among Father, Son, and Spirit has often been a key concern. The East has wanted to speak of the “concrete particularity of Father, Son, and Spirit.”<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, as noted several times, they have emphasized the Father as the source of the deity. Son and Spirit proceed from the Father from eternity. In the West, there has often been more emphasis on the divine being/substance/essence from which the personal distinctions derive. Consequently, there has been emphasis on the joint working of the three in the world.<sup>41</sup> Whatever the difference between the Christian East and West, each of them has faced its own

<sup>37</sup> This is one of the theses of Catherine Mowry LaCugna’s *God for Us. The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991), 81-104.

<sup>38</sup> Overstatements abound and those need to be corrected: “We must acknowledge that the doctrine of the trinity in the East is an integral part of its total theological understanding. The same cannot be said for the Western formulation stemming chiefly from Augustine. Here, the doctrine is an unneeded appendage to theology.” John B. Cobb, Jr., “The Relativization of the Trinity,” *Trinity in Process. A Relational Theology of God*, ed. Joseph A. Bracken and Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki (New York: Continuum, 1997), 5.

<sup>39</sup> Letham’s *The Holy Trinity* includes a quite helpful chart of the key features of both East and West even when it tends to be quite categorical (250-51).

<sup>40</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God. The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 8. See also Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 39.

<sup>41</sup> This is the so-called “Augustinian rule”: the works of the Trinity *ad extra* are indivisible.

challenges: for the East, it was the danger of tritheism because of the emphasis on three different *hypostaseis* and subordinationism because of the idea of the Father as the source of divinity. Westerners have tended to be more modalistic. Moreover, Eastern theological traditions in general and Trinitarian ones in particular have been more pneumatologically oriented, whereas in the West Christology has often played the key role. This, again, brings us to the question of the *filioque* to be discussed in what follows.

Having said all this, one also has to acknowledge that there are several aspects of the Augustinian tradition that were picked up by later Western tradition that led to the eclipse of the Trinitarian doctrine so evident in the judgment of contemporary theologians. First, with all his stress on relationality, there is no denying that Augustine also emphasizes the divine unity and substance.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, there is some truth in the insistence that whereas for the Christian East distinctions of persons (*hypostaseis*) are the key to Trinity; for Augustine substance is, though not to the neglect of relations. Second, Augustine's idea of the Spirit as shared love between Father and Son is problematic ecumenically and biblically. In the Bible, God is love rather than Spirit. Furthermore, Augustine's idea feeds the idea of *filioque*. And last but not least, this analogy can hardly argue for any distinct personality of the Spirit. Third, while Augustine seemed to handle analogies of the Trinity with care and was aware of their limitations, many of his followers elevated them to a role that easily leads away from the concrete biblical

<sup>42</sup> LaCugna's comment is an overstatement, yet contains a kernel of truth: "[Augustine's] focus on the individual apart from its personal and social relations flows directly from the ontology that begins from substance rather than person." LaCugna, *God for Us*, 102. LaCugna, however, qualifies this by saying that was not Augustine's intention, yet it was picked up by his followers.

salvation history into abstract speculations. While valid in itself—based on the idea that humanity is created in the image of the Triune God—it can end up being a Trinitarian theology “from below.” There are not only similarities but also differences between the Trinity and humanity.<sup>43</sup>

### **Is the Origin of the Spirit Still a Theological Impasse?**

As is well known, the Bible does not clarify the interrelations of Father, Son, and Spirit. A classic example, with reverberations still felt, is the question of the procession of the Spirit. On the one hand, Jesus says that he himself will send the Spirit (John 16:7) or that he will send the Spirit (called *Parakletos* here) who proceeds from the Father (15:26). On the other hand, Jesus prays to the Father for him to send the Spirit (14:16), and the Father will send the Spirit in Jesus’ name (14:26).<sup>44</sup> Because of the lack of clarity in the biblical record as well as the rise to prominence of the Augustinian idea of the Spirit as shared love (another idea which of course has its basis in the biblical idea of the Spirit as *koinonia*), the Christian West added the Spirit’s dual procession, filioque (from Latin: “and from the Son”) to the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed that originally said that the Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father.” While some of the historical details are somewhat debated,<sup>45</sup> it is clear that in the first

<sup>43</sup> See further, Miroslav Volf, “‘The Trinity Is Our Social Program’ The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement,” *Modern Theology* 14.3 (July 1998): 403–23.

<sup>44</sup> In terms of biblical scholarship, speculation into the “immanent” and “economic” sendings is quite problematic. See e.g., Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 203. Those distinctions have to do with postbiblical historical and systematic constructions.

<sup>45</sup> The standard view is that this addition was first accepted by the Council of Toledo in 589 and ratified by the 809 Aachen Synod. It was incorporated in later creeds such as that of the Fourth Lateran in 1215 and Council of Lyons in 1274. See, e.g., Justo L. Gonzales, *The Story of Christianity*, vol. 1, *The Early*



major breach of the Christian church in 1054 the *filioque* clause played a major role with political, ecclesiastical, and cultural issues. The Christian East objected vigorously to this addition claiming that it was a one-sided addition without ecumenical consultation,<sup>46</sup> that it compromises the monarchy of the Father as the source of divinity,<sup>47</sup> and that it subordinates the Spirit to Jesus with theological corollaries in ecclesiology, the doctrine of salvation, and so on.<sup>48</sup> While the details of the origin of the *fili-*

*Church to the Dawn of the Reformation* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 264-65; Kenneth Scott Latourett, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1953), 304, 360. A standard full-scale study on the theology and history of *Filioque* is Bernd Oberdorfer, *Filioque. Geschichte und Theologie eines Ökumenischen Problems* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001).

<sup>46</sup> "Can a clause deriving from one theological tradition simply be inserted in a creed deriving from another theological tradition without council?" Theodore G. Stylianopoulos and S. Mark Heim, eds., *Spirit of Truth. Ecumenical Perspectives on the Holy Spirit* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1986), 32.

<sup>47</sup> Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 210-14, defends the Father's monarchy as the reason for opposing *Filioque*. Ware critiques the Western idea of Father and Son as two independent sources of the Spirit. Ware, however, does not take into consideration the quite nuanced view of Augustine according to which the Father is the principal source while the Son is the source of the Spirit in a derivative sense, Augustine, "On the Trinity" 15.17.27.

<sup>48</sup> Vladimir Lossky has most dramatically articulated the charge of "Christomonism" against Western theology. According to him, Christianity in the West is seen as unilaterally referring to Christ, the Spirit being an addition to the church, to its ministries and sacraments. Vladimir Lossky, "The Procession of the Holy Spirit in Orthodox Trinitarian Doctrine," *In the Image and Likeness of God*, ed. John H. Erickson and Thomas E. Bird (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), ch. 4. See also Nikos A. Nissiotis, "The Main Ecclesiological Problem of the Second Vatican Council and Position of the Non-Roman Churches Facing It," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 6 (1965): 31-62. All of these three objections, namely, that it was a unilateral act, it subordinates the Son to the Spirit, and that it compromises the Father's monarchy were already presented by the most vocal critic in history, the ninth-

*oque* addition in the West are not fully known, besides the Augustinian idea of the Spirit as the mutual love, it is believed that the addition also served a function in opposing Arianism. Mentioning the Son alongside the Father as the origin of the Spirit was seen as a way to defend consubstantiality.<sup>49</sup>

With all its exaggerations,<sup>50</sup> the Eastern critique of the *filioque* is important both ecumenically and theologically and should not be dismissed.<sup>51</sup> The West did not have the right to unilaterally add *filioque*.<sup>52</sup>

In my judgment, *filioque* is not heretical even though ecumenically and theologically it is unacceptable and therefore should be removed.<sup>53</sup> Ecumenically and theologically it would be important for the East to be able to acknowledge the nonheretical nature of the addition. Furthermore, the Christian East should

century patriarch of Constantinople, Photius in his *On the Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit* (Astoria, NY: Studien Publications, 1983), 51-52, 71-72 especially.

<sup>49</sup> Against the standard view, Richard Haugh surmises that the addition happened just by way of transposition with any conscious theological reason. Richard Haugh, *Photius and the Carolingians. The Trinitarian Controversy* (Belmont, MA: Norland, 1975), 160-61.

<sup>50</sup> Photius insisted that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *alone*, the Son having no part to play. The intention of this polemical statement was not of course to argue the total exclusion of the Son from the Spirit but to defend vigorously the monarchy of the Father as the source of the deity of both Spirit and Son. See further, Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 205.

<sup>51</sup> For an important Orthodox statement, see Nick Needham, "The Filioque Clause. East or West?" *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 15 (1997): 142-62.

<sup>52</sup> Peters puts it bluntly: "The insertion of *filioque* in the Western version of the Nicene Creed was an act of unwarranted authority and certainly not done in the interest of church unity." Peters, *God as Trinity*, 65.

<sup>53</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1: 319 concurs. Peters makes the brilliant point that in principle there is nothing against adding to the creeds as long as it is done in concert. Theology is an ongoing reflection, elaboration, and processing of tradition. No creed as such has to be the final word. Peters, *God as Trinity*, 66.

keep in mind the fact that with all its problems, at first *filioque*, as mentioned above, was used in the West in support of substantiality, an idea shared by both traditions.<sup>54</sup>

### **In Lieu of Conclusions. Some Hopes for the Future**

While there are those who for some reason or another support the *filioque* clause,<sup>55</sup> there is a growing consensus among Western theologians, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, about the need to delete the addition and thus return to the original form of the creed.<sup>56</sup> J. Moltmann for years has appealed for the re-

<sup>54</sup> See further, Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 213.

<sup>55</sup> Well-known is the defense of *Filioque* by Karl Barth, who feared that dismissing it would mean ignoring the biblical insistence on the Spirit being the Spirit of the Son. See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956), I/1: 480. Gerald Bray defends the addition with reference to the doctrine of salvation. In his opinion, the Eastern doctrine of *theosis* with its focus on pneumatology severs the relationship between Son (atonement) and Spirit. Gerald Bray, "The *Filioque* Clause in History and Theology," *Tyndale Bulletin* 34 (1983): 142-43. While I disagree with Bray, I also commend his relating the question of the *Filioque* to the Spirit, which is indeed at the heart of Eastern theology. For this, see further the comment by Theodore Stylianopoulos ("The Biblical Background of the Article on the Holy Spirit in the Constantinopolitan Creed," *Études Théologiques: Le II<sup>e</sup> Concile Oecuménique*, 171 (Chambésy-Genève: Centre Orthodoxe du Patriarcat Oecuménique, 1982): "At stake was not an abstract question but the truth of Christian salvation." For this quotation, I am indebted to Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 203.

<sup>56</sup> For a helpful discussion, see *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ. Ecumenical Reflections on the Filioque Controversy*, ed. Lukas Vischer (London: SPCK, 1981). For Roman Catholic support of the removal of the *filioque* clause, see Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3: 72ff. In addition to Moltmann and Pannenberg, to be discussed in what follows, a strong defender of the Eastern view has been the Reformed Thomas F. Torrance, who was instrumental in the Reformed-Orthodox dialogue. For the dialogue, see Thomas F. Torrance, ed., *Theological Dialogue between Orthodox and Reformed Churches*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1993), 219-32. For his own views in this respect, see

moval of the addition and has suggested a more conciliar way of putting it, namely, that the Spirit proceeds “from the Father of the Son.” He wants to emphasize the biblical idea of reciprocity of Spirit and Son.<sup>57</sup> An alternative to *Filioque* “from the Father through the Son” would be also acceptable to the Christian East. It would defend the monarchy of the Father (and in that sense, some kind of subordination of the Son to Father, an idea not foreign to the East) and still be ambiguous enough.<sup>58</sup>

I agree with Pannenberg that beyond *Filioque* there is a weakness that plagues both traditions, namely, the understanding of relations mainly in terms of origins. Both East and West share that view both in their own distinctive way, the East by insisting on the role of the Father as the source and the West by making the Father primary in the deity with their idea of the proceeding of the Son from the Father and then the Spirit from both.<sup>59</sup> This blurs the key idea of Athanasius—the importance of which he himself hardly noticed—that relations are based on mutuality rather than origin.

The Lutheran Ted Peters, who supports the removal of the *filioque* clause, however, remarks that the idea of the Spirit proceeding both from the Son as well as the Father also points to something valuable. It highlights relationality and communali-

Thomas F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives. Toward Doctrinal Agreement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 110-43. For these references to Torrance, I am indebted to Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 218 n. 66.

<sup>57</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God. The Doctrine of God* (London: SCM Press, 1981), 178-79, 185-87.

<sup>58</sup> Boris Bobrinskoy, *The Mystery of the Trinity. Trinitarian Experience and Vision in the Biblical and Patristic Tradition*, trans. Anthony P. Gythiel (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999), 302-3. Again, my appreciation for bringing this source to my attention goes to Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 217 n. 64. For incisive comments, see also O'Collins, *The Tripersonal God*, 139.

<sup>59</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1: 319.

ty, the Spirit being the shared love between Father and Son (and by extension, between the Triune God and the world). Furthermore, on this side of Pentecost, it reminds us of the importance of resurrection and ascension: the risen Christ in Spirit is the presence of Christ. "In this work of transcending and applying the historical event of Jesus Christ to our personal lives, we must think of the Spirit as proceeding from Jesus Christ."<sup>60</sup> Finally, Peters notes, within the divine life the Spirit indeed is the principle of relationship and unity. "The separation that takes place between Father and Son—the separation that defines Father as Father and the Son as Son—is healed by the Spirit. It is the Spirit that maintains unity in difference."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Peters, *God as Trinity*, 66.

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# Women's Spirituality, Lived Religion, and Social Reform in Finland, 1860-1920

PIRJO MARKKOLA\*

*University of Jyväskylä*

**Abstract.** In the 19th century, women contributed to social work based on revivalist religious values. They founded orphanages, deaconess institutes and shelters for "fallen women." Even in the Lutheran, very homogenous context of Finland, the question of gender and religion was a multi-faceted issue. Religious reform movements both empowered women and defined proper fields of activity for both sexes. The Christian framework fostered several understandings of women's calling. The Deaconess Institute of Helsinki, founded in 1867, offered one interpretation of a woman's calling. Emma Mäkinen, who founded a shelter for "fallen women" in 1880, represented an alternative interpretation of a woman's calling. The third understanding can be found in the women's rights movement and in the White Ribbon. Both movements consisted of middle-class women who worked on a broad program ranging from moral reform to political participation.

**Key words:** Gender, calling, deaconate, revivalism, social reform

The Christian conception of humankind is explicitly based on gender difference. At creation God created two categories: men and women (Genesis 1:27). Over the centuries, the social understanding of gender difference has defined the lives of both sexes, and the arguments on appropriate gender relations have been based on those definitions. The notions of proper femininity and masculinity are constructed and negotiated in the social

\* PIRJO MARKKOLA is Professor of Finnish History at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland.

context of daily life. Furthermore, socially acceptable ways of being female and male depend on other categories like class and ethnicity. This has been obvious in churches and revivalist movements too. In 19th and early 20th century Finland, women actively contributed to social work based on revivalist religious values. They founded orphanages, deaconess institutes and shelters for “fallen women.” They engaged in philanthropic work among the urban poor and assisted deaconesses to rural villages and missionaries to other continents.<sup>1</sup> In these efforts they were both encouraged and discouraged. Some members of society felt that women’s activities threatened the existing social order while others looked upon them as cornerstones of a new social order. In this article I study the ways in which urban middle-class women in the Lutheran context of Finland redefined women’s social responsibilities and rights. I argue that women who were expanding their social activities challenged the social consequences of gender difference; yet, they based their arguments on differences between men and women.

Hierarchical gender relations placed women and men in different positions in the social processes by which Finnish society was constructed in the 19th century. The Evangelical Lutheran Church was the established church and Lutheranism was the official confession of Finland. Many leading members of the Lutheran clergy were inspired by the German theologian J. T. Beck, whose biblical view of Christianity was based on a literal interpretation of the Bible. One of the most prominent representatives of the Beckian theology was Bishop Gustaf Johansson

<sup>1</sup> Pirjo Markkola, “Promoting Faith and Welfare. The Deaconess Movement in Finland and Sweden, 1850-1930,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 25 (2000); Pirjo Markkola, *Synti ja siveys. Naiset, uskonto ja sosiaalinen työ Suomessa 1860-1920* (Helsinki: SKS, 2002); Inger Marie Okkenhaug, ed., *Gender, Race and Religion. Nordic Missions 1860-1940* (Studia Missionalia Svedica: Uppsala, 2003).



(1844-1930), who held that the women's rights movement was threatening the social order given by God. Biblical texts emphasizing women's obedience and subjection were often cited. To motivate their own social activities, women—and those men who supported women's visible role in the struggle against social problems—used other citations of the Holy Book. Women's active social role was both promoted and opposed through references to the authority of the Bible.<sup>2</sup> Contesting interpretations suggest that religion was used to legitimate different definitions of gender relations.

Interpretations of Christian gender relations had social consequences. To understand the role of religion in industrializing society, I use the concepts of "spirituality" and "lived religion." Both studies of spirituality and lived religion emphasize the daily life. Research on spirituality takes seriously women's self-understanding and experience.<sup>3</sup> I do not claim, however, that we can reconstruct genuine "women's experiences"; instead, I argue that women's ways to give meaning to religious and social practices and to experience those practices are bound to the context in which they lived. In those contexts people practice religion in various ways. Research on lived religion is concerned with religious practices, which cannot be understood apart from the meanings people give to them.<sup>4</sup> To take women's

<sup>2</sup> Maija Rajainen, *Naisliike ja sukupuolimoraali. Keskustelua ja toimintaa 1800-luvulla ja nykyisen vuosisadan alkupuolella noin vuoteen 1918 saakka* (Helsinki: Suomen Kirkkohistoriallinen Seura, 1973); Markkola, 2002, 178-188.

<sup>3</sup> Johanna H. Stuckey, *Feminist Spirituality. An Introduction to Feminist Theology in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Feminist Goddess Worship* (Toronto: Centre for Feminist Research, York University, 1998), 5-8; Marguerite Van Die, "A Woman's Awakening: Evangelical Belief and Female Spirituality in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Canada," *Canadian Women. A Reader*, Wendy Mitchinson et. al. eds. (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Canada, 1996), 51-52.

<sup>4</sup> David D. Hall, ed., *Lived Religion in America. Toward a History of Practice* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997); Marguerite Van

experiences seriously means here that I try to be sensitive to their spirituality and their ways of living religion.

The empirical narrative of my article is based on three groups of middle-class women who engaged in social work to uplift working-class women. The ways in which they chose to work were different. Some women found their vocation in a formalized context of deaconess movement; others devoted themselves to evangelical work among “fallen women,” whereas some other women began to argue for women’s rights and actively paved their way to politics. All these women extended their social work beyond the family, but they interpreted the religious vocation in differing ways. The concept of “woman’s calling” became central in women’s organizations and new female occupations in the 19th century. According to the Lutheran theology, women’s calling was to serve the social collective as mothers and daughters, i.e. in the households.<sup>5</sup> At a time when economic changes were undermining the household unit, the definitions of women’s proper calling were re-evaluated.

### **Women and Social Change**

Various forms of religious social reform—the deaconess movement, homes for “fallen women” and moral reform associa-

Die, *Religion, Family, and Community in Victorian Canada. The Colbys of Carrollcroft* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005), 8-9, 188-189.

<sup>5</sup> On Lutheran calling and 19th century women, see Inger Hammar, “From Fredrika Bremer to Ellen Key. Calling, Gender and the Emancipation Debate in Sweden, c. 1830-1900,” *Gender and Vocation. Women, Religion and Social Change in the Nordic Countries, 1830-1940*, Pirjo Markkola, ed. (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2000); Inger Hammar, *Emancipation och religion. Den svenska kvinnorörelsens pionjärer i debatt om kvinnans kallelse ca 1860-1900* (Stockholm: Carlssons förlag, 1999); On marriage as a calling, see Carter Lindberg, “Martin Luther on Marriage and the Family,” *Perichoresis* 2.1 (2004), 44.

tions—were a part of wide international reform movements. In Finland they were rooted in the social and political context in which the shift from an old, ordered society to a new civil society was conceptualized as an era of social question. The political relations were shaped by a growing nationalist movement and the “Russian question,” meaning the relations between Finland and Russia. Having been an eastern part of Sweden for centuries Finland formed a Grand Duchy within the Russian Empire from 1809 to 1917. The social structure and legal system remained Scandinavian during that period, as the Emperor recognized the Swedish laws, including Lutheran confession and the status of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a state-church. After 1917 the strong position of the Lutheran church was continued also in the independent Finland.<sup>6</sup>

Until the 20th century, Finland was an agrarian country in which the vast majority gained their livelihood from agriculture. In 1900 the share of agrarian population was still about two thirds. Despite late industrialization and the dominance of agriculture, the industrial working-class grew rapidly. The number of urban workers in 1910 was four-fold compared to 1870. The 1890s, in particular, spelled a quick growth of urban population; in a few years the number of city-dwellers doubled.<sup>7</sup> The urban middle-classes who became active in revi-

<sup>6</sup> On Finnish history, see David Kirby, *A Concise History of Finland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Jason Lavery, *The History of Finland* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Publishing, 2006); Max Engman and David Kirby, eds., *Finland. People, Nation, State* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1989); Merja Manninen and Päivi Setälä, eds., *The Lady with the Bow. The Story of Finnish Women* (Helsinki: Otava, 1990).

<sup>7</sup> Pertti Haapala, “Työväenluokan synty,” *Talous, valta ja valtio. Tutkimuksia 1800-luvun Suomesta*, 232-233, Pertti Haapala, ed. (Tampere: Vastapaino, 1992); Pirjo Markkola, “Women in Rural Society in the 19th and 20th Centuries,” *Manninen and Setälä*, 1990, 18. The population of Finland in 1900 was

valist reform movements formed a small, but a steadily growing part of the population. They were seeking solutions to the problems of urbanization and industrialization. Social order based on households, in which the head of a household was responsible for the well-being and discipline of his household-members, could not meet the demands of the industrializing and urbanizing world.

Economic changes were intertwined with ideological changes, a combination which paved the way to the individualization of citizens. It was typical of the revivalist movements to emphasize Christianity as a choice guiding the deeds and minds of people, a choice which had both social and individual repercussions. Faith was no longer the collective, self-evident cornerstone of a Christian worldview. The pietism of the 18th and early 19th centuries had accentuated service and benevolence as Christian obligations towards fellow human beings. These ideas manifested themselves in a home-mission movement with the German Inner Mission as the most direct model. The goal of the home mission was to solve the social question through the renewal of popular piety. Home missions worked for the benefit of the poor; nevertheless, the ultimate goal was to save their souls.<sup>8</sup> The involvement of women was understood to be crucial in promoting these goals.

The active members of the Lutheran church acted under two kinds of pressures while developing the home mission in Finland. On the one hand, the pressure of secularization mani-

2.9 million. The majority were Finnish-speaking, but the Swedish-speaking minority was active in many fields.

<sup>8</sup> Markkola 2000; Nicholas Hope, *German and Scandinavian Protestantism 1700-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 409-417; Catherine M. Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge, and Change. Religious Dimensions of the Mid-Nineteenth-Century Women's Movement in Germany* (New York-Westport-London: Greenwood Press, 1987).

fested itself not only as a budding neglect of church doctrine but also as a redefinition of the social division of labor. The Lutheran parishes and local municipalities were separated in the 1860s. In the new division of labor the poor relief became a responsibility of local municipalities. The construction of municipal poor relief challenged the churchmen to reconsider the role of Christian charity in changing society. On the other hand, evangelicalism created pressure on Lutheran Christianity. During the last quarter of the 19th century two newcomers to Finland, Free Church revivalism and the Salvation Army, engaged in social work and managed to recruit many women for their ranks.<sup>9</sup> The Lutheran church met these challenges by developing church-based charitable work and establishing home-mission societies which worked in close co-operation with the Lutheran clergy.

In this context gender relations were in a process of transformation. Women's rights were gradually expanded; unmarried women gained majority in the 1860s, but married women were not freed from their husband's guardianship until a new Marriage Act was passed in 1929.<sup>10</sup> The question of women's political rights became one of the issues. The parliamentary reform of 1906 abolished the old Diet of four estates and established the unicameral parliament—at that time the most modern representative body in Europe. Both men and women got

<sup>9</sup> Eila Helander, *Naiset eivät vaienneet. Naisevankelistainstituutio Suomen helluntailiikkeessä* (Helsinki: Suomen Kirkkohistoriallinen Seura, 1987), 33-35; Nils G. Holm and H. Sandström, *Finlandsvensk frikyrklighet* (Åbo: Insitutet för ekumenik och socialetik vid Åbo Akademi, 1972).

<sup>10</sup> These reforms were made in all the Nordic countries in the 1920s. Kari Melby, Anu Pylkkänen, Bente Rosenbeck and Christina Carlsson Wetterberg, eds., *The Nordic Model of Marriage and the Welfare State* (Copenhagen: The Nordic Council of Ministers, 2000); Anu Pylkkänen, "Finnish Understandings of Equality. The Agrarian Heritage and the Public," *Women in Finland* (Helsinki: Otava, 1999), 33-36.

the right to vote and to stand as candidates. Among the 200 members of parliament elected in 1907 were nineteen women. Many new female members of parliament came from women's organizations.<sup>11</sup> The impact of this parliamentary reform could be seen as a turning point in women's voluntary social work.

### **Vocation in a Suit**

In the 19th century the deaconessate became a new opportunity for young Protestant women, who could join a deaconess institute and devote their entire life to the service of God. The model for this new Christian activity was found in the New Testament in which a woman called Phoebe had served in a Christian community.<sup>12</sup> The first deaconess institute was founded in a small German town of Kaiserswerth in 1836 by Protestant minister Theodor Fliedner and his wife Friederike Fliedner. The movement soon gained a foothold in the Nordic countries. The main line of work was to nurse the poor sick, but deaconesses were also involved in education and social work among the poor. Deaconessate was relatively widely accepted as a suitable calling for women; nevertheless, there was variation in the ways in which the female diaconate was organized.<sup>13</sup> The

<sup>11</sup> Irma Sulkunen, "The Women's Movement," Engman & Kirby 1989, 178-191; Irma Sulkunen, Seija-Leena Nevala-Nurmi, and Pirjo Markkola, eds., *Suffrage, Gender, and Citizenship. International Perspectives on Parliamentary Reforms* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> Romans 16:1-2; Jenny Ivalo, *Diakonian lukukirja* (Sortavala 1920); Carolyn De Swarte Gifford, ed., *The American Deaconess Movement in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York-London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1987).

<sup>13</sup> On deaconess education see Catherine M. Prelinger, "The Nineteenth-Century Deaconessate in Germany. The Efficacy of a Family Model," *German Women in the Eighteenth, and Nineteenth Centuries. A Social and Literary History*, 215-225, Ruth-Ellen B. Joeres, and Mary Jo Maynes, eds. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); Prelinger, 1987, 18-23, 167-169; Ursula Bauman, *Protestantismus und Frauenemanzipation in Deutschland 1850 bis 1920*

churches claimed repeatedly that deaconesses were not Protestant nuns, but the similarities were striking. *Diakonia* (service) represented a clearly marked choice to follow God: deaconesses belonged to the community of a deaconess institute, they wore a deaconess suit, and they were not paid for their work. The community took care of their daily needs and provided social security in case of illness and old age. However, the deaconesses were allowed to leave the community if they got married or found that the deaconessate was not their calling.

The first deaconess institute in Finland was founded by Aurora Karamzin (1808-1902), a benevolent widow, who also supported the philanthropic Ladies' Society. She was familiar with the Evangelical Deaconess Institute (*Evangelische Hospital*) in St. Petersburg; furthermore, in a visit to Kaiserswerth she was impressed by the work of German deaconesses. In the famine year of 1867 she bestowed money for the foundation of a deaconess institute in Helsinki and invited the Finnish sister Amanda Cajander (1827-1871) from *Evangelische Hospital* to become the first matron. Having lost her husband and both children by the age of 29, Sister Amanda joined the institute in St. Petersburg. She became the first deaconess in Finland and a leading pioneer in

(Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 1992), 45-56; Almut Witt, "Zur Entwicklung kirchlicher Frauenberufe Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts," "Darum wagt es, Schwestern..." *Zur Geschichte evangelischer Theologinnen in Deutschland* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1994), 42-43; On the first deaconess institutes in the Nordic countries, see Ernst Lönegren, *Minneskrift till Svenska Diakonissanstaltens femtioårsjubileum* (Stockholm, 1901); Erkki Kansanaho, *Sata vuotta kristillistä palvelutyötä. Helsingin Diakonissalaitos 1867-1967* (Porvoo, Helsinki: WSOY, 1967); Gunnel Ekmund, *Den kvinnliga diakonin i Sverige 1849-1861. Uppgift och utformning* (Lund, 1973); Kari Martinsen, *Freidige og uforsagte diakonisser. Et omsorgsyrke voxer fram 1860-1905* (Oslo: Aschehoug/Tanum-Norli, 1984); Tuulikki Koivunen Bylund, *Frukta icke, allenast tro. Ebba Boström och Samariterhemmet 1882-1902* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1994).

the field of nursing. Until Sister Amanda's untimely death, Aurora Karamzin offered her spiritual and material support, which extended from acquiring instruments for the hospital while travelling abroad, to buying a new house for the institute, when it was needed. These two women opened a new era in the field of Christian charity in Finland; they also managed to introduce a new idea of women's vocation, although their institute was very modest in the beginning. During the first years, the institute founded a small hospital with eight beds, an orphanage, and an asylum for female servants. In the wintertime it also ran a soup kitchen.<sup>14</sup> The primary groups to be served were women and children.

In the beginning of the 20th century the goal of the deaconess institute was "to educate women, who, out of love for their Saviour have voluntarily chosen their calling in life the nurturing of the suffering, the sick and the fallen."<sup>15</sup> The first matron initiated visits to working-class families, i.e. "the nurturing of the suffering and the sick." She searched out sick adults and neglected children and sent them to the hospital or the orphanage. Later on, this work was continued by Sister Cecilia Blomqvist (1845-1910), another pioneer in the inner-city mission. Her life history was traumatic. She lost her mother in her early childhood and was brought up by her father, who was a sea captain, and her stepmother, whom she also lost at a young age. At the age of sixteen Cecilia travelled to France and Italy with her fa-

<sup>14</sup> *Amanda Cajander's letters to Aurora Karamzin, 1867-1870*. Aurora Karamzin's Collection. National Archives (KA), Helsinki; Pirjo Markkola, "Cajander, Amanda (1827-1871)," *Suomen Kansallisbiografia* 2 (Helsinki: SKS, 2003), 78-79; Marianne Tallberg, "Nursing and Medical Care in Finland from the Eighteenth to the Late Nineteenth Century," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 14 (1989): 274.

<sup>15</sup> Paavo Virkkunen, "Uskonnolliset ja hyväntekeväisyhdistykset," *Oma maa* (Helsinki, 1909), 477.



ther. During the journey, which broadened the worldview of a girl from a small harbor town, she spent several months in Marseilles. After the journey she developed into an active member of the Ladies' Society, took up teaching at Sunday school, and additionally taught sewing to poor girls. During the severe famine in 1867-1868 she nursed people who suffered from typhoid. These benevolent activities, childhood experiences and—most importantly—religious revival made her open to deaconess work. After having read about the Deaconess Institute of Helsinki, she felt that she had found her calling. After her father's death in 1873 she could devote herself to it.<sup>16</sup>

The deaconess institutes wanted to recruit educated women from middle-class homes rather than daughters of working-class or rural families, who, it was feared, would join the institute in pursuit of upward social mobility. Due to her background Cecilia Blomqvist became a warmly welcomed student in the little institute still in the process of formation and, in fact, suffering from a lack of human and material resources.<sup>17</sup> Albeit diaconate was defined to be humble and self-sacrificing service, the vocation offered many opportunities to talented women. In her humble service Cecilia Blomqvist turned out to be an innovative woman with a visible influence on the early history of the deaconess movement. For example, she was the first Finnish deaconess to work with a Lutheran parish—a line of work which was to become the most far-reaching part of female diaconate in the 20th century. In 1930 more than 600 deaconesses

<sup>16</sup> Cecilia Blomqvist, "The Roll of Deaconesses" 1. The Deaconess Institute of Helsinki (*HDL*) Ba: 1. KA; Pirjo Markkola, "Blomqvist, Cecilia (1845-1910)," *Suomen Kansallisbiografia* 1 (Helsinki: SKS, 2003), 678-679.

<sup>17</sup> Kansanaho 1967, 41-42, 50-51, 64. In practice the institutes attracted rural and working-class women. "The Roll of Deaconesses," *HDL*, KA.

worked outside the deaconess institutes, and at least 75 per cent of them were serving the Lutheran parishes.<sup>18</sup>

Sister Cecilia's work included nursing and social work. In the deaconess institute she was in charge of the hospital. Moreover, she visited working-class neighborhoods, nursed the sick, taught children and placed some of them in orphanages and foster homes. An important venue for charitable work was found in city missions, which were formed to fight against sin, misery and sickness. The City Mission of Helsinki was explicitly organized in 1883 to continue the missionary work started by Cecilia Blomqvist. The timing of this decision must be seen within the context of the social question—a central issue of the 1880s—for which solutions were sought all over society. Both religious and humanitarian groups paid increasing attention to the problems of urban communities.

Furthermore, at the age of 55, Cecilia Blomqvist accepted a new challenge when the health authorities invited the deaconess institute to found a leprosy hospital. She steered the hospital until 1910. On the whole, Sister Cecilia proved her competence and seemed to be in the right place at the right time. The deaconesses did not choose their work; they were sent to new fields by the director and the matron. Sister Cecilia did not conceptualize her work as a career. For her the work was a vocation, a calling given by God, and she repeatedly reflected on her

<sup>18</sup> Pirjo Markkola, "Diakonissan mellan det privata och det offentliga. Kvinnlig diakoni i Sverige och Finland 1880-1940," *Den privat-offentliga gränsen. Det sociala arbetets strategier och aktörer i Norden 1860-1940*, 190-191, Monika Janfelt, ed. (Copenhagen: Nordiska Ministerråd, 1999). The more extensive work in parishes was initiated by the deaconess institutes of Sortavala and Oulu founded in the 1890s. They gave a short education following the Norwegian model. Hannu Mustakallio, "Emansipaatiota, diakoniaa ja filantropiaa. Pohjoispohjalaiset naiset diakoniaa ja hyväntekeväisyyttä edistämässä 1900-luvun alkupuolelle saakka," *Teologinen Aikakauskirja* 104 (1999), 94-101.

insufficiency as God's servant. She complained for her lack of love and patience to suffering people around her.<sup>19</sup> However weak she might have felt herself the calling led her to a remarkable career not only in the service of Christian social work but also health care in Finland. During her 37 years as a deaconess she made several excursions abroad and represented her institute at international conferences. At home she was among the first deaconesses to be elected to the board of the deaconess institute; furthermore, in 1889, as the first woman in Finland, she was elected to the municipal poor-relief board of Helsinki.<sup>20</sup> The example of Cecilia Blomqvist in fact shows the ways in which women in the religious context of deaconessate met challenges that may have seemed too difficult, yet their spirituality, which was based on the belief that they were called by God, empowered them to accomplish demanding tasks.

Deaconesses were visible representatives of the new understanding of a woman's calling. In the Lutheran theology parenthood and, especially, motherhood was given the status of a calling.<sup>21</sup> Both the male and female leaders of the deaconess movement often drew an explicit parallel between motherhood and the work of deaconesses and explained that, as deaconesses, unmarried women attained a chance to be mothers to the motherless.<sup>22</sup> Motherhood was thus put at the very centre of a deaconessate. When married women's calling was concretely defined through motherhood, the deaconess movement gave unmarried women a symbolic way to fulfill their womanly calling.

<sup>19</sup> For ex. "Cecilia Blomqvist to Artur Palmroth" 14.9.1909, *HDL*, File 33, KA.

<sup>20</sup> Markkola 2003, 678-679.

<sup>21</sup> Hammar, 1999, 25-26, 247-248; Lindberg, 2004.

<sup>22</sup> For example Elsa Vennerström, "Diakonisskallet. Föredrag vid kristliga studentmötet i Sordavala," *Betania* 9/1916, 140-141.

Moreover, the leaders explained that they could not call anybody to become a deaconess; they could only support and strengthen those who got their calling from God.<sup>23</sup> The deaconessate was a vocation; women were called to serve. While the deaconessate opened up new opportunities for unmarried women to gain a livelihood, it was still strongly built on traditional models and Lutheran interpretations. According to the Lutheran conception of calling everybody was called to serve in his or her daily life. Women's calling was connected to the household; they were called to serve God as spouses, mothers and daughters.<sup>24</sup> The construction of a deaconessate and a deaconess vocation represented an extension of the traditional role of a Christian woman and in this respect it did not question the Lutheran mode of thought. The fact that the first deaconess institutes were defined as homes in which a deaconess had the role of daughter made it easier for the churches to approve the deaconessate as a way to make use of women's resources—and for women to enter the institutes.

In the Lutheran sense, however, a deaconess vocation was a serious calling. It had to be tried before a young woman devoted her life to the service of God. The serious nature of the deaconess vocation was often reflected in the ways in which many women chose to become deaconesses. Both sister Amanda and sister Cecilia had lost their mothers at a young age. Cecilia also lost her stepmother, Amanda's husband committed suicide. Those experiences together with a revivalist awakening paved those women's ways to the membership in a deaconess community, which gave spiritual support to those who were

<sup>23</sup> For example U. Nordström, "Diakonisskallet och förberedelsen därtill," *Betania* 5-6/1914, 80; Elsa Vennerström, "Diakonisskallet," *Betania* 9/1916, 134-141; Sam. Thysell, "Maallinen kutsumuksemme," *Koti ja kirkko* 7/1911, 8/1911.

<sup>24</sup> Hammar, 1999, 23-24.

ready to accept it, but could also create pressure on women who did not share the worldview of the institute. Deaconess institutes, which bound sisters into the community, were sometimes criticized for resembling monasteries. The dropout figures of the Deaconess Institute of Helsinki speak for themselves. The training usually took several years; an overwhelming majority of trainees left the institute before they were consecrated. The publications of the Finnish deaconess institutes repeatedly published articles warning young women from seeking the earthly honour or imagining that as deaconesses they would become more pious individuals. If the calling was not from God, attempts to serve as deaconesses were doomed to fail.<sup>25</sup>

### **Evangelical Calling**

Private charitable work represented another way for women to live religion. Giving alms had traditionally been a suitable form of women's charitable work. However, during the 19th century it was becoming less acceptable. Philanthropic ideals condemned unsystematic alms-giving; instead a strong emphasis was put on education and work. New establishments were founded all over the industrialized world. Convinced of the importance of education and practical training, Emma Åhman (1849-1915) opened a shelter for "fallen women" in Helsinki in 1880. She was not a wealthy woman but she was motivated by a strong vocation, a calling to serve suffering women. Emma Åhman belonged to the first generation of women who had access to formal education in Finland. In 1870 she graduated from the first teacher's training seminar, established in 1863,

<sup>25</sup> "Diakonissoiksi," *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 5/1894; Elsa Vennerström, "Vilka särskilda faror medför diakonissans uppgift för utvecklingen av hennes personlighet," *Betania* 1/1914; "The Roll of Deaconesses 1," *HDL* Ba: 1, KA.

and became a primary-school teacher in Helsinki. The social question materialized to her through the living conditions of her pupils. She visited their homes and found a new world, which had been unfamiliar to a daughter of a lower civil-servant family.<sup>26</sup>

At the same time the new Anglo-Saxon revivalist movement reached Finland. Famous international Free Church evangelists, among them Lord G. A. W. Radstock from England and the Swedish preacher Fredrik Tiseliuss, visited Finland, held prayer meetings and helped to initiate the revivalist movement among the Swedish speaking Finns. Emma Åhman belonged to the first converts. Free Mission was organized in the form of voluntary associations or informal groups of friends, who shared the experience of conversion and emphasized Jesus' words "unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Unlike Baptists and Methodists, the movement did not take advantage of the Dissenters' Act of 1889, which legalized the existence of Protestant churches in addition to the Lutheran and the Orthodox state-churches. They continued to work as a Free Mission movement, and many of the members managed to stay on good terms with the Lutheran clergy. The Evangelical Free Church of Finland was first organized in the 1920s when the freedom of religion was granted.<sup>27</sup>

The emphasis on social work and home mission pushed many women to seek an active social role. The movement organized informal meetings, in which only re-born Christians participated.<sup>28</sup> The lack of formal structures strengthened the posi-

<sup>26</sup> Emma Mäkinen, "The Evangelical Free Church of Finland" (EFCF) I Ha: 4. Hämeenlinna Provincial Archives (HMA); "Mitä yksinäinen nainen voi saada aikaan," *Naisten ääni* 4/1909; "Emma Mäkinen," *Valkonauha* 15.2.1909.

<sup>27</sup> Simo Heininen and Markku Heikkilä, *Suomen kirkkohistoria* (Helsinki: Edita, 1996), 204-207, 224-225.

<sup>28</sup> Heininen and Heikkilä, 1996, 206.

tion of women. Moreover, many supporters came from the Swedish-speaking upper and middle-classes, a fact that guaranteed the presence of resourceful female members in the movement. The Lutheran concept of calling was extended: women were to become mothers to the suffering poor and the fallen sinners. Emma Åhman found her calling in Stockholm while visiting a women's shelter founded by Elsa Borg. She felt that such an institution was badly needed in Finland. After the excursion she quit her job, borrowed money from her friends in the Free Mission and opened a shelter for women in December 1880. Three years later she also founded a private orphanage which was connected to the shelter.<sup>29</sup> The Free Mission supporters were "free" also in the respect that they did not tie their benevolence to formal structures such as those which, for example, were clearly discernible in the deaconessate.

The aim of the shelter was to normalize "fallen women" into ordinary working-class women who could gain their livelihood in a decent manner. Prostitutes in fact formed a minority of the inmates during the first decade;<sup>30</sup> the majority consisted of other women, who were considered to be "fallen" or in need of protection. The idea of a "fallen woman" was wide-spread in the 19th century. A woman who lost her chastity, i.e., became sexually active outside marriage, was "fallen," and there was hardly any way back to decent womanhood; at the best the road was rocky and difficult. The Evangelical Christianity emphasized that everyone could be saved; for that purpose Evangelicals founded asylums and shelters for "fallen women" in Europe as

<sup>29</sup> The shelter was also known as a home for "fallen women." Emma Mäkinen. EFCF I Ha: 4, HMA; Miss Elsa Borg was well known in Finland, see Elsa Borg, *Valkonauha* 15.3.1909.

<sup>30</sup> Rajainen, 1973, 158; Antti Häkkinen, *Rahasta-vaan ei rakkaudesta. Prostituutio Helsingissä 1867-1939* (Helsinki: Otava, 1995), 201; Markkola, 2002, 235.

well as in North America.<sup>31</sup> The process of uplifting was thought to be long and painful; one of the best medicines, in addition to God's word, was manual labor. In Emma Åhman's shelter "girls"—as they were called—worked in a laundry, learned household chores and made handicrafts for sale. The laundry in particular served the purpose of vocational training; the work trained women to wash, iron and starch which were useful skills for improving their position in the labor market. The youngest girls were less than 15 years old, but the majority was around the age of 20. Women older than 30 were usually not welcomed in the shelter because they were thought to be beyond all hope already.<sup>32</sup>

The fact that women had to enter the shelter voluntarily was a key to the care ideology of the home. Women who enrolled to the shelter had to agree to follow the rules and regulations defined by the matron. Medical control was a prerequisite for entering the home. The rules prohibited inhabitants from leaving the home without permission—the newcomers were allowed to go out only if accompanied by someone whom the matron could trust, everyone had to take up any work given to her, alcohol and cigarettes were strictly forbidden, the matron decided whether guests would be allowed, the daily program was

<sup>31</sup> For example Barbara Meil Hobson, *Uneasy Virtue. The Politics of Prostitution, and the American Reform Tradition* (New York: Basic Books Inc. Publishers, 1987), 110-115; Karin Lützen, Byen Tæmmes, *Kernefamilie, sociale reformer og velgørenhed i 1800-tallets København* (København: Hans Reitzels Forlag, 1998); Larry Whiteaker, *Seduction, Prostitution, and Moral Reform in New York, 1830-1860* (New York-London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1997), 43-63; Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water. Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1991), 99-103.

<sup>32</sup> Some former residents thanked for useful skills or asked for further advice in ironing and starching. For example letters of Tilta A. 11.2, 30.3 and 14.7 (no year mentioned) and Anna B. 6.9.1885 and 3.10.1885. Emma Mäkinen, *EFCF I Ha: 4*. HMA.



punctually organized and everyone had to attend prayers in the morning and in the evening. By giving their consent, women made a symbolic contract with moral reformists and legitimized their efforts.<sup>33</sup> The matron depended on their consent and could work with them only if they agreed to work with her.

The care ideology was further reflected in the ways in which Emma Åhman treated her inmates. She set the limits and demanded that they were respected. Some women suffered from alcoholism or simply thought that there was nothing wrong with having a drink; in fact there were problems with young women who escaped, drank and then wanted to return to the shelter. Sometimes the matron ended up calling the police. On the one hand she could not risk the order in the home by letting some individuals disturb the daily routines; on the other hand she had, in the name of her credibility, to punish those who broke the contract.<sup>34</sup> Her vocation was informed by philanthropic and revivalist Christian ideas that demanded self-discipline and obedience from those who were helped. It was not acceptable to give without demanding. There are also concrete examples of her struggle between patience and order in the home. One remorseful girl who sought refuge in the home was taken in although she was not sober. The first night Emma stayed up with her. The next day a doctor ordered the girl to a mental institution, but she needed to wait another day in the

<sup>33</sup> "Emma Mäkinen to Fredrick Caconius in 1895." Emma Mäkinen, *EFCF* I Ha: 4, HMA; "Fredrick Caconius to Emma Mäkinen" 4.2.1895. *EFCF* I Fb: 3. HMA; Anna Jansdotter has conceptualized the relationship of a moral reformist and a "fallen woman" as a power relation in which both had a certain degree of power. Anna Jansdotter, *Ansikte mot ansikte. Räddningsarbete bland prostituerade kvinnor i Sverige 1850-1920* (Stockholm/Stehag: Brutus Österlings bokförlag Symposion, 2004), 25-26.

<sup>34</sup> "Emma Mäkinen," *EFCF* I Ha: 4. HMA; Fredrick Caconius to Emma Mäkinen 4.2.1895. *EFCF* I Fb: 3. HMA; "Emma Mäkinen to Antti Mäkinen" 4.2.1903 and 15.8.1903. *EFCF* I Fb: 5. HMA.

shelter. In the evening the girl saw demons, swore and became paranoiac. The matron had to give up and call the police.<sup>35</sup> Police and hospitals were the earthly authorities she relied on in her rescue work.

In 1886 Emma Åhman married Antti Mäkinen (1857-1931), a student of theology, who interrupted his studies at the University of Helsinki and instead attained a training of a Free Church evangelist in London. Emma continued her rescue work among women and children, while her husband travelled around Finland as a home-mission preacher. The couple was in a position in which both had a capacity to support the other's work.<sup>36</sup> On the one hand, Emma had a longer history in the Free Mission and her friends around Finland could help the visiting evangelist, her husband, to organize revivalist meetings. On the other hand, the husband's journeys made his wife's shelter widely known. Free Mission friends and others involved in moral reform often asked if they could send women to the home.<sup>37</sup> The most remarkable partners were Hellman sisters in Vaasa, a small harbor town on the west coast. Being widely involved in the Evangelical revival they initiated many new forms of social work. A total abstinence movement, a seamen's mission and a prison mission were started by them.<sup>38</sup> Home mission was the mission of their life.

Prostitution was relatively widespread in the harbor towns. In the 1880s Vaasa, a town of less than ten thousand inhabitants, housed several brothels. Hellman sisters sought "fallen

<sup>35</sup> "Emma Mäkinen to Antti Mäkinen," 15.8.1903. *EFCF I Fb*: 5. HMA.

<sup>36</sup> Emma and Antti Mäkinen's correspondence. *EFCF I Fb*: 3-5. HMA.

<sup>37</sup> For example letters from Fanny Stenroth 17.8.1884, Olga Kronlund 20.3.1885, Frida Sjöblom 13.4.1886 and 19.4.1886, Lilli Fabritius 14.2.1892. *EFCF I Fb*: 3. HMA.

<sup>38</sup> "Alba, Hilda and Anna Hellman to Emma Mäkinen," Forsman-Koskimies Family, KA, Helsinki; Markkola, 2002, 238.

women" from the streets or met them in the harbor, when all of them were heading to the ships, Hellman sisters with their sack of Bibles, prostitutes seeking work. Their home soon became known among young women who needed help; the letters of Alba Hellman, one of the sisters, frequently tell about the visits of young prostitutes. Many of them were sent to Emma Mäkinen's home and Alba Hellman organized a group of local volunteers to pay their maintenance. The financial aid given by the group was an important contribution to the shelter. For example, in 1883-1884, about 60 per cent of its income was received in the form of donations. In 1885 the home was granted a state loan and in 1890 it began to get state support. Nevertheless, most of the time only 20 or 25 per cent of the budget consisted of public contributions. Women of the Free Mission were the financial backbone of the rescue work. They arranged annual bazaars and persuaded their wealthy relatives to contribute to the shelter. Furthermore, many "brothers in faith" gave both spiritual and material support to the pioneering work among marginalized women.<sup>39</sup>

The question of state support tried Emma Mäkinen's vocation. She would rather have relied on God's help and was not sure if God would accept a state loan. Yet she stated that "so few Christians in Finland had more means to give"; their money was needed for many purposes and the state seemed to be willing to strengthen the work for moral reform. She struggled and prayed. Finally she took the step of accepting the state support.<sup>40</sup> The hesitation revealed important features of Emma Mäkinen's evangelical spirituality and showed the way in which she lived her religion. Her faith was more than a psycho-

<sup>39</sup> "Emma Mäkinen," *EFCF* I Ha: 4. HMA; Sefa Forsman to Toini Jauhiainen, 19.10.1899, 13.12.1899, 20.11.1900. Forsman-Koskimies Family, KA.

<sup>40</sup> "Emma Åhman to Antti Mäkinen," 13.7.1885. *EFCF* I Fb: 5, HMA.

logical or mental factor giving her strength; it was a guiding principle in her daily efforts. She discussed every decision in a prayer and sought guidelines for the practical social work from the Bible.

The religious worldview of women involved in moral reform has, in Finnish research, been interpreted as a barrier between prostitutes and their saviors. It has been claimed that the upper-class ladies did not understand the living conditions of the prostitutes and thus could not define realistic goals for their projects.<sup>41</sup> No doubt there was a disparity between the living conditions of “fallen women” and those of the middle-class women who attempted to uplift them, but the lack of understanding among moral reformists should not be exaggerated. For example Alba Hellman gave very detailed descriptions of the young women she sent to the shelter and very clearly saw their situation in economic terms. Poverty and the lack of employment were often mentioned. She also discussed their health—including venereal diseases—and often commented on the brothels in which they had worked. Moreover, social aspects were taken into consideration. Women in small towns knew that a new life could be started only in a new environment—that is why they were sent to the capital city where their reputation as former prostitutes or “fallen women” was not known.<sup>42</sup> The fact that many prostitutes returned to their old business, as Antti Häkkinen has shown, can better be understood by paying attention to the motives of the residents themselves. They were more than victims of “men’s passions” or of benevolent women’s moralism. Because they entered the home voluntarily, women could use it as a temporary shelter. Emma

<sup>41</sup> Häkkinen, 1995, 204-205.

<sup>42</sup> “Alba Hellman to Emma Åhman,” 10.6.1883 and 3.7.1883. “Emma Mäkinen,” Forsman-Koskimies Family. KA.

Mäkinen's correspondence shows that some women requested a place in the shelter when, for instance, they were released from the prison or if they wanted to move.<sup>43</sup> Numerically the rescue work failed, because many protégées sought a passing refuge, not a permanent correction or an eternal salvation, which in fact was the ultimate object of the religious moral reform.

Emma Mäkinen's shelter was also a private home. She opened her doors to "fallen women" and lived there with her mother, husband and sometimes mother-in-law too. In this respect she worked within the walls of a home and did not enter the wider society. The combination of private life and rescue work was not without problems. Emma Mäkinen's vocation was most severely tried in 1900 when she spent several months in a hospital. During that time her husband, who occasionally suffered from mental problems, had an affair with a woman in the shelter. The husband, who was one of the leaders of the Free Mission, was immediately sent away from Helsinki and later from Finland by the other leaders. He lost his position and a shadow was thrown over the home. Friends in the Free Mission demanded that the orphanage and the home for fallen women should be separated and the children moved away from the shelter. During the time the "fallen" husband stayed out of Helsinki, the couple wrote to each other almost daily.<sup>44</sup> He blamed himself, showed regret and expressed gratitude to his loving wife and merciful God. Emma did not approve her husband's behavior but from the very first letter after the catastrophe was discovered she was ready to forgive him. Bitter feelings were expressed a couple of times, but all the time her disappointment

<sup>43</sup> Häkkinen, 1995, 203; "Letters From the Inmates," Emma Mäkinen, *EFCF I Ha*: 4, HMA.

<sup>44</sup> "Emma and Antti Mäkinen's correspondence," March 1900-March 1901. *EFCF I Fb*: 4-5, HMA.

was subjected to her faith in the love of Jesus. She believed that in front of almighty God everyone was a sinner and needed mercy. Marriage crisis was turned into a spiritual experience which strengthened her evangelical conviction.

However, a woman who had devoted her entire life to uplifting “fallen women” had to confess that she had not been careful enough. She knew the risks involved in her work: “fallen women” represented a moral threat to people around them. According to a common understanding men were not able to control their sexuality in the same way as chaste women.<sup>45</sup> With her friends Emma Mäkinen openly discussed “his sin” and his weakness. Fellow believers often sent their regards to Antti and promised to pray for him. Emma welcomed her husband back, although some friends recommended that he should stay out of his home. The husband returned and after a while he was again employed by the Free Mission, but he could not gain the same position he had had earlier, partly due to his mental weakness.<sup>46</sup> Emma Mäkinen remained a respected member of the community continuing her rescue work until her death in 1915. She was convinced that evil powers were threatening everywhere and every soul. For her the life of a Christian was an ongoing struggle against sin which could be won only by staying very close to Christ.

Although Emma Mäkinen found her calling in the context of Anglo-Saxon evangelicalism and was even baptized in 1883, she had close contacts with many women from the Deaconess Institute of Helsinki, the matron being one of her friends. Some-

<sup>45</sup> On the ideas of chastity in Sweden, see Hammar, 1999, 173-177; Jansdotter 2004, 258-260.

<sup>46</sup> Antti Mäkinen’s weakness was discussed—without mentioning his name—in the weekly newspaper of the movement. John D. Kilburn, “Kristityitten lankeaminen,” *Suomen Viikkolehti* 19.4.1900.

times they held private prayers together.<sup>47</sup> There were also other deaconesses in close contact with Emma Mäkinen and her rescue work was respected among the Lutheran majority of moral reformists. In the early 20th century Emma Mäkinen was elected to a delegation which made the case to the high state authorities of the importance of female police officers in the work against prostitution and venereal diseases.<sup>48</sup> The fact that she was a religious dissident did not exclude her from moral reform.

### Political Calling

In the 1880s and the 1890s, an increasing number of Finnish women felt that private charities and philanthropic enterprises could solve some problems but they could not cure the origins of social problems. For real improvements, women's battle against sin and vice needed changes in legislation. The first women's rights society, the Finnish Women's Association, was founded in 1884. In addition to women's right to work and women's legal rights, one of the goals was moral reform. To women's surprise, this part of their program gained the strongest opposition from some outstanding members of the Lutheran clergy, although many pastors openly supported women's attempts to uproot vice from Finnish society.<sup>49</sup> The crucial question seemed to be the way in which women's social role was understood.

<sup>47</sup> "Emma Mäkinen to Antti Mäkinen," 13.8.1889, *EFCF* I Fb: 5. HMA; About Emma's baptism Nanny Lundgren to Edvard Björkenheim, 1.7.1883. Edvard Björkenheim's correspondence, Orisberg, Finland.

<sup>48</sup> Frida Sjöblom, "Siveellistyön järjestäminen maassamme," *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 12/1908; Rajainen, 1973, 174.

<sup>49</sup> Rajainen, 1973; *Excelsior* 1886. *Excelsior* was a yearbook published by the Women's Association.

Bishop Gustaf Johansson was the most prominent opponent of women's attempts to expand their fields of activity. In 1885 he presented his view of women's emancipation. He reminded the clergy of his diocese that both the state and marriage were God-given; therefore, human beings should not change the divine order. He underlined that women had the same human dignity as men and there were tasks for women beyond the scope of a family, but to grant them equal rights would be against divine social order, and, logically, to demand equal rights was to rebel against God's will. Following this reasoning he could not see any way to combine Christian faith and the women's rights movement. They were totally incompatible. Furthermore, the Bishop saw that the emancipation of women—by being in itself disobedience to God's will—promoted immorality and licentiousness.<sup>50</sup>

Women who advocated moral reform found the Bishop's critique unjust and misplaced. The Women's Association replied directly to the Bishop clarifying their own position and explaining the contents of emancipation. They made clear that the women's rights movement was not rebelling against "divine social order"; instead, they were honestly trying to determine which rules were ordered by God and which rules were only said to be God-given. The Women's Association wanted to abolish social defects. It was also very clearly and polemically stated that the women's rights movement would give up its demands if someone could rationally prove that social defects were created and ordered by God. If that could not be proved, then it was obvious that it was a wrong judgment to claim that women's emancipation was "a rebel against God's order." Moreover, the Women's Association published both in Finnish and in Swedish a booklet by the Danish minister Hostrup

<sup>50</sup> "Piispa Johansson naisvapautuksesta," *Excelsior* 1886, 58-60.



which clearly laid the foundation of women's rights on a Christian basis.<sup>51</sup>

The representatives of the women's rights movement were also interpreting the Holy Bible. They underlined that the basic values of Christianity were freedom and equality. Women criticized Eastern, patriarchal ideology which, according to their understanding, was against the very message of the New Testament, but showed that the same Paulus, who told women to keep silence in the meetings or wives to be obedient to their husbands, had also promoted gender equality. "... there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus," quoted one of the local leaders of the Women's Association in 1905.<sup>52</sup> Christianity was understood to be the founding principle of women's emancipation. This was repeatedly emphasized by Alexandra Gripenberg, one of the most prominent women's rights activists of her time. Looking back at the history of the women's rights movement, she stated that women's emancipation was a fruit of Christianity. For her all radical efforts to free women's emancipation from the burden of Christian religion were in fact endeavors to smuggle anti-emancipatory ideas into the women's rights movement. Women's emancipation had two basic principles: men and women should have equal rights, and they should be equal in terms of morality. The latter part was based on Chris-

<sup>51</sup> "Piispa Johansson naisvapautuksesta," *Excelsior* 1886, 64-65; C. Hostrup, *Tutkistelemus, kuinka naisen vapauttamisesta kristillisesti on ajateltava* (Helsinki: Suomen Naisyhdistys, 1896).

<sup>52</sup> "Eastern" referred to Middle East and the world of Old Testament. Iida Yrjö-Koskinen, "Mietteitä kirkkokäsikirjan johdosta," *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 11/1905; "Piispa Johansson naisvapautuksesta," *Excelsior* 1886, 65-71; "Naisen toiminnasta," *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 11/1898; Toini Topelius, "Mietteitä naisesta ja siveellisyyskäsitteestä," *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 6-7/1892; "Naisasian nykyinen kanta Suomessa," *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 7/1905; On similar arguments in Sweden, see Hammar, 1999, 130-141.

tian values which freed women from the prison of sexuality and which demanded the same purity from both sexes. Because equality in terms of morality was another cornerstone of women's emancipation, only Christianity could guarantee it.<sup>53</sup> Moral reform was threatened both by prostitution and the new ideas of free sexuality; as long as moral reform was not achieved, attempts to gain gender equality remained fruitless.

At the end of the 1880s the Women's Association made several attempts to put an end to prostitution in Finland. They wrote petitions and turned to the Diet of four estates. In the estate of clergy their first petition was presented by Bishop C. H. Alopaeus in 1888. The petition was signed by 3037 women and 2745 men. The discussion by the legislators showed the different understandings of women's calling. Bishop Johansson was unwavering. He claimed that the Women's Association polluted the moral atmosphere by spreading information about prostitution.<sup>54</sup> Two bishops held opposite views of women's social activism. While one of them supported the women's petition and their crusade against prostitution, another saw the crusade itself as an attack against God's order. Moral reformists should not talk about "fallen women" because, by making them visible, they endangered and offended decent women. The new issue was not easy for women either. In 1887 a small-town group of benevolent women discussed moral reform because they had received tracts on "white slavery." One of them could read only two pages; her friend bought one tract to support the

<sup>53</sup> "Suomen Naisyhdistys 1884-1904," *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 3/1904; "Naisasia v. 1903," *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 5/1904; "Mitä tarkoittaa 'naisasia vapaamieliseen suuntaan'?" *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 1 (1906): 2-3.

<sup>54</sup> "Suomen Naisyhdistys," *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 3 (1904); Rajainen, 1973, 130-134. Women's petition was again presented by Bishop Alopaeus in 1891 and in 1897 by Bishop Råbergh.

cause but she was going to burn the disgusting text.<sup>55</sup> Not all women were ready to join moral reform movement.

The struggle for moral reform was further promoted by the Finnish branch of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). In many countries, including Finland, it was called the White Ribbon. Frances Willard, who was a key figure of the movement in the United States, was frequently quoted in the publications of the Finnish White Ribbon.<sup>56</sup> The first contacts with the WCTU were created in 1888, when the Finnish teacher Alli Trygg visited the United States and was very impressed by Frances Willard. As soon as she was back at home, she took the first attempts to organize a women's Christian temperance movement in Finland. In 1890 she invited Mrs. Mary Clement Leavitt from the World WCTU to speak about its work. However, the first efforts to start the work in Finland failed, partly because potential moral reformists were active in the Women's Association. More successful was a visit by the Danish speaker Mrs. Elisabet Selmer, who lectured in Turku in 1896. As a result of her visit, the first White Ribbon association was founded in Turku, the city of the chair of the Archbishop.<sup>57</sup> According to the statutes of the "Totally Abstinent Christian Women's Association" the aim of the new society was to work on the basis of God's word to uplift women mentally and materially and to promote total abstinence, moral purity and other Christian virtues "for the home, the native land and the humankind."<sup>58</sup>

<sup>55</sup> "Elli Cajander to Emma Mäkinen" 25.3.1887, *EFCF I Fb*: 3. HMA.

<sup>56</sup> *Jumalalle, kodille ja ihmiskunnalle* (Helsinki, 1916), 3-8; Ann Firor Scott, *Natural Allies. Women's Associations in American History* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991).

<sup>57</sup> Fanny von Hertzen, "Piirteitä Suomen Valkonauhaliikkeen synnystä ja kehityksestä v. 1896-1931," *Valkonauha 1896-1931 Juhlajulkaisu Festpublication* (Valkonauha: Helsinki 1931), 1-2; *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 11 (1895).

<sup>58</sup> *Ehdottomasti raittiin, Kristillisen Naisyhdistyksen Säännöt* (Turku, 1897).

By that time several temperance societies were very popular among women. The Labor movement was one of the strongest supporters of the temperance cause. Activist women in the labor movement organized in the Social Democratic Women's Association in 1900, and more women could be found in the ranks of the Social Democratic Workers' Associations.<sup>59</sup> The field around the temperance question was expanding but it was also in a turbulent state. The fact that the temperance movement was relatively strong influenced the ways in which the small White Ribbon, founded by middle-class women, found its very own field of work in Finland. When the national organization was established in 1905, several actual issues were discussed. The limited resources of the women's rights movement were bound to a fight for women's suffrage, and the temperance movement was believed to be on the edge of total prohibition. Nationalists, including women, struggled against the Emperor's efforts to change the status of the Grand Duchy of Finland. In the midst of all these burning issues, moral reform seemed to remain neglected.

During the national strike in 1905, meetings were held on moral reform. The White Ribbon prepared a petition to abolish prostitution and medical control of it (regulated prostitution), which was understood by many to legalize the trade. In the overall reform enthusiasm, women of the White Ribbon managed to collect thousands of signatures on an appeal which was presented to the Senate. This time the reformists were successful; regulated prostitution was abolished in 1907. However, the moral crusaders were not satisfied with the end result of the reform, because the old system continued in practice. Now it was made a duty of the medical authorities to control venereal

<sup>59</sup> Sulkunen, 1989, 178-191; Irma Sulkunen, "The mobilisation of Women and the Birth of Civil Society," *Manninen and Setälä* 1990, 42-53.

diseases among the prostitutes or women suspected to be prostitutes.<sup>60</sup> Women activists of the White Ribbon felt that they still had an enormous amount of work to do.

When regulated prostitution was abolished, the White Ribbon tried to arrange work for former prostitutes—though it soon became apparent that the reform did not cause remarkable unemployment among them. The White Ribbon founded shelters for “fallen women” and young girls in several towns. Most of them were small and lived a relatively short time, but they managed to put moral reform on the agenda of local decision-makers or to make them aware of the cause. The first one was originally initiated by a Lutheran minister in Turku in 1894. When a Swedish-speaking White Ribbon association was founded in 1904, the association continued to run the shelter. The little association planned to follow the leading principle of Frances Willard to “do everything,” which, in Turku, meant plans to start missionary work in the railway stations, hospitals and police stations; to demand female police officers; and to establish a home for female servants, a work exchange, and a youth club. However, the program was too ambitious as the work was already discontinued by 1909.<sup>61</sup>

The White Ribbon was an association based on Christian values. Many leaders supported feminist ideas of women's rights, which, according to their understanding, had a solid foundation in the Christian social order. Women's suffrage was an important issue for the movement. One of the local associations looked back to the year of the parliamentary reform and called it an anniversary for the people of Finland and, in partic-

<sup>60</sup> Rajainen, 1973; *Valkonauha 1896-1931. Juhlajulkaisu* (Helsinki, 1931).

<sup>61</sup> *Valkonauha 1896-1931*, 9-15; “Helsingin Valkonauha. Pieni rengas suuressa mailmanyhdistyksessä,” *Valkonauha* 8-9/1916; Protokoll 27.1.1894, 18.4.1894, 22.5.1894. The White Ribbon of Turku (WRT) Cb: 3. Turku Provincial Archives (TMA).

ular, for the history of women. They were expecting a better future in terms of temperance and moral reform because women could now make themselves heard in the elections. One of the members even visited the unicameral parliament in order to see the new women members of parliament in action. In September 1907 she travelled to the capital, joined a long queue of visitors and finally entered the balcony of the parliament. The first women she saw among the parliamentarians were Alexandra Gripenberg and Hilda Käkikoski who were devout Christians and outstanding promoters of moral reform. The observer saw them, as well as the other women of the nationalist Fennoman party, to be hardworking, clever and mature members of parliament. The social democratic women—excluding Miina Silanpää who looked intelligent—seemed shallow to her.<sup>62</sup> The way in which the middle-class moral reformist saw the female members of parliament was determined by the parliamentarians' commitment to Christian social work. The more they were involved, the more reliable they looked to her.

Women's participation in parliamentary decision-making was now defined to be the fulfilling of their highest national duty. It was hoped that the parliamentary work, instead of being fruitless attempts to acquire more power, would be real work for women and the entire nation. Women's public role was accepted in the association although some Christian associations were very careful in terms of political participation. The White Ribbon had to address these doubts as well and explain that, by promoting women's rights and temperance among others, they already had entered the field of politics. Both causes demanded new legislation—that is why Christian women had to be involved in politics. The same message was repeatedly expressed by the Women's Association. Christian women were

<sup>62</sup> Valkonauha, 6.2.1907, 30.10.1907. WRT H: 1. TMA.

needed in politics and women who had a Christian worldview should vote for candidates who promoted the right issues and shared the correct values. This was further emphasized by the women of the White Ribbon, who pointed out that the right choice was important. Not only did it promote common good but it also protected religion, abolished the curse of alcohol, promoted nationalism, uplifted the poor and suffering and made it possible for women to have more power in other sectors of society.<sup>63</sup> They built their arguments around the older Christian tradition which, in the name of God, could give women an opportunity to promote good cause.

Women's rights, spirituality, domesticity and nationalism were understood to support each other. In 1916 one of the national board members wrote that, by working for God, home and native land, the organization in fact was working for women. According to her, women were created equal and before God women and men were equal. To spiritually uplift women meant that they should be given an opportunity to come close to God, to find the real purpose of their lives. God's word provided the best spiritual tools for a young woman who could form an equal partnership with her pious husband. Being equal and valuable human beings they could bring up equal and valuable daughters and sons. Pious homes were a necessary condition for spiritual and ideological gender equality. However, the work for women demanded material reforms too. Women's

<sup>63</sup> Valkonauha, 5.12.1906, 19.2.1908. WRT H: 1. TMA; "Naisasian nykyinen kanta Suomessa," *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 7/1905; "Hiukan äänioikeuspakinaa syrjäkylän torpassa," *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 12/1905; "Naiset ja nykyhetki," *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 11/1906; "Kristillismieliset naiset ja vaalit," *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 1/1910.

rights needed to be protected and their equal status promoted by passing similar laws for both sexes.<sup>64</sup>

On some issues the White Ribbon developed an indirect feminist discourse in which women's status in Finland was contrasted to that of other countries. A good example was found in missionary work abroad, which was often motivated by referring to women's lower status in the heathen world. For instance the White Ribbon in Turku discussed missionary work in China. They asked if "we, who find the issue of women's rights precious, can calmly look at the miserable lot of women in China, their huge ignorance of the state of their souls in particular."<sup>65</sup> They underlined that female forces were needed in the China mission and emphasized the importance of women's support of the work. However—as in many other countries—this criticism of Chinese women's status referred indirectly to women's status at home.

Similar examples could be found on their own continent. In 1907 the low status of female teachers in Germany was contrasted to the education of women and the equal status of male and female teachers in Finland. After pointing out the positive achievements of Finnish women, the author could give a long list of unjust conditions which still demanded improvement: "exemption from her sex" needed in civil service, the missing rights of married women, women's right to work, etc.<sup>66</sup> Middle-class women of the White Ribbon were very careful not to give any reason to be blamed for too militant opinions but neither did they hesitate to demand full rights for women.

<sup>64</sup> Irene Rosenqvist, "Työ naisten hyväksi," *Jumalalle, kodille ja ihmiskunnalle* (Helsinki, 1916), 59–65.

<sup>65</sup> Valkonauha 2/1904. WRT H: 1. TMA; Eila Helander, "Miksi naiset lähtivät lähetystyöhön? Uskontososiologinen näkökulma anglosaksisen maailman naislähettien historiaan," *Teologinen Aikakauskirja* 100 (1995), 544–545.

<sup>66</sup> Valkonauha 8.5.1907. WRT H: 1. TMA.



## Conclusions

Various forms of Christian social reform were initiated almost simultaneously in Finland. The deaconess movement was introduced already in the 1860s but in practice it began to grow from the 1880s onward. Free Mission and social work inspired by Anglo-Saxon revivalism commenced in the early 1880s. Also the women's right movement was established in the 1880s. It started the first crusade against prostitution at the end of the decade. The three forms of women's participation in social reform movements presented here, in fact, represented the most important part of the moral reform in 19th and early 20th century Finland.

The examples of Christian social reform indicate that even in the Lutheran, very homogenous context of Finland, the question of gender and religion was a multi-faceted issue. Religious social and moral reform movements empowered women but at the same time they defined proper fields of activity for both sexes. The Christian framework fostered several understandings of women's calling. The Deaconess Institute of Helsinki, founded in 1867, offered one setting and interpretation of a woman's calling. Emma Mäkinen, who founded a shelter for "fallen women" in 1880, represented an alternative interpretation of a woman's calling. The third alternative can be found in the women's rights movement and in the White Ribbon. Both movements consisted of middle-class women who worked on a broad program ranging from moral reform to political participation.

In the Lutheran theology, a calling was connected to everyday life and applied to everybody regardless of age, gender or social position. Women's calling was to serve God as mothers, daughters and servants in the household. The deaconess movement followed most faithfully the Lutheran conception of calling. It expanded the limits of household, but it did not ex-

PLICITLY enter the sphere of politics. Deaconessate offered women a formalized, systematic way of serving the suffering and being mothers to the motherless. By easing earthly misery they were witnessing the love of God and thus promoting the renewal of popular piety which was understood to be the true source of better social conditions. The threshold for entering the motherhouse community was made relatively high, a fact which suggests that the calling of a deaconess was a special vocation.

Women, who were urged by evangelical revivalism to help the suffering, expanded their social role by establishing private charitable enterprises. Emma Mäkinen's shelter is a good example of that kind of work. She worked to uplift "fallen women," and she wanted to help the prostitutes to become decent members of society. Her calling was based on a belief in the importance of personal awakening. Instead of social changes she focused on individual "betterment." Personal Christian faith was a key to better society.

The women's rights movement and the White Ribbon exemplify new challenges to the social definition of gender relations. They re-defined a woman's calling as extending into politics. By giving new interpretations of the Bible, they demanded changes in legislation. To reach their goals they found it necessary to participate in the political decision-making. They were convinced that women and the values represented by them were needed in politics and state affairs. Christian faith was a driving force behind their social participation, both in the moral reform and the women's rights movement, which by the early feminists were understood to be intertwined.

The women involved in Christian social reform gave new interpretations to gender relations. The deaconess movement, the evangelical moral reform and the feminist moral reform were all based on the notion of gender difference. Nevertheless, they

wanted to challenge the social consequences of the difference between men and women. Because God had created women and men equal but different, they felt that women and feminine values were needed in all sectors of society. Deaconesses and the women of the Free Mission were not involved in the struggle for women's political rights, but, as soon as the rights were gained, they used them. The first elections in 1907 brought women from all these groups to the polls. In this way even the deaconesses joined the category of *persona publica*, public person, which in the Lutheran tradition was reserved solely for men. Sister Cecilia Blomqvist already entered politics in 1889 when she became a member of the municipal board for poor relief. For her, the membership represented rather an extension of her work in the City Mission than an opportunity to gain influence in politics. The major difference between the women's rights activists and the other women involved in Christian social and moral reform was that the women's rights advocates were explicitly speaking for themselves. They tied the rights of the poor and the "fallen" to their own rights and claimed that there would be no changes if women were denied the access to politics.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> This article is an updated and revised version of "The Calling of Women: Gender, Religion and Social Reform in Finland, 1860-1920" that appeared in Pirjo Markkola, ed., *Gender and Vocation. Women, Religion and Social Change in the Nordic Countries, 1830-1940* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2000).

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# Re-Emergence of Practice in Contemporary Theology. Aspects and Prospects

OLLI-PEKKA VAINIO\*

*University of Helsinki*

**Abstract.** When positivist philosophies started to falter and pragmatism gained momentum in Anglo-American philosophy, it was natural for theology to follow the path as well. The emphasis started to move from theories to practices. This highlighting of practice can be seen in at least three rather recent—distinct, yet over-lapping—philosophical and theological movements: liberation theology, postliberal theology, and virtue-ethics and virtue-epistemology. In this article, I will shortly describe the role of practice in these movements, and then examine the current debates and their possible future prospects. As a conclusion, I suggest that although the rise of pragmatism offers a tool for beneficial internal criticism, theology should not abandon the epistemic nature of its claims.

**Key words:** practice, postliberalism, liberation theology, virtue ethics, pragmatism

When positivist philosophies started to falter and pragmatism gained momentum in Anglo-American philosophy, it was natural for theology to follow the path as well. The emphasis started to move from theories to practices. This highlighting of practice can be seen in at least three rather recent—distinct, yet over-lapping—philosophical and theological movements: liberation

\* OLLI-PEKKA VAINIO is Adjunct Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Helsinki, Finland.

theology, postliberal theology, and virtue-ethics and virtue-epistemology.

In pragmatism, the practice is the criterion of truth, and both the existence and the meaning of things require an answer given in terms of the practical actions. Broadly understood, this kind of pragmatism seems to be in the background of both liberation theology and postliberalism. Virtue-based approaches (hereafter VBA) in ethics and epistemology are more suspicious towards the theorizing that seeks to function merely in the level of abstractions and rules. VBA are practice-oriented in the sense that they aim at *application* of theories.

In this article, I will shortly describe the role of practice in these movements, and then examine the current debates and their possible future prospects. I do not mean that theology before these movements was impractical or even anti-practical and in favor of mere theorizing. Instead, by “re-emergence” I mean new attention that is given to practice, which in many ways is not a new but rather re-discovery of older habits of doing theology.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For example, in the 17th century Lutheran theology, “*theologia prima*” was the theology embodied in various church practices while “*theologia secunda*” was the theology done in academia. According the Johan Gerhard, theology is not mere *gnosis*, but also *praxis*; “above all theology is practical aptitude.” See Robert Preus, *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, vol. 1, *A Study of Theological Prolegomena* (St. Louis: CPH, 1970), 112-113. For other post-reformation and modern theologies affirming the similar theme (spirituality always seeks to transform and enable the action), see Jens Zimmermann, *Recovering Theological Hermeneutics* (Grands Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 47-132. Liberation theology also seeks to relate itself to ancient modes of *doing* theology. See, e.g., Christopher Rowland, “Liberation Theology,” *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, John Webster et al. eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).



**Practice as Embodied in Certain Contemporary Movements*****Liberation Theology***

Historically, the ideological roots of liberation theology are to be found in the post-World War II Continental European philosophy that considered Marxist pragmatist anti-realism avant-garde at the time. In contemporary philosophy of science, the relationship between pragmatism and realism is still one of the most disputed questions. According to the standard juxtaposition of these two approaches, the scientific realism is more theoretical (it creates puzzles) while pragmatism deals with social practices (it solves puzzles). The same juxtaposition can easily be transferred to analytical-continental debates in philosophy and theology—and liberation theology's critique of traditional theological styles mirrors this same sentiment.

The role of practice was central in original Marxist analysis of history.<sup>2</sup> Practice is the criterion of truth, and our knowledge of the world and our skills of forming the world develop together in reciprocal change and process. Although both realism and pragmatism acknowledge that we approach truth through various processes, pragmatism generally abandons the correspondence-thesis and the idea of objective reality, emphasizing creative practices: instead of asking what the world is like, we can seek to transform it according to our wishes and desires.<sup>3</sup>

The idea of constructing reality surfaces in many forms in contemporary continental philosophy and theology. According to Simon Critchley, the historicity of all philosophies and philosophers feeds into the fact that (1) the human subject is radical-

<sup>2</sup> Marxist connections of liberation theology are usually acknowledged, although nowadays scholars tend to distance these two and emphasize independence of liberation theology from Marxism. See, e.g., Rowland, "Liberation theology," 642.

<sup>3</sup> Ilkka Niiniluoto, "Pragmatismi," *Nykyajan filosofia*, 146-154, I. Niiniluoto & E. Saarinen (Helsinki: WSOY, 2002).

ly finite and does not possess a God-like standpoint, and (2) the character of human experience is thoroughly contingent, i.e., everything that exists could be otherwise. From here we reach the transformative practice of philosophy: Human beings are able to emancipate themselves from their current condition through critique. Critchley summarizes this emancipatory progress as follows.<sup>4</sup>

critique → praxis → emancipation

Critique here means the critique of current praxis, which is seen for some reason unwanted. Necessarily, this critique is based on some theory, which directs and shapes the way we see the current praxis causing it thus to appear as unwanted. The standard theory behind this emancipatory movement is constant critique of the present (and the past). The critique exposes the contingent nature of present, and the ultimate task of the philosopher is the production of crisis, “disturbing the slow accumulation of the deadening sediment of tradition in the name of a reactivating historical critique, whose horizon would be an emancipated life-world.”<sup>5</sup> As theory forms the new praxis, it is supposed to create emancipation from unwanted to wanted practices and consequently to help us conceive new way of understanding the shape of human life.

The same practical orientation is typically mirrored in liberation theology. For example, Elina Vuola claims that liberation theology is grounded in practice and it aims toward practice.<sup>6</sup> However, we should not read liberation theology as anti-

<sup>4</sup> Simon Critchley, *Continental Philosophy. A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 74.

<sup>5</sup> Critchley, *Continental Philosophy*, 73.

<sup>6</sup> Elina Vuola, *Limits of Liberation. Feminist Theology and the Ethics of Poverty and Reproduction* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 37-39.

theoretical because it is based on certain theoretical frameworks through which it interprets the world: theory and practice are thus inherently intertwined.

### *Postliberal Theology*

George Lindbeck's seminal work *The Nature of Doctrine* (1984) launched the postliberal movement and expressed sentiments that gathered together the theologians who did not share the revisionist bias in liberation theologies. Nonetheless, practice was central feature here as well.<sup>7</sup> Lindbeck's famous example in *The Nature of Doctrine* of a crusader cleaving the skull of an infidel while shouting "*Christus est dominus*," functions here as an example of the fact that the truth of a proposition is not tied only to the meaning of the employed words separated from the use of the words and acts, which together form the interpretative context for the proposition. In this case, the act (of cleaving the skull) attaches a false type of lordship to Christ because the meaning of the words is expressed in the use of the words.

Nevertheless, this example has raised questions about the ontological status of Christ's Lordship. Does this entail that it is the practice that makes Christ the Lord? Is Christ's nature dependent on the faith and practice of the church?

Lindbeck has tried to answer to this challenge by distinguishing three kinds of truth: categorical, intrasystemic (coherentist) and ontological (correspondence). According to Lindbeck, the first two kinds are needed to get the last one right.<sup>8</sup> The real correspondence is enabled by true performance of an intrasystemic truth. In other words, in order to refer to God,

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Reinhard Hütter, *Suffering Divine Things. Theology as Church Practice* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1999).

<sup>8</sup> Lindbeck, "Response to Bruce Marshall," *The Thomist* 53 (1989): 403-406; "George Lindbeck replies to Avery Cardinal Dulles," *First Things* (January 2004): 13-15.

one must not only utter some words but practice the meaning of the words as well.<sup>9</sup> Lindbeck writes,

It does no harm and may be helpful sometimes to speak of two other kinds of "truth," categorical and intrasystematic, that are necessary in order rightly to affirm the ontological truth of, for example, *Christus est Dominus*. First, in the absence of appropriate categories and concepts, Christ's Lordship is misconstrued. That Lordship is unlike any other: it involves, most astonishingly, the suffering servanthood of One who is God. Unless this is in some measure understood, "Christ is Lord" is false: it predicates the wrong Lordship of Jesus Christ. Nor does this proposition correspond to the reality affirmed by faith unless it is also, in the second place, intrasystematically "true," that is, coheres and is consistent with the whole network of Christian beliefs and practices. In the light of these clarifications, the tripartite division of "truth" implies neither relativism nor lack of objectivity.<sup>10</sup>

Then Lindbeck goes on to claim that "[i]t most emphatically does not imply that the realities which faith affirms and trusts are in the slightest degree intrasystematic. They are not dependent on the performative faith of believers (as if, for example, Christ rose from the dead only in the faith of the Church), but are objectively independent."

Lindbeck's theory for religious truth is *performative*. In speaking about God, a person seeks to correspond her personhood to the nature of God. This correspondence remains always mysterious but Lindbeck claims that this aptly defines what takes place in the act of signification.<sup>11</sup> But is there any way to test the truth of, for example, the Christian God-claims, if, as it seems,

<sup>9</sup> Paul DeHart, *Trial of Witnesses* (Oxford: Blackwell 2006), 86.

<sup>10</sup> Lindbeck, "Dulles," 15.

<sup>11</sup> George Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press 1984), 64-65.

that God's goodness can only be presupposed? Paul DeHart summarizes Lindbeck's point appropriately: "The only test of categorical truth is the living of the pattern itself, the ongoing test of the religious symbol system's ability to provide illumination and orientation for life and account for anomalous experiences."<sup>12</sup> The truthfulness of religion is measured against its capacity to shape people's lives, and in relation to other religions and belief systems in the sense of making credible accounts of religious phenomena at large. There is no ultimate proof for the truth of any belief system. Instead the truth must be supposed—and then tested in the laboratory of life.

### **Virtue-Based Approaches in Ethics and Epistemology**

Modern virtue ethics grew out of dissatisfaction with deontology and utilitarianism, especially with their inability to address classical themes of interest in moral theory, such as inception of moral character and virtuous behavior, wisdom and moral discernment as personal skills, the role of emotions in habituation, and mundane questions like "what sort of person should I be"?<sup>13</sup> Virtue epistemology, on the other hand, was a reaction to formalism of traditional epistemology, which sought to understand epistemic justification solely in terms of, for example, epistemic duties, adjusting one's belief according to evidence, or the use of certain methods.

Generally, VBA are interested not only in reasons behind various choices but also in the wider context where the reasoning takes place. This includes "emotions, emotional reactions, choices, values desires, perceptions, attitudes, interests, expect-

<sup>12</sup> DeHart, *Trial*, 84. Lindbeck, *Nature*, 131.

<sup>13</sup> These questions linger in the background of Elisabeth Anscombe's essay "Modern moral philosophy," (1958) which marked the rebirth of virtue ethics.

tations and sensibilities.”<sup>14</sup> This means that being virtuous (and, consequently, acting virtuously) is a matter of rather complicated set of properties that function in sync with one another. It is common to say that virtuous habits are not single-track but multi-track properties of persons: they involve the whole personhood.

The development of a virtuous character demands practice, which takes time. A central concept in VBA is *phronesis*, practical wisdom. According to Aristotle, young people cannot have *phronesis* because they lack experience, although they may have, e.g., mathematical skills, which concern universals. *Phronesis*, however, deals with “particulars,” practical applications of universal rules in particular contexts.<sup>15</sup> *Phronesis* is thus needed when certain individual virtues or rules seem to conflict with one another.

The apparent problem with VBA is that the virtues are interpreted from the viewpoint of single tradition. For example, tolerance is understood differently in Islamic and secular Western societies, and some virtues, such as obedience, are considered vices in some traditions.

### **That’s Nice, but Does It Fly?**

All the aforementioned movements take practice as the central factor in their policies, although in differing ways. In doing this, they try to correct one-sided conceptions perceived in rival traditions. Unsurprisingly, there have been substantial critiques against all of these movements. Despite the differing nature of each of these movements, the core of criticism is fairly similar: it focuses on the role of *truth* in these systems. As these movements share certain sensibilities of linguistic turn in that they

<sup>14</sup> Rosalind Hursthouse, “Virtue ethics,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2007). [www.plato.stanford.edu](http://www.plato.stanford.edu)

<sup>15</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean ethics*, 1142a.

stress the embeddedness of our knowing, they are easily seen as insulating themselves from external critique. Commonly, this is the critique laid at the postliberals' door: their definition of rationality as tradition-dependent makes it impossible to criticize them, because theology becomes immanent practice of given systems. However, something similar can be said liberation theology as well, and with regard to VBA it is common to claim that they fall prey to cultural relativism because they are not able to provide universal rules of conduct, being thus too permissive and bound to their respective traditions that disagree with other traditions. I think that all these accusations have a point—but there is a way to give an answer, which may not satisfy everybody but still might show a way forward. First, however, some comments on criticism and cultural relativism.

For example, Rowland underlines that it is not possible to understand liberation theology without commitment and respective action. Consequently, he suggests that liberation theology presents problems for those who “write *about* it.” This can be understood as sort of truism that suggests that we are able to understand more about things by engaging in related action by doing it than by reading about it. Naturally, reading about snowboarding in a comfy chair is something less than tying your legs to a piece of plastic, wood, and metal and rushing down the mountain 60 mph. But surely the reader can understand that there is something potentially dangerous about snowboarding without even seeing a snowboard. She is thus able to provide some kind of valid criticism without ever trying it herself.<sup>16</sup> Extra-systemic critique is thus possible without en-

<sup>16</sup> Parents do this all the time (“No, we are not buying you a snowboard/motorcycle/XBOX/rifle”).

gaging in the given practice (that is, “being one of us”) and a categorical denial of this sounds like insulation from criticism.<sup>17</sup>

These same dynamics are displayed in Rowland’s exposition when he stresses that “liberation theology... is not to be confused with some kind of armchair radicalism in which the thoughts of a liberal intelligentsia offers an Olympian perspective on the doings of fellow men and women.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, Rowland refutes the “Olympian perspective” claims, yet he still maintains that the poor and the oppressed have some kind of epistemological superiority compared to, e.g., “rich” people. Of course, few deny that the poor and the rich share differing perspectives but what exactly does this privileged position mean? Rowland seems to think that privilege in this context means that the “text of life” is given hermeneutical superiority over literal texts, such as sacred scripture.

But now we may ask the same question that is often posed to postliberals: what if your grounding theory is flawed?<sup>19</sup> Several

<sup>17</sup> Pope Benedict XVI remarks that it is impossible to critique liberation theology because it looks like “a flight from reality as well as a denial of reason and morality.” This is due to the dualistic structure and dialectic of liberation theology, which creates a “total picture,” with a clear line between friends and enemies. See, Benedict XVI, “Liberation theology,” *The Essential Pope Benedict XVI*, J. Thornton and Susan Varenne eds. (New York: Harper, 2008), 225.

<sup>18</sup> Rowland, “Liberation theology,” 644.

<sup>19</sup> We do not have pure access to the reality and even our experiences are subjective interpretations, and it is hard to see why the text of life should have a primacy because in this respect the text of life and sacred texts (as an interpretation of life) are on the same level. See, e.g., Merold Westphal, *Whose Community? Which Interpretation?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009). However, it is important to ask how far the interpretation goes? Clearly, being tortured, raped, or being subject to extreme poverty is a horrific experience. Yet people subjected to those evils may interpret them differently. For example, a yogi, a Christian mystic, and Joe the Plumber, may have significantly differing interpretations of being subjected to torture. Despite the differ-



liberation theologians have complained about the failure of liberation theology. I am in no position to evaluate the truth of this claim and I here rely simply on the lamentations of liberation theologians themselves. According to Mary Grey, liberation theology has failed to convince and motivate people to act.<sup>20</sup> Could this mean that there is something wrong in the basic structure, which needs to be critiqued and revised?

ences, they all probably consider the act wrong. But questions like “is torture morally wrong in very possible case,” “what is the best way to end torture,” or “what kind of public policies should I endorse based on my experience” are not so easily and uniformly answered.

<sup>20</sup> Mary Grey, “‘My yearning is for justice’ Moving beyond praxis in feminist theology,” *Interpreting the Postmodern. Responses to Radical Orthodoxy*, Rosemary Raford Ruether and Marion Grau, eds. (New York/London: T&T Clark, 2006). Grey cites, for example, Gustavo Gutierrez’s pessimistic account on the success of liberation theology: “The poor are even poorer and the world cares even less.” A year ago I attended an AAR session about the future of liberation theology. Many of the papers dealt with the problem of the decline of liberation theology, and one of speakers, a Latin American man, even suggested that liberation theology should copy the methods of evangelical Christians in order to survive. But why has liberation theology failed to gain interest? I do not intend to give definite answer but I offer a guess. It may have to do something with the lack of shared stories and the institutions that can embody the stories. The underlying story of revolution and crisis, and re-interpretation of the role of tradition marks a difference between the classical Christian faith and liberation theology. Because some liberation theologies see the tradition as the enemy and the main agent of oppression, they are easily interpreted as a tradition of their own. This is apparent, for example, in the Vatican’s responses to liberation theology. For them, liberation theology is not sufficiently theological or it is interpreted driven by alien theology—despite its noble motivation. Somehow liberation theology faces here a dilemma. On the one hand, in order to be effective it needs to be incorporated in institutions and pronounce a story or narrative with a clearly defined *telos*. On the other hand, it cannot do this because the grounding theory is against seamless metanarratives, which are usually needed for some kind of successful communities to operate. Theology ap-

However, some scholars have remarked that liberationists seem very confident in their reading and analysis of history and suggested remedies.<sup>21</sup> Here one may find some commonalities between liberationism and fundamentalism. However, I do not here use the f-word in its common, pejorative sense. Instead, I find Slavoj Žižek's use more helpful. According to Žižek, fundamentalism is less an endeavor to maintain dogmatic certainty in a time of change but more an assertion of the freedom to violate the dogmatic attitudes that have become absolute in a way that they define the correct conduct without possibility to challenge them openly.<sup>22</sup> The reason why I find Žižek's reading compelling is that the pejorative use of f-word approaches easy psychologism: "those people" behave as they do because they are stupid/not as bright as we/afraid of X, etc.<sup>23</sup> Žižek's reading, however, turns the whole thing upside down and allows us to ask: are we (those opposed by the fundamentalists) doing something wrong? This enables introspection and may open a space for a new kind of encounter between the conflicting parties. Of course, in order to have any effect, this requires both moral and intellectual virtues from the both sides.

Even if fundamentalism can be viewed as a channel or embodiment of the critique of the powers-that-be, we still face the problem of absolutism (in both liberation theology and postli-

pears to be both the cure and the disease. It needs the Church it tries to rid itself of.

<sup>21</sup> For example, Charles Mathewes, *A Theology of Public Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008), 240. Of course, this is a no-brainer because almost everyone fulfills this criterion.

<sup>22</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute* (New York: Verso, 2000), 132.

<sup>23</sup> Sometimes this takes rather amusing forms. For example, Daniel Dennett coined the slightly self-congratulatory term "bright" to refer to people with a naturalist worldview. They even have appropriately named website [www.the-brights.net](http://www.the-brights.net).

beralism).<sup>24</sup> One might suppose that the grounding theory of liberationism (perpetual criticism) would enable a fair amount of criticism, and it naturally does. However, what is interesting is the general direction of emancipation. The grounding story seems to shatter the movement to smaller and smaller pieces.<sup>25</sup> As the number of conversation partners increase, communication challenges abound. Nevertheless, this critical impetus does not entail that the grounding theory could be demonstrated false; or at least I haven't come across such deliberations.<sup>26</sup> The other side of the coin is that the constructivist positions (broadly understood) leave us clueless regarding certain important questions: To which direction we should emancipate? According to which theory? Whose practice? And whose virtues?<sup>27</sup>

### *Prospects*

At the moment, all three aforementioned movements are undergoing changes that differentiate the respective groups more and more both internally and—especially in the case of liberation theology and postliberal theology—in relation to one

<sup>24</sup> The non-foundationalist sheltering of some post-liberal theologians (e.g., Stanley Grenz, Nancey Murphy, Bruce Marshall) is critiqued by Randal Rauser, *Theology in the Search of Foundations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009).

<sup>25</sup> Elaine Graham claims that feminist theology will experience the increasing growth of locality as the "death of the subject" theory slowly erases essential concepts through which the reality could be grasped. See Graham, "Feminist theology, Northern," *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, Peter Scott and William Cavanaugh, eds. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 221.

<sup>26</sup> MacIntyre sees this same dynamic in political theories. Possible changes are already possibilities within the system and the systems do not enable the criticism of the system itself. See A. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (London: Duckworth 1988), 392.

<sup>27</sup> For example, Critchley himself in *Continental Philosophy*, 74, offers multiple differing goals. It is possible that differing emancipatory groups have goals that exclude each other. See also Graham, "Feminist theology," 223.

another. Although there are “conservative” factions within liberation theology, a large part of the movement is abandoning the classical forms of theology, which are generally favored by postliberals. Thus, this is one example of growing plurality in our age. In this case the pluralism seems to result from the pragmatic grounding theory, which enables multiple possibilities of framing out the goal and means of emancipation.

Nevertheless, if we deliberate on this a bit, we could still examine whether there is a point of contact between the aforementioned movements. It could be pinpointed by methodological similarities: the emphasis on performance and the efforts “to practice what one preaches.” Granted that our socio-theological space is littered with different ways to conceptualize goodness, which is the goal of respective practice, it might be wise to search for a common ground and language. One basic phenomenon could be the experience of suffering. For example, in contemporary religious dialogues sharing the stories of suffering has been found to be a valuable tool. However, mere exposure to the experience of suffering (or to the stories about suffering) is not enough. For example, torturers are exposed to these experiences in first person but this does not restrain them from their violent actions. The mere seeing of the face of the other is not enough; the perceiver needs to actually perceive *the* (not just a) face. The torturers may experience pangs of conscience while pushing their victim’s head under the water, but they are unable to respond to their conscience because *they have reasons* for their actions. We may feel empathy, but this does not necessarily affect our actions.<sup>28</sup> What is needed is a shared story that joins people together. Without a theory that sets the other

<sup>28</sup> In fact, empathy (understood here as a mere part of our psycho-social make-up) can be a useful tool for the torturer because it enables him or her to deliver even greater pain.

on a par with me, I am unable to *act* empathetically.<sup>29</sup> Answering questions like “What should I love?” or “Why should I care?” requires some kind of way arguing convincingly about these things.

Here, VBA might be found helpful. Even if different traditions interpret particular virtues differently, they still offer a common and rich vocabulary to address these issues. Generally, VBA do not reduce the number of possible stories one may adopt, but they may offer a way of conviviality and mutual understanding of these stories. Employing the language of vice and virtue can offer an abounding treasure for action-guidance, which is much richer than the formalism of rival models.<sup>30</sup> In similar vein, Eric Gregory claims that “*Caritas* has its different expressions (both personally and institutionally), but awareness of the reality of others is fundamental to a political morality that aims neither too high nor low.”<sup>31</sup>

One of the advantages of liberation theology has been its ability to point out the detrimentality of methods that distance the observers from “the text of life.” The method of distancing

<sup>29</sup> According to Nicholas Wolterstorff, this is the central problem in post-Christian ethical theories. See, Wolterstorff, *Justice. Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

<sup>30</sup> Hursthouse, “Virtue Ethics:” “It is a noteworthy feature of our virtue and vice vocabulary that, although our list of generally recognized virtue terms is comparatively short, our list of vice terms is remarkably, and usefully, long, far exceeding anything that anyone who thinks in terms of standard deontological rules has ever come up with. Much invaluable action guidance comes from avoiding courses of action that would be irresponsible, feckless, lazy, inconsiderate, uncooperative, harsh, intolerant, selfish, mercenary, indiscreet, tactless, arrogant, unsympathetic, cold, incautious, unenterprising, pusillanimous, feeble, presumptuous, rude, hypocritical, self-indulgent, materialistic, grasping, short-sighted, vindictive, calculating, ungrateful, grudging, brutal, profligate, disloyal, and on and on.”

<sup>31</sup> Eric Gregory, *Politics and the Order of Love* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 367.

makes everything trivial.<sup>32</sup> Sometimes it is said that postmodernity teaches love without truth, but is not in fact the opposite true? We never learn to appreciate or love anything if there is no inherent value in the world (except the value we happen to attribute to it). Postmodernism teaches a rigid theory about reality, which makes love and commitment incomprehensible or even impossible. Why bother if it is only violence all the way down, anyway? This engenderg cynicisms, distances us, and makes us unable to commit to anything because we can for example see the revolution changing the colors of the flag but leaving the status quo otherwise intact. If everything is just vapor, why invest in something that vanishes after the first breeze? Postmodern theories of emancipation paradoxically enable "certain nearness," but when you get to heart of the matter, there is nothing to be found.

Therefore, it might be wise to make sure that the pendulum does not swing to the other extreme, so that after an (allegedly pure) theoretical era we enter an (allegedly pure) pragmatic era. Even if we may have pragmatic reason for choosing or valuing certain practices or standards of rationality over others, it does not mean that we should trust in them for purely pragmatic reasons. We may and should have epistemic reasons alongside the pragmatic reason as well.

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<sup>32</sup> See, for example, Linda Zagzebski's account of "Ideal Observers," *Divine Motivation Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

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*Diligite homines, interficite errores.*  
The Ethics of Saint Augustine (354-430) in  
Approaching the Donatist Issue

RADU BANDOL\*

*Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași*

**Abstract.** This study addresses Augustin's position, as the exponent of Catholicity in the West, from an ethical perspective in relation to the Donatist schism which in 401-411 was a serious blow to the Church. The Church was facing a crisis caused by the bishops who had succumbed to the persecution and thus became *traditores* (traitors). The Donatists were a particular group within the Church who contended that in order for the Church to be holy, united and truly full of grace it ought to remove those who had compromised. Augustin's intervention in this delicate problem was rooted in an orderly distribution of love: first God and then one's neighbor. Augustin assumed the role of mediator between the Donatists and the Church with the intention of winning the Donatists to Catholicity. To ascertain this he appealed to ethical values rooted in the concept of Absolute Good, founded in love as the motivation of any action (*dilige, et quod uis fac*—love and do what you will), which, on the one hand, elicits the love of people and destroys the errors, and on the other hand, when necessary, imposes the juridico-political correction of civil nature (*coercitio*).

**Key words:** *traditores, coercitio, ethics, diligite homines interficite errores* (love the people, while you destroy errors), *dilige, et quod uis fac* (love and do what you will)

\* RADU BANDOL is PhD student at the Faculty of History within Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, România.

## Introduction

The complexity of the problems approached and researched by Augustine makes his writings a remarkable turning point in the history of Christian philosophical thinking.<sup>1</sup> His philosophical theology is articulated by profound Christian ethics and, if appropriately assessed, it demands to be contextualized within the hipponite's own epoch of unrest. In the present paper we address the ethical attitude of Augustine as representative of Western Christian Catholic thinking, on the issue of the Donatist schism, which took a major turn between the years 401-411.

## The Donatist Issue

### *The Catholicity,<sup>2</sup> Traditores and the Donatists' Position*

The seed of the Donatist issue is found in the crisis that occurred inside the Church in the time of Diocletian's persecution, between 303-305, and thereof following events, when "a fierce debate begun to question the legitimacy of the bishop of Carthage, Cecilian, who had been ordained by bishop Felix of Aptonga and was accused of being a 'traitor'"<sup>3</sup> for handing the holy books over to the heathen persecutors so that the magistrates may burn them. Indeed, the Church was confronted with tremendous pressure, orchestrated by Deocletian, and this fact caused many bishops to give up their office, thus joining the ranks of what it was perceived as "traitors." Inevitably, this led

<sup>1</sup> *Diligite homines, interfite errors* is a phrase which translates "love the people while you destroy errors."

<sup>2</sup> Here and everywhere else in the paper, it represents the official Christian faith of the Church and not the Catholic denomination from later on.

<sup>3</sup> Claudio Moreschini, and Enrico Norelli, *Istoria literaturii creștine vechi grecești și latine*, vol. II/tom. 1, *De la Conciliul de la Niceea pînă la începuturile Evului Mediu*, trans. Elena Caraboi, Doina Cernica, Emanela Stoleriu and Dana Zămosteanu (Iași: Polirom, 2004), 265.

them to paying the price of being stripped of all the spiritual authority they had within the church.

In 311, a group of bishops from Numidia declared Caecilian's ordination, at the end of the persecution, to be invalid, and demanded the election of a new bishop upon the death of the bishop of Carthage. This group of bishops found a suitable successor in the person of Majoranus, and appealed to the emperor to find an impartial court, made up of the bishops of Gaul, to deal with the case. As the verdict was ruled in the Catholics' favor, the Numidian bishops, who by then had sided with the Donatists, took leading positions in the party of Donatus of Carthage even from 313, and "held on to their own position of being proud of representing the depositary majority of the Christian holiness."<sup>4</sup> Thus the schism between Catholic and the Donatists deepened and spread in the years followed, against the background of the Numidian's uprising meant to override the imperial authority: the Donatists encouraged the local churches of Carthage to reject any financial and food aid offered by the emperor Constantine through Paul and Macarios, and used the Circumcelions, gangs of day laborers and unemployed people, to stir up revolts.<sup>5</sup> The Circumcelions proved their revolutionary acumen by rising up against the landowners and defending the poor. According to a well-known narrative, on one occasion, coming across a rich landowner sitting in his chariot with a slave in the front seat, they stopped the chariot demanding the landowner to swap places with the slave.<sup>6</sup> Finally, the imperial armies stifled the revolts, and many of the Circumcelions and the Donatists were killed. Donatus, together with the heads of the revolt, were exiled.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 266.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>6</sup> *Vedi Optati Milevitani, De schismate Donatistarum (Adversus Parmenianum)*, III, 4 (PL 11: 1006-1013cc).

The territory of North Africa became the stage of a perpetual dispute between the Catholic community and the Numidian faction, and “since then until the Muslim invasion of Africa there were two rival groups, each with its own episcopate, reciting the same creed, and practicing identical sacramental format and liturgical structures.”<sup>7</sup> The attitude of the Donatists became increasingly separatist, and they had “a conscience characterized by a sectarian spirit, as they were the only ones who were right and considered themselves as soldiers of Christ who fight for a good cause: their church was the a church of the martyrs.”<sup>8</sup> They reached extreme levels of fanaticism. Martyrdom became a supreme goal, and was even associated with praise and a sense of vindication. This glamorization of martyrdom was also fueled by the cult of memoirs and relics through which members were encouraged to revel in the assurance that they would share in the fate of their brothers in faith who likewise had endured persecution under Diocletian. This led to cases of collective suicide, as people threw themselves into ravines or set stakes ablaze.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Stakes of the Fight between 401-411**

From an ethical-theological point of view, the apple of discord was the question of the *holiness* of the Church. In response to the paramount doctrinal question, “which is the causal connection between grace and perfection or between the Church unity and the Church holiness?”<sup>10</sup> Petilian answered: *Vae igitur vobis*,

<sup>7</sup> Henry Chadwick, *Augustin*, trans. Ioan-Lucian Muntean (București: Humanitas, 2006), 106.

<sup>8</sup> Henri-Irénée Marrou, *Biserica în antichitatea târzie 303-604*, trans. Roxana Mareș (București: Teora-Universitas Publishing House, 1999), 38.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>10</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *Tradiția creștină. Nașterea tradiției universale 100-600*, vol. I, trans. Silvia Palade (Iași: Polirom, 2004), 318.

*qui violando quod sanctum est, rescinditis unitatem*,<sup>11</sup> referring to the Catholics. Each party considered itself to be “Catholic.” The Donatists, however, embraced the idea of subordinating to Catholicity and to the unity of holiness; hence, in order to be utterly pure, the Church had to be cleansed from *traitors*. The absolute perfection and the holiness resided only with the Donatists, the community of the rightful Church, and by implication, the holy Mysteries belonged exclusively to it. Therefore, the Mysteries carried out by the descendants of believers who, in times of persecution made a “pact” with the devil, thus becoming “the synagogue of Satan” (i.e. the Catholics), were not valid.

### **Augustine’s Ethics Rooted in the *Summum Bonum***

Augustine is the first among the Church Fathers who “makes Christian ethics a specific part of theology.” The reverberations of his ethics through the history of the Church “have shaped and accentuated his legacy to Christian ethics.” This heritage “combines an acute moral sense, certainty of an objective moral order, a sober assessment of the limits of humane virtue, a complex but supple doctrine of Christian love, and a refusal either to relinquish hope in moral transformation or portray it as a simple matter of willful resolve.”<sup>12</sup> As Bonnie Kent<sup>13</sup> notes,

<sup>11</sup> Augustinus, *Contra Litteras Petiliani Donatistea Cirtensis Episcopi*, 2.105.240, PL 43: 343c, English cited from Augustin, “Answer to Letters of Petilian, Bishop of Cirta,” in Augustin, *The Writings Against the Manichaeans and Against the Donatists*, NPNF<sup>1</sup> 4: 593: “Woe unto you, therefore, who, by doing violence to what is holy, cut away the bond of unity...”

<sup>12</sup> Gerald W. Schlabach and Nello Cipriani, O. S. A., “Ethics,” *Augustine Through the Ages. An Encyclopedia*, Paperback Edition, 320-321, gen. ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> Bonnie Kent, “Augustine’s ethics,” *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, 205, eds. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Augustine regarded ethics as an incursion into the *Summum Bonum*: the supreme good, which provides the happiness all human beings seek. In this respect, Augustine's moral thinking comes closer to the eudaimonistic ethical virtue of classical Western tradition than to the ethics of duty and law associated with modern Christianity.

If God is the greatest good, it means that by following Him, we will lead a good and happy life. When engaging with the heathen philosophers and the Manicheans, Augustine argued in platonic style, opposing the Epicureans and the Stoics. However, Augustine's ethics are profoundly scriptural as they emphasize on the order of love: love must be fairly shared. The Scriptures include the commandment to love, first and foremost the Lord God, with one's whole mind and strength, and then, inseparably linked, to love one's neighbor. Regarding the second part of the commandment, Augustine agreed with the Peripatetics and the Stoics, reiterating and upholding the social and the religious dimensions of the human nature.<sup>14</sup> The hierarchy in distributing love is extremely important, as living correctly means abiding by the natural order of things: God first, and all the others in relation to God.

The late work of Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* (425), unveiled the stoic reminiscence of his vision of the moral life, which sincerely desired the establishment of a rational order of virtue, not only *per se*, but also in the social sphere. The bishop reached the conclusion that, because the project of the social order is, to say the least, "impeded" here on earth, the Christians should strive for a partial peace, without putting their hope in its fulfillment during this life. On her way to the heavenly city, the Church remains the place of the highest hopes in accomplishing

<sup>14</sup> Nello Cipriani, "Ethics. Philosophical Background," *op. cit.*, 321, gen. ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald.

the order of mutual love, in spite of it being a *corpus permixtum* whose final perfection will not be a result of achieving the highest level of virtues, but from the forgiveness of sins. The dynamics of the mutual love is anchored in the Trinitarian love that is a role model of the first fruit of creation in the community of mutual love. One cannot invoke and single out one corridor of love, because Christian love stems from a whole:

Si autem diligis fratrem, forte fratrem diligis et christum non diligis? quomodo quando membra christi diligis? cum ergo membra christi diligis, christum diligis; cum christum diligis, filium dei diligis; cum filium dei diligis, et patrem diligis. Non potest ergo separari dilectio. elige tibi quid diligas; sequuntur te cetera. [...] nemo se excuset per aliam dilectionem ad aliam dilectionem. omnino sic se tenet ista dilectio: quomodo ipsa compaginata est in unum, sic omnes qui ex illa pendent unum facit et quasi conflatur illos ignis.<sup>15</sup>

However, it is worth noting that Augustine confronted a great limitation in exercising this kind of love, as the Church in the north of Africa was divided between the Donatists and the Catholics. At the same time, some of his most eloquent teachings about love were born out of the passionate longing of the bishop to restore the order of mutual love between the two par-

<sup>15</sup> Augustinus, *In Epistolam Joannis ad Parthos tractatus decem*, 10.4, PL 35: 2055-2056cc, English version cited from Saint Augustin, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, in *St. Augustin: Homilies on the Gospel of John; Homilies on the First Epistle of John; Soliloquies*, NPNF<sup>1</sup> 7: 521-522: "When therefore thou lovest members of Christ, thou lovest Christ; when thou lovest Christ, thou lovest the Son of God; when thou lovest the Son of God, thou lovest also the Father. The love therefore cannot be separated into parts. Choose what thou wilt love; the rest follow thee... Let none excuse himself by another love, for another love; so and so only is it with this love: as the love itself is compacted in one, so all that hang by it doth it make one, and as fire melts them down into one."

ties, with the price of justifying the imperial power and the sanctions of correcting—*coercitio*—the Donatists, in the name of the proffered love. In the following paragraph we will critique the ethics of Augustine’s attitude in the Catholic–Donatist conflict (401–411).

### **Augustine Facing Donatism**

All his life, Augustine militated in favor of truth whilst trying to comprehend the mainstream contemporary school of thought. He was at the same time a defender of the Church and a great lover of God. Seeking to uncover the truth, he fought with three major heretical groups: the Manicheans, the Donatists and, towards the latter part of his life, the Pelagians. Between 401 and 412 his main preoccupation was to fight, with all the resources he possessed, for the unification of the Church of Christ in North Africa. The schism of the Donatists was for him not only the cause of an intense personal spiritual discomfort, but also, due to their aggressiveness, the source of general public disorder. That is why Augustine, using every possible means, such as dogmatic writings, treaties, letters, sermons, polemic writings, invitations to irenic dialogue, councils, public conferences and even intervention with armed forces, sought reconciliation with the Donatists.

### ***Diligite homines, interficite errors. Love the People, While You Destroy Errors***

We have asserted that Augustine’s ethics were rooted in *Summum Bonum*, and that the hipponite wanted the establishment of a rational order of virtue even in the social sphere. In his controversy with the Donatists, Augustine was compelled to use theological arguments to justify his ethics. In the discussion about Christ’s mediation, he introduced the concept of *totus Christus caput et corpus*—the whole Christ head and body. “He



develops this image, at least in part, in order to stress Christ's unity with the church against the Donatists, for whom the church exists only where it can be found 'without stain or wrinkle' (Ephesians 5:27): that is, where its members, particularly its bishops, are free of serious sin."<sup>16</sup> Augustine's arch-motif, as he admonished the Catholics, in his pursuit of "recovering" the Donatists, is encapsulated in that which is known as the principle *diligite homines, interficite errores*:

Quapropter, carissimi, quamquam multis modis convictus error iste superetur, nec ullis assertionibus qualiscumque rationis, sed sola impudentia pertinaci resistere audeat veritati [...] Haec, fratres, cum impigra mansuetudine agenda et praedicanda retinete: diligite homines, interficite errores: sine superbia de veritate praesumite, sine saevitia pro veritate certate. Orate pro eis quos redarguitis atque convincitis. Pro talibus enim propheta Deum deprecatur, dicens: *Imple facies eorum ignominia, et quaerent nomen tuum, Domine*. Quod quidem iam fecit Dominus, ut eorum facies ignominia Maximianistarum apertissime impleret: superest ut norint salubriter erubescere. Ita enim nomen Domini quaerere poterunt, a quo perniciosissime aversi sunt, dum pro eo suum nomen extolunt. Vivatis et perseveretis in Christo, et multiplicemini, atque abundetis in caritate Dei, et in invicem, et in omnes, dilectissimi fratres.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Robert J. Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 97-98.

<sup>17</sup> Augustinus, *Contra Litteras Petiliani Donatistae Cirtensis Episcopi*, I.27.29, 29.31, PL 43: 258-260cc; English cited from Augustin, "Answer to Letters of Petilian, Bishop of Cirta" in Augustin, *The Writings Against the Manichaeans and Against the Donatists*, NPNF<sup>1</sup> 4: 529: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, though that error is exposed and overcome in many ways, and dare not oppose the truth on any show of reason whatsoever, but only with the unblushing obstinacy of impudence... these things, brethren, I would have you retain as the basis of your action and preaching with untiring gentleness: love men, while you destroy errors; take of the truth without pride; strive for

In the first part of the Donatist dispute, Augustine tried to formulate convincing arguments which appealed exclusively to the conscience of his contenders. Often they crossed the line in their behavior. They overlooked the small punitive measures of the emperors, and when Gildon stepped into the shoes of the emperor Theodosius, declaring himself independent and offering freedom to the Donatists, the latter became impudent and terrorizing (e.g. Optat of Thamugadi). The Donatist bishop Crispinus of Calama, owner of the Mapalia domain, near Hippona, forcibly rebaptized 84 Catholics on his estate. The Circumcelions reacted with clubs and the deacon Nabor was captured and killed. The Donatists who returned to the Catholics had limewater with vinegar rubbed in their eyes.<sup>18</sup> Augustine's answer, in the view of the reconciliation in this conflict, is one that appeals to the right of freedom of conscience, proposing public discussions which the peasants could attend and where they were able to choose for themselves which church they would want to be a part of. Moreover, the bishop of Hippona encouraged people to fear God's judgment before fearing the law, principle that he could ask anyway to be imposed. Augustine himself suffered at hands of the schismatics on many occa-

the truth without cruelty. Pray for those whom you refute and convince of error. For the prophet prays to God for mercy upon such as these, saying, 'Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Thy name, O Lord.' And this, indeed, the Lord has done already, so as to fill the faces of the followers of Maximianus with shame in the sight of all mankind: it only remains that they should learn how to blush to their soul's health. For so they will be able to seek the name of the Lord, from which they are turned away to their utter destruction, whilst they exalt their own name in the place of that of Christ. May ye live and persevere in Christ, and be multiplied, and abound in the love of God, and in love towards one another, and towards all men, brethren well beloved."

<sup>18</sup> Bernard Ștef, *Sfântul Augustin. Omul. Opera. Doctrina* (Cluj-Napoca: Gloria Publishing House, 1994), 139.

sions. Once he was slandered and mocked by a Donatist priest, as he was on his way to offer his council to the daughter of a Catholic colon (that is a tenant farmer) who was mistreated by her father for having joined the ranks of the Donatist Virgins. On another occasion, as he was travelling on a road well known to his enemies to a preaching appointment in another place, his life was providentially spared as the Donatists wanted to kill him but failed to do so, as their guide got confused and lost his way. Augustine answers in *Epistle 105*:

Caritas Christi, cui omnem hominem, quantum ad nostram pertinet voluntatem, lucrari volumus, tacere nobis non permittit. Si propterea nos odistis, quia pacem vobis catholicam praedicamus, nos Domino servimus dicenti: *Beati pacifici, quoniam ipsi filii Dei vocabuntur* (Matthew 5:9)... Si Christum ipsum tenetis, ipsam Ecclesiam quare non tenetis? Si in ipsum Christum quem legitis, et non videtis, tamen propter veritatem Scripturarum creditis; quare Ecclesiam negatis, quam et legitis et videtis? Haec vobis dicendo et ad hoc bonum pacis et unitatis et charitatis vos compellendo, inimici vobis facti sumus; et mandatis quia occidetis nos qui veritatem vobis dicimus, et in errore vos perire quantum possumus non permittimus. Vindictet nos Deus de vobis, ut ipsum errorem vestrum in vobis occidat, et nobiscum de veritate gaudeatis. Amen.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Augustinus, "Epistola 105," *PL* 33:396, 404cc); English version from Augustin, "Letter 105. Augustine to the Donatists," *Augustine. Political Writings*, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought Series, eds. Robert J. Dodaro and Margaret E. Atkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 162, 173: "The love of Christ, for which we wish to win every person, in so far as this is down to our will, does not allow us to remain silent. If you hate us because we preach Catholic peace to you, we are only serving the Lord... If you hold on to Christ, then why don't you hold on to the church itself? If you believe in Christ because of the truth of scripture, although you can read of him, but not see him, why do you deny the church, which you can both read of and see? We have become your enemies by saying this to you, and by forcing you into this good of peace and unity and love. You re-

Augustine engaged in extensive polemic activity in this period of time. He even forsook other writings he had begun, in order to commit himself to the Donatist issue. *Contra Epistulam Parmeniani* from the year 400 was "one of the most significant works written by Augustine against the schismatics." In it he "examines afresh the role of various Mysteries and of those who consecrate them and reaffirm that at the end of times the good will be separated from the evil ones."<sup>20</sup> Also in 400/401 he wrote *De baptismo contra Donatistas*, dealing with the burning issue of the validity of the baptism conducted by the schismatics. *De unitate Ecclesiae* or *Epistula ad Catholicos de secta Donatistarum*, finished in 405, is a rejection of *Contra litteras Petilianii*, in which the texts quoted by Petilianus are exegetically well scrutinized. If in the initial part of the polemic Augustine relied on the documents of Optatus of Mileve, in the latter part he used the acts of the Donatist councils, their internal epistles, deeds from recent history and even other materials from friends. In the writings of this period he condemned the violence of the Donatists against the Catholics, as well as the cruel treatment of the dissident Donatists.<sup>21</sup>

### *Coercitio*

The fight against the Donatists did not refer only to their dogmatic correction, but also to a juridical - political one "determining Augustine to formulate a theory according to which it is ne-

port that you are going to kill us when we are only speaking the truth to you, and preventing you, so far as we can, from being lost through error. May God rescue us from you by killing this error of yours in you. Then you may rejoice with us in the truth. Amen."

<sup>20</sup> Claudio Moreschini, and Enrico Norelli, *Istoria literaturii creștine vechi grecești și latine*, vol. II/tom. 2, *De la Conciliul de la Niceea pînă la începuturile Evului Mediu*, trans. by Hanibal Stănciulescu (Iași: Polirom, 2004), 42.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*.

cessary to use... the powers as well, even if they are of exclusively civil essence, of the so-called *coercitio*, that is to be forced by police means to profess the Catholic faith."<sup>22</sup>

Phillip Gray partially agrees with the solution offered by Ernest Fortin whereby, due to the innate evil it was necessary educate the human nature *per molestias eruditio* (educating through hardships). Furthermore, Gray submits that "this is the underlying source for Augustine's apparently different views on coercion used in just wars and his ideas about the Donatists, where the main point of coercion is to save the schismatic or heretic from his own weakness and damnation by forcing him into the Church (taking note that forcing someone physically into a church to hear the Good News is different from forcing *conversion*)."<sup>23</sup>

In his book "There Is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ" and particularly in the article *Augustine, the State, and Disciplinary Violence*, Michael Gaddis conveys his argument in a very clear and compelling manner as to how *coercitio* was perceived in the times of the Donatist controversy. Vincentius, the Donatist bishop of Cartenna, who was also the leader of the Rogatists, a small group of bishops that separated themselves from the Donatist group, was the advocate of tolerance, contending that nobody should be compelled to seek justice. In the dispute with Augustine, he reproached him by saying exactly what Augustine himself used to believe at the beginning, that coercive measures would simply produce insincere converts, superficial Catholics that would remain Donatists in their hearts. However, the effects of the measures of the new laws brought forth in

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>23</sup> Phillip W. Gray, "Just War, Schism, and Peace in St. Augustine," *Ethics, Nationalism, and Just War. Medieval and Contemporary Perspectives*, eds. Syse Henrik and Gregory M. Reichberg (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 51-52.

Augustine new defiant arguments. For instance, some had joined the Catholics, but kept silent because of their fear of Donatists. Others fell into the Donatist error merely by tradition and the power of habit and had not previously been forced to consider these disputes as risky. Now, the same power of habit would lead them to joining the flock again. Even those whose conformity had been purely superficial would be able, in the end, to take to heart what their tongues confessed. Nevertheless, as Gaddis observes, “this was a fundamentally utilitarian argument: coercion was acceptable because it *worked*. Practical experience had overcome Augustine’s initial worries.”<sup>24</sup> The argument, in this sense, was based on the Scriptures as well: if Jesus called Peter and the other apostles with one word, in the case of Paul he used power, flinging him to the ground and striking him with blindness.<sup>25</sup>

*Dilige, et quod uis fac. Love and Do What You Will*

It is not coincidental that this sentence from *Tractatus in epistolam Ioannis ad Parthos* (407/409), which has become so famous and has often been misquoted, was actually born in the context of Donatism and Church discipline, in which reflection upon the meaning of God’s love was not an easy thing. Here is the sentence framed in the immediate context:

Hoc diximus in similibus factis. In diversis factis, invenimus saevientem hominem factum de caritate; et blandum factum de iniquitate. Puerum caedit pater, et mango blanditur. Si duas res proponas, plagas et blandimenta; quis non eligat blandimenta, et fu-

<sup>24</sup> Michael Gaddis, *There Is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ. Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 132.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Augustin, “Letter 185. Augustin to Boniface,” 187, *op. cit.*, eds. Robert J. Dodaro, and Margaret E. Atkins.

giat plagas? Si personas attendas, caritas caedit, blanditur iniquitas. Videte quid commendamus, quia non discernuntur facta hominum, nisi de radice caritatis. Nam multa fieri possunt quae speciem habent bonam, et non procedunt de radice caritatis. Habent enim et spinae flores: quaedam vero videntur aspera, videntur truculenta; sed fiunt ad disciplinam dictante caritate. Semel ergo breve praeceptum tibi praecipitur: Dilige, et quod vis fac: sive taceas, dilectione taceas; sive clames, dilectione clames; sive emendes, dilectione emendes; sive parcas, dilectione parcas: radix sit intus dilectionis, non potest de ista radice nisi bonum existere.<sup>26</sup>

The text clearly proves the spirit in which Augustine raised the issue of coercion. The motivation behind every act was love. The Donatists claimed that using a civil tribunal was not proof of love; furthermore, the Catholics could not represent Christ and discredit themselves by resorting to *ipso facto* persecutions. "Augustine did not believe that this kind of protests—formu-

<sup>26</sup> Augustinus, *In Epistolam Joannis ad Parthos tractatus decem*, VII, 4.8, PL 35: 2033c; English version cited from Saint Augustine, "Homilies on the First Epistle of John," *St. Augustin. Homilies on the Gospel of John; Homilies on the First Epistle of John; Soliloquies*, NPNF<sup>1</sup> 7: 504: "This we have said in the case where the things done are similar. In the case where they are diverse, we find a man by charity made fierce; and by iniquity made winningly gentle. A father beats a boy, and a boy-stealer caresses. If thou name the two things, blows and caresses, who would not choose the caresses, and decline the blows? If thou mark the persons, it is charity that beats, iniquity that caresses. See what we are insisting upon; that the deeds of men are only discerned by the root of charity. For many things may be done that have a good appearance, and yet proceed not from the root of charity. For thorns also have flowers: some actions truly seem rough, seem savage; howbeit they are done for discipline at the bidding of charity. Once for all, then, a short precept is given thee: Love, and do what thou wilt: whether thou hold thy peace, through love hold thy peace; whether thou cry out, through love cry out; whether thou correct, through love correct; whether thou spare, through love do thou spare: let the root of love be within, of this root can nothing spring but what is good."

lated by those that made themselves responsible for a long series of violent acts against the Catholics in Africa—are entirely plausible,” nor did he accept that “a ‘parental reprimand,’ applied following a major disagreement, equated persecution,” but he rather theorized that “bringing somebody back on the right track, even if ‘the path’ is less smooth, means love.”<sup>27</sup> However, taking into account the historical developments, i.e. the impact of the prelates, the hierarchs and of those who made decisions throughout Church history, we can join Michael Gaddis, Robert Markus in *Saeculum. History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* and Peter Brown in *St. Augustine’s Attitude toward Religious Coercion*, in confessing that “Augustine’s change of heart on this issue (*coercitio*, A/N) has rightly been considered a defining moment in church history, an endorsement of muscular state intervention in matters of faith.”<sup>28</sup>

## Conclusion

In this study we have critiqued Augustine’s ethics vis-a-vis the Donatists and the problems created by their schism in the period 401-411. The challenges for the Catholic side, whose representative Augustine, were major and continued to mark the history of the church. The Donatists separated themselves from Catholicity due to the *traditores*. Augustine’s ethics were rooted in *Summum bonum*, through which the hipponite bishop wanted to establish a rational order of virtues in the sphere of social life. He fought and encouraged the Catholics under the banner: *love the people, while you destroy the errors, then love, and do what you will. Coercitio*, that is, the means of correction and bringing people back on the right track by means of force, was endorsed by Augustine, when he realized that by the power of

<sup>27</sup> Chadwick, *Augustin*, *op. cit.*, 113-114.

<sup>28</sup> Gaddis, *op. cit.*, 133.



habit people can come to believe in their hearts that which they confess with their tongues. But, *coercitio* was considered a form of love.

Augustine's fight against the schism, the heresy, was drawn to an end, but it did not enjoy complete success. The forced conversions achieved with the help of *coercitio* did not lead to the cessation of the hostility against the Catholics, as the Donatists continued to thrive in Africa during the time of the Vandals.

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# A Remythologized Theology? An Appraisal of Kevin J. Vanhoozer's Communicative Theism

NATANAEL MLADIN\*

*Queen's University of Belfast*

**Abstract:** After “procrastinating in the prolegomenal” fields long enough, where, to our benefit, he has cultivated a robust theological methodology and a sophisticated evangelical hermeneutic, in *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship*<sup>1</sup> Kevin J. Vanhoozer unpacks the ontology implicit in his previous works. The book is an ambitious attempt to, on the one hand, reclaim the biblical *mythos*, or plot line, as the starting point and source of one's theological ontology, and, subsequently, to flesh out a communicative ontology attuned to the polyphonic nature of Scripture. In the first half of the paper I seek to present a detailed summary of Vanhoozer's development of the doctrine of God as articulated in *RT*, while in the second half I offer a series of critical reflections on key areas in Vanhoozer's “communicative theism,” focusing particularly on his “authorial analogy” (*analogia auctoris*) and its use in discussing the relation between divine sovereignty and human freedom.

**Key words:** *mythos*, ontology, communicative theism, remythologizing, authorship

\* NATANAEL MLADIN is PhD student at Irish Baptist College, The Institute of Theology, Queen's University of Belfast, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom.

<sup>1</sup> Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology. Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship. Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Remythologizing theology—an intimidating, somewhat abstruse and theologically ambiguous title, one might say. Vanhoozer, however, considers it fitting once the confusion surrounding the notion of *myth*, or rather *mythos* has been cleared. This he attempts in the opening pages of the book. Readers are warned that *remythologizing* has nothing to do with Bultmann’s demythologizing project, but everything to do with Aristotle’s *mythos*, understood as “emplotted” story, “all the ways in which diverse forms of biblical literature represent, and render, the divine drama” (p. 7)—in other words, the polyphonic Scriptures.

Vanhoozer traces the history of the notion of myth, distinguishing between modern definitions, whether coming from the pen of secular anthropologists (E. B. Taylor, *Primitive culture*)<sup>2</sup> or from modern theologians, especially Bultmann,<sup>3</sup> and ancient ones, particularly Aristotle’s *mythos*.<sup>4</sup> Myth and *mythos*—a perfectly defensible distinction. One can nevertheless wonder how likely it is that the ancient, Aristotelian notion of *mythos*, which Vanhoozer seeks to deploy, will be able to trump the modern understandings of myth (i.e. *fictional*, “sacred story”). To illustrate the confusion a term like *remythologizing* may create we will mention one instance only. In *Speaking of God*, Stephen D. Long uses re-mythologizing as a label to describe the general tendency in modern and more recent theology to replace one way of conceptualizing God (i.e. in substantialist, Aristotelian terms) with another (i.e. relational, personalist, dia-

<sup>2</sup> E. B. Taylor, *Primitive Culture* as referenced in Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 220.

<sup>3</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, facsimile ed. (New York: Prentice Hall, 1981); Bultmann, *New Testament & Mythology* (Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1984).

<sup>4</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics. English* (Public Domain Books, 2009).

logical, perichoretic-kenotic).<sup>5</sup> Although the reference to Aristotle's *mythos* is well detailed in *Remythologizing Theology*, such a close proximity to Bultmann's demythologizing and the kenotic-perichoretic relational theism he seeks to avoid renders the term somewhat confusing and thus less strategically useful.

Nevertheless, given Vanhoozer's penchant for dramatic articulations of theology, it comes as no surprise that he defends Aristotle's notion of *mythos* as "dramatic plot: a unified course of action that includes a beginning, a middle, and end." Also, "*Mythos* concerns what people do and what happens to them; it is a story that concerns doers (agents) and done-to (sufferers)" (p. 5). Vanhoozer highlights a very important feature of *mythos*, namely the connection that exists between it (*mythos*) and "the way the action is rendered." He adds the following clarification remarks: "Unlike myths that hide kerigmatic kernels under disposable literary husks, the form and content of *mythos* are integrally linked." (p. 5-6)

What does Vanhoozer mean then by *remythologizing* and what does theology look like after it has attuned itself to the biblical *mythos*? Theology, simply put, is reasoned, scripturally based and informed reflection on the theodrama, "the story of how the Creator consummates His creation into a whole that is true, good, and beautiful as it is meaningful: a renewed and restored world, an abundant garden-city characterized by everlasting *shalom*." (p. 327) A remythologized theology takes as its starting point the "interpersonal dialogue between God and human beings that the Bible not only depicts but instantiates." (p. xiii) Acknowledging the fundamental fact that God is a communicative Triune being who eternally communicates life, love,

<sup>5</sup> Stephen D. Long, *Speaking of God. Theology, Language, and Truth (The Eerdmans Ekklesia Series)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 16.

beauty in the intra-trinitarian life, who has spoken “many times and in many ways” (Hebrews 1:1) through prophets, and supremely in Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:2), the question to which a remythologized theology is the answer is: What must God be like (e.g. His being, attributes) if He is the communicative agent that Scripture depicts him to be? Thus, remythologizing seeks understanding by pursuing the ontological and metaphysical implications of the biblical images/metaphors, and the biblical *mythos* as a unitary whole. A remythologized theology is, in effect, a Scripture-informed and governed theology, attuned to and informed by the biblical *mythos*, that is, the theodramatic story line. Remythologizing theology is then about restoring Scripture as one’s interpretative framework and basis for metaphysics.

Vanhoozer poignantly argues that biblical descriptions of God’s action and passion are not simply accommodated language, to use Calvin’s long-standing notion,<sup>6</sup> but the elevation of human words to divine discourse. God not so much accommodates to a poor language, but co-opts just this language, just these literary forms to communicate Himself adequately, yet not exhaustively. This is an intriguing, and dignifying reversal of Feuerbach’s charge against theology being the mere projection of humanity’s highest ideals.<sup>7</sup> It is not humans who project themselves into God-talk, but God projects Himself in the biblical text, “from above.” God appropriates human forms—language, literature, the humanity of Jesus—in order to disclose Himself in dialogical interaction with His creatures, being fully Himself, wholly other, holy Author in our midst. (p. 489)

<sup>6</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Library edition ed. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 1.13.1

<sup>7</sup> Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, tr. George Eliot (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1989).



It may be worth noting here the ten theses on remythologizing that Vanhoozer presents at the beginning of his work. I have chosen to present them in my own words. I will expand on them and offer critical comments further on in the essay. RT<sup>8</sup> is about recovering the biblical *mythos*, not a fall-back into a bultmannian understanding of myth. Thus it concentrates on God's Triune being in communicative action and seeks understanding His being and attributes based on His own system of (theodramatic) projection in words, word, and Spirit. RT presents God engaging the world, and particularly humans, in communicative rather than causal fashion. It seeks to show how causation may be better understood in communicative, rather than mechanical terms. RT operates with and within a *theodramatic* framework. This means metaphysics, epistemology and ethics are accorded to the gospel *mythos*, not the other way around. Its ultimate goal is, as previously argued in *The Drama of Doctrine*, appropriate participation in the divine drama, the communication of Word and Spirit.<sup>9</sup> RT maintains Christ and the canon as the starting point for reflection on God, since these are the chief means of God's self-presentation and communication. Such reflection is to be carried out in a way that respects the specificity and reality-depicting power of all literary forms in Scripture. RT is an exercise in biblical reasoning, starting from the diversity of biblical literary forms, points of view, and agencies at work in the theodrama, and laboring towards a dialogical systematics. In contrast to demythologizing, RT seeks the integration of exegesis, biblical and systematic theology through careful reflection on the notion and implications of conceiving God as a triune communicative being/agent.

<sup>8</sup> Remythologizing/remythologized theology. Henceforth "RT."

<sup>9</sup> Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine. A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

He proceeds in the first chapter by presenting a “gallery of canonical exhibits” and “a miscellany of theological issues,” which arise out of these (and others, which the ones presented merely illustrate). These pertain to (1) the nature of God; (2) the God/world relation; (3) the theological interpretation of the Bible: (a) Active voice—God is a speaker; (b) The problem of anthropomorphisms and particularly antropopathisms; (c) The Creator-creature distinction; (d) The covenant Lord/servant relation; (e) The economic and immanent Trinity; (f) Time and eternity; (g) Passive voice (the possibility of God being not only an agent, but a patient, a fellow-sufferer).

Vanhoozer continues in chapter 2 with an assessment of classical theism. He investigates and, through careful reasoning, he rebuts the claim that its conceptual vocabulary used to describe divine perfections and the God-world relation is a pagan inheritance, a fall into Hellenistic Philosophy, an imposition of Greek-thought on Jewish categories of thought and representations which, it is argued by the likes of Elizabeth Johnson,<sup>10</sup> Catherine LaCugna,<sup>11</sup> and most notably Jürgen Moltmann,<sup>12</sup> fundamentally distorts the picture of God as a personal, vulnerable, loving person who engages His creatures in a reciprocal, give-and-take relationship.<sup>13</sup> He argues that although concepts like self-existence, perfection, immutability, impassibility, simplicity are not explicitly present in Scripture, they are adequate

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is. The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2002).

<sup>11</sup> Katherine LaCugna, *God for Us. The Trinity and Christian Life*, 1st pbk. ed. (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1993).

<sup>12</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God. The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, 1st Fortress Press ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

<sup>13</sup> John W. Cooper, *Panentheism. The Other God of the Philosophers. From Plato to the Present* (Nottingham, England: Apollos, 2007), 17-30.

conceptual summaries of the nature of God and His relation to the world as presented in the biblical representations. He avers: "their explicit clarification and amplification required the conceptual midwifery of Greek philosophy." (p. 82) Far from capitulating to Greek philosophical thought, Jewish (e.g. Philo) and Christian theologians, from the patristic writers to Scholastic Protestantism, used Greek ontological categories in a ministerial and missionary way, as to make the Gospel teaching intelligible and conceptually clear to audiences less familiar with the biblical representations. They did not abandon the specificity of the Christian narrative and allow it to be swallowed up in generic ontological categories belonging to foreign metaphysics.

The same cannot be said, however, of modern theology. Modern philosophical theism is indeed more susceptible to the charge of having fallen captive to Greek philosophical categories, argues Vanhoozer, since it has largely proceeded not from the canon but from the concept of an infinitely perfect being. (p. 94) This has resulted in a metaphysics controlled by the concept of perfection, foreign to the biblical representation, attributed to a generic being and espoused by purportedly generic human beings. It is precisely such a metaphysical enterprise which Feurbeach is right to unmask as mere projection of human aspirations.

In marked contrast, a remythologized theology will seek to move from *mythos* to *logos*, *metaphysics*, if metaphysics is understood to be simply the study of being, and will employ metaphysical categories in ministerial, rather than magisterial fashion, in order "to clarify the divine ontology implied by the words and acts of the triune God." (p. 104) Such an endeavour Vanhoozer calls *theo-ontology*, as opposed to *ontotheology* (i.e. perfect being analysis).

A parallel trend in modern theology which Vanhoozer merely sketches, offering brief critical remarks is the renaissance of

Trinitarian theology articulated in predominantly relational rather than causal categories. The immanent Trinity, shows Vanhoozer, is collapsed in the economic Trinity.<sup>14</sup> This is demonstrably a fateful move which severely limits God's freedom to be distinct from His creation and saving work (p. 109) and virtually eliminates the historically established transcendence-immanence distinction. Salvation history becomes God's personal history. For Moltmann, a prominent representative of relational trinitarianism, the cross is an intra-trinitarian event, rather than the climactic redemptive-historical event.<sup>15</sup> Sovereignty is really the power of suffering love. (p. 129) God is more a sympathetic lover alongside the world than Lord over it, affected in his being by it.

The key issue which Vanhoozer explores by investigating such proposals is their potential, or lack of thereof, for giving "a coherent account of the types of special divine action—especially communicative action—that the Bible everywhere depicts." (p. 134) In other words, the question is whether such construals of God's being are faithful to God's pluriform self-presentation.

Vanhoozer continues focusing on 20th century variations on relational theism (esp. panentheism, open theism, process panentheism), by examining how they construe (1) God's personhood, (2) God's love, and (3) God's suffering. All relational theistic proposals share a group of principal ideas. First, the divine persons are not to be conceived in substantial but *relational terms*. Relations are understood to constitute being. Secondly, God's love for the world is seen as *perichoretic* relationality. On this point it is worth noting the displacement of the notion of

<sup>14</sup> Stanley Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 115.

<sup>15</sup> Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 244.

*perichoresis* from its proper dogmatic location in the immanent Trinity to the God-world relationship. God, in effect, ontologically depends on the world. Likewise, *kenosis* is removed from its historically established location in Christology and applied to the oikonomy. Divine love is understood to be a limitation of the sphere of divine action to allow for humans to exercise their libertarian freedom so that the God-humans relationship that ensues is personal, reciprocal, rather than casual, manipulative. As a result of this ontological vulnerability, God's suffering is seen as a necessary consequence of His *kenotic* relatedness. His love is ontologically necessary, not free.

Relational theism, argues Vanhoozer, through its skewed emphasis on *perichoresis* as a fundamental mode of God's relation to the world robs God of His distinctiveness, placing humans on the same ontological level with Him, thus rendering the drama of redemption superfluous at every one of its junctures. For if we are already *in* God, ontologically, through *perichoresis*, man's separation from God is not sin and the solution, accordingly, need not be the Son's Incarnation and salvation of humanity through His death and resurrection. *Kenotic-perichoretic relational ontotheology*, Vanhoozer's somewhat abstruse phrase for the conceptualized theology proper after the relational turn, presupposes a cavalier reading of the biblical narrative and particularly the depictions of God's nature and the nature of His relations to the created order. Relationality, we might somewhat oxymoronically say, is the new substance after theology proper has made the fatal relational turn in postmodernity. "Relations all the way down" is the cardinal dogma of the "New Orthodoxy."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, LeRon Shults, LeRon Shults, *Reforming the Doctrine of God* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005) and Shults, *Reforming Theological Anthropology. After the Philosophical Turn to Rela-*

Feuerbach's trenchant critique looms large, for, he says, "the doctrine of Trinity is a projection of the human ideal of 'participated life.'" (cited in Vanhoozer, p. 159)

Of course, one proper response to this conceptual shift is to stress that while the connection between a person's being and his relations is indeed intimate, the two are nevertheless distinct. Being is not reducible to relations, although relationality is a fundamental dimensions, even call of human beings.<sup>17</sup> God himself, while in a sense relational, is more than He has revealed himself to be and more than His relations with the world. He remains prior to His relations and distinct from His creatures precisely in order to be the kind of God worthy of worship because of His great deeds for His people.

To avoid turning talk about God into anthropological projections, as Feurbach charges both classical theists and kenotic-perichoretic relational theists, we must orientate it on Christ. Theological discourse must be *theomorphic*, argues Vanhoozer, and must be informed not by our best human experiences, but by the recital of the economy of salvation. (p. 162) This a remythologized theology, as Vanhoozer repeatedly stresses, means "thinking God's being on the basis of His communicative action whereby God does things in and through His Word and Spirit." (p. 175) For Vanhoozer this means a conceptual retooling, a communicative variation on classical theism. This is precisely what he seeks to do in Part II of his book.

What Vanhoozer proposes in Part II is that we articulate our metaphysics by studying the biblical account of God's speaking and acting. The first plank of Vanhoozer's metaphysics of the theodrama is that God's being is in His free, wise, and loving

*tionality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 12-24.

<sup>17</sup> John Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 703, cited in Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, 142.

communicative agency. But His communicative activity is not limited to the God-world relation. God is and has always been a communicative triune being, where the Three Persons of Trinity have perpetually communicated themselves to one another in perfect communion. God is fundamentally a communicative being, who has spoken and acted in history and who continues to do so until now. We may understand Him by attending to the record of His speech and actions or more precisely, speech-acts, in Scripture. But since His self-presentation reaches its climax in the person of Jesus Christ, in His words and acts, theology must be thus orientated on Christ. Jesus is what Vanhoozer calls the *analogia dramatis*. His personal history, His speech and words, reveals God's being. Instead of beginning with a generic "perfect" being in a bottom-up natural theological method, highly susceptible to the Feuerbachian critique, a remythologized metaphysics takes God's being-in-communicative-act as its loadstar. *Analogia dramatis* is to be preferred over the *analogia entis*. Here Vanhoozer seeks to move beyond Barth,<sup>18</sup> arguing that although God reveals His being-in-act supremely in Christ, the proper context for understanding the incarnation, the singularity of Jesus Christ come down as God Incarnate, is the nexus of biblical revelation. Without the canonical Old Testament context, the singularity of the Christ event is bound to remain opaque. It is the prior revelation of God in the Hebrew Scriptures that makes understanding Christ possible. Christ then, as the supreme entry point for the knowledge of God is knowable within the canonical parameters. The canon as a whole, pointing as it does to Christ, is itself divine communication.

Vanhoozer avers that recasting ontology in communicative rather than instrumental causal interactions may supply us

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I./2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956), 463.

with an enhanced understanding of the triune God (chapter 5) and the God-world relation (chapter 6). He also suggests it may also aid and enhance our understanding of God's passions/sufferings and love/compassion, and also of the life of the triune God and our participation in Christ.

Examining the God-in-communicative-action that Scripture presents one is faced with a triune God. Vanhoozer even goes so far as to say that the Trinity itself is the drama, "a doing than which nothing greater can be conceived; a ceaseless activity of communication that yields consummate communion." (p. 243, 245) It is not clear, however, why drama must be used in such extensive way as to descriptively cover even the intra-Trinitarian life. This triune communicative God, avers Vanhoozer, is eternally light, life and love which he seeks to communicate to His creation. God's purpose in the theodrama is to "restore the lines of communication that had broken down in order to effect union and communion." (p. 280) On this view then, union with Christ, the agent of restoration and reincorporation, is not ontological but theodramatic. We are united with Christ not by being incorporated into His divine being, but by "christodramatically" participating in the redemptive activity of the triune God. The six theses that Vanhoozer offers to clarify what shape union with Christ takes in a remythologized theology, building on insights from Cyril, Calvin and Owen, are simply superb. Vanhoozer is careful and competent in distinguishing his position from other construals that merge God's being with his communication. For Vanhoozer, God is more than he communicates freely. The economic Trinity *communicates* the immanent Trinity, is not identical to it (see Rahner's rule).<sup>19</sup> The God which has perfect light, life, and love in himself engages the world as communicative agent. The climactic

<sup>19</sup> Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970), 21.



communicative activity of God is the Son. He is the initiator or “author” (*archegos*) of Salvation according to Hebrew 2:10. God as author, naturally, presents a host of questions pertaining to His relationship to the world. It is in this sensitive and thorny area that communicative theism, argues Vanhoozer, can help illumine issues like the emotional life of God, the relationship between divine and human freedom.

In Part III of the book, in light of God’s speaking creation, covenant, and canon into being, divine authorship is presented as an apt aid for understanding the nature of the dramatic action outside (and inside) the world of the text, and thus a helpful heuristic device for grasping divine transcendence and immanence. (p. 305) Vanhoozer seeks to develop an understanding of God as *author* and tease out the implications such a construal has for the God-world relationship. God, says Vanhoozer, authors the world (transcendence), dialogues with the world (immanence) and authorially governs and cares for the world dialogically (triune providence).

The question immediately arises whether construing God as *author* is biblically warranted. In other words, is it yet another anthropomorphism, a metaphysical abstraction arbitrarily used to qualify the God-world/humans relationship, or a notion successfully deployed by Vanhoozer as a valid stand-in for the concept of Creator? Naturally, his entire remythologizing enterprise is built on the validity and usefulness of the *analogia auctoris*, hence one must inquire whether this conceptual retooling is indeed warranted. On the received, evangelical view, Scripture itself is a product of divine authorship. Life itself is authored, created by God. There was a time when humans did not exist, but the divine Author “wrote” them into existence. God, on this view, is the unauthored author—“I am who I am”—who is infinitely qualitatively distinct, wholly Author/Other from His authored, contingent “heroes.” Vanhoozer

notes: "Authorship is the remythologizd equivalent for expressing the so-called sovereignty-aseity conviction that 'God is the one reality that exists *a se* (from and of himself) and is dependent on nothing outside himself for His essence and existence.'" (p. 485) Vanhoozer considers divine authorship to be not only biblically justified but the best construal of both God's distinction and relation to the world, serving as the material principle of a remythologized theology. (p. 487)

Moreover, contends Vanhoozer, biblical discourse provides us with sufficient proof that God can indeed be identified as author. "To speak of God as Author of the world is merely to go with the grain of biblical discourse (Hebrews 11:3; cf. Genesis 1:1; John 1:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11)." (p. 485)

But what kind of Author is God then? Vanhoozer highlights the need for a robust concept of authorship that can give an account both of divine sovereignty and human freedom in the integrity of their relation. Vanhoozer is clearly exploring unmapped territories and is concerned to find a suitable model and fitting categories that will not distort the fundamentals of orthodox faith. The Author that Vanhoozer has in mind is not the Tolstoy-like author of classical theism that is understood to be the first, absolute cause of everything that takes place in the world of the text, that leaves no room for the hero's own voice, that operates through causal, coercitive, strategic action, and that does not do justice, argues Vanhoozer, to the dialogic nature of God's interactions with His beings, as depicted in Scripture. Rather he proposes that divine authorship is best viewed in terms of communicative rather than strategic (causal; coercive) action, and that His communicative action is best understood in conjunction with Bakhtin's dialogic conception of au-

thorship based on Dostoievski's "polyphonic" novels.<sup>20</sup> On this view, God's Authorial word creates and sustains the universe; creates and sustains human asymmetrical dialogical partners or "heroes" with whom he dialogically interacts towards the testing of their freedom and the consummation of their existence. True freedom, it is argued, is not self-determination, but the capacity to respond in the affirmative to the divine call; not "I think, therefore I am" (Descartes),<sup>21</sup> but "Here I am" (Samuel). In fact, there is no contradiction between Authorial determination (through effective dialogical persuasion) and self-determination (not to be confused with self-authoring!), argues Vanhoozer. It is precisely in dialogue with God that human beings exercise their freedom to realize their own voice-idea. In Pharaoh's case, for example, the word of the Lord prompts Pharaoh to show his true colors by the pattern of his response. Vanhoozer notes that Pharaoh is consummated through the Word of Lord confronting him, which solicits his free, response: No. We note here the striking but nevertheless helpful conjunction between consummation, which may seem to imply one-sidedness, and free response, which indicates human freedom.

In a model that offers central place to communication, Vanhoozer presents the failure to realize one's personhood as not hearing the voice of God. The hardening of heart is an exercise in training not to hear the call of God.

Vanhoozer speaks of divine sovereignty in terms of enabling and governing over human freedom. God enables the free response of man, through his two hands, Spirit and Servant Jesus. God opens us up, re-orientes us to himself, catching us up into the theodramatic action which has Jesus at its centre. Here

<sup>20</sup> See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, tr. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

<sup>21</sup> See René Descartes, *Discourse on the Method and Meditations on First Philosophy* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1996).

Vanhoozer's Calvinistic roots come to the surface, as, even in a highly nuanced model that is deeply indebted to notions coming from literary theory, he ascribes ultimate determination/agency to God rather than humans. Specifically, it is God, through the "inner persuasive discourse" of Word and Spirit, who enables and stimulates the free response of man. Through the invariably effective and persuasive communicative action of God, through Word and Spirit, God is able to dialogically consummate individuals and nations alike.

Whence then does evil come from? Instead of presenting us with a theodicy, Vanhoozer encourages us to recognize that the theodramatic action is complex, calling for an elaborate system of rendition. Hence the different genres of the canon, each with its own conceptual framework. Moreover, the theodramatic action has multiple agents—supremely God, humans, angels and demons—performing at different levels (historical, psychological), calling for multiple points of view. "What we learn by looking through the various scriptural lenses is that there are different kinds of agencies working on multiple theodramatic levels." (p. 354)

Remythologizing means respecting the multiplicity of layers, voices, agencies at work in the drama of redemption and particularly in the canon. "Certain aspects of the theodrama... come to light under some forms of biblical literature better than others." (p. 350) In epistemological terms, no one conceptual framework is sufficient to explain or grasp the Truth. In the same manner, truth may be absolute, but our conceptual elaborations and conceptual frameworks are not.<sup>22</sup> Hence we need

<sup>22</sup> Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Pilgrim's Digress. Christian Thinking on and about the Post/Modern Way" *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn*, ed. Byron B. Penner (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2005), 89.

more than one in each case to grasp, tentatively, partially, progressively the Truth, the meaning of the theodrama.

Specifically, evil ought not to be treated monologically as in a theodicy. Rather it should be approached in canonical fashion, by being attuned to the different “genre-ideas” in the canon. That is, we should observe and learn from the variety of literary forms that operate as the corrective lenses that enable us to see evil from different viewpoints. Indeed, the Bible contains forms of lament, exhort, praise, and console, all of which are ways of seeing and responding to evil.

It is, however, crucial that we maintain the fundamental conviction that God cannot be held accountable for infusing evil. God is not the author of evil/sin. But when sin has disrupted the relationship between God and His creatures, the Holy Author entered the theatre of the world, taking the form of a man to restore us to perfect communion with himself. “In this is love: that the Author, while remaining all that he is, nevertheless pours His uncreated self into created form and space, blood and bones, in order to communicate His light and life to others” (p. 358) so that communion is restored.

Of all the different levels where action takes place, Vanhoozer argues that the level of human hearts and wills is the one where most action takes place (p. 356) through asymmetrical dialogue.

In a remythologized soteriology, God remains Author, Lord of His Word but also Lord over the hearing and salvific effectiveness of His Word. He governs both the Incorporation of His Word, both in the production of Scripture and in the Incarnation, and what Vanhoozer calls the “incardiation”—the writing of the true, good, and beautiful Word in the human heart. The hearts of readers receive the divine Word through the unfailingly effective, personal, dialogical ministry of the Spirit. While all human beings are capable of hearing the external, general

call, through outward preaching, it is the Spirit which makes the call effective, rendering the divine discourse internally persuasive (a la Bakhtin) through an effective dialogical interaction. God, through His Spirit, operates not in a manipulative, strategic way, as a brute force, but as a properly *communicative* force (e.g. the “force” of a cogent argument), releasing humans so that they may freely respond to the Word that simultaneously constitutes them as new beings.

Probably the place where God’s communicative, dialogical action is most visible is in the area of prayer. “Prayer is the practical resolution of the theoretical problem of how to balance divine determination (i.e., authorial consummation) and human freedom (i.e., heroic consent).” (378) Prayer, avers Vanhoozer, is a human response to the divine summons to participate in the economy of triune communication. (p. 381) Prayer is primarily about answerableness to the divine *call/ing* and will, being the prime exhibit of the providential *concursus* of divine sovereignty and human freedom.

Providence, in a remythologized theology, is treated according to the principles already outlined above in discussing God’s interaction with human beings, namely persuasive dialogue. God does not move chess players in a manipulative way,<sup>23</sup> neither does he not “move” creatures at all, or simply inspires them, but efficaciously persuades them to move freely in the direction of His will. (p. 367) Vanhoozer asserts dual agency. “Divine providence is less a matter of God’s ‘strong right hand’ than of the Father’s *two* hands (i.e. Son and Spirit)—in a word, triune authorship.” (p. 367) God is able to work efficiently because he is placed on a different ontological level than His crea-

<sup>23</sup> Peter Geach, *Providence and Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 58.

tures-heroes. His operation is Authorial. He remains the Author, we the heroes (a dialogical take on Romans 9:20-21).

Vanhoozer thus attempts a construal of divine providence in communicative rather than causal terms. He shows how God directs His people through bona fide communicative acts. God directs the drama of redemption largely by directing its company of players, those faithful members who make up the body of Christ, by *effectually prompting* them through the ministry of the Spirit.

Another serious challenge that a remythologized theology faces is that of moving from biblical representations of God's emotional life to theological conceptualizations in such a way as to avoid the fall back into myth, where God is a being placed on the same ontological level as His creatures, but also the demythologizing move which denies God Authorial action in space and time. Vanhoozer shows how critiques of impassibility coming from the "new orthodoxy" are off target because traditionally understood, impassibility referred not to the absence of divine affections but to the impossibility of God being moved by external forces. (p. 396) Committed to upholding divine impassibility, Vanhoozer takes a cognitive approach to emotions, locking onto Robert Robert's notion of emotions as concern-based construals.<sup>24</sup> He sees emotions as intentional states (they are about something, they have objects). On this view, God's affections are seen to be godly emotions, active *dispositions* to act in a particular way based on certain divine concerns. Vanhoozer's spin on Robert's cognitivist, activist account of emotions can be somewhat obscurely summed up like this: *Divine emotions are covenantal concern-based theodramatic construals.*

<sup>24</sup> Robert C. Roberts, *Emotions. An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 83-106; See also Roberts, "What an Emotion Is: A Sketch," *The Philosophical Review* 97 (1988): 191.

In simpler words, divine emotions are biblical construals—ways of grasping one thing in terms of another—that present God’s unswerving concern for His creature’s fitting participation in the theodrama. “God’s emotions proceed from His construals of the way in which human beings respond to His own words and deeds, the drama of redemption, especially as these come to a climactic focus in Jesus Christ.” (p. 413) Patheic attribution in the OT comes in a distinctly covenantal context. These are construals of the way in which the people respond to the word of God in the context of a loving covenant between Yahweh and them. God’s “emotions” are instances of *covenantal affection*.” (p. 414)

To give an example, Vanhoozer notes that expressions of jealousy are to be explained as follows: “Jealousy is the lover’s construal of the beloved as rightfully His own yet in danger of transferring his affections to the rival.” (p. 414) God’s construals (of the concern for fittingness of the human hero in the theodrama) are invariably true and His concerns constant. It follows that God’s feelings (“his concern-imbued redemptive-dramatic construals”) are as impassible as they are infallible: *the impassible feels*. (p. 415)

Something similar may be said of Jesus who suffers the tug of temptations as a divine person in His human mode of existence. (p. 425) The Son is impeccable but not impervious with regards to temptation. “Divine impassibility means not that God is unfeeling—impervious to covenantally concerned theodramatic construals of what is happening—but that God is never overcome or overwhelmed by these feelings such that he ‘forgets’ His covenant, or who he is as covenant Lord.” (p. 433) God is self-moved based on His covenant. God is compassionate insofar He directs/communicates His goodness to those suffering. (p. 434) Seeing all of reality *sub specie theodramatis*, God is compassionate in an active way. He is not a fellow suf-



ferer, passively contemplating His creatures' suffering. Divine compassion is kyriotic. He has compassion as sovereign Lord. But then the question arises: why does not God put an end to suffering? Vanhoozer hints in the direction that God chooses to withstand His creatures in their freedom. "God's patience is His free decision to make room for creaturely freedom." (p. 450) Yet as he does this, nothing that His creatures do will deter Him from His purposes with them being perfectly accomplished. The church, the theatre of the Gospel, rejoices in suffering "in the realization that one has been given the privilege and responsibility of playing a part—that of the faithful disciple—in the drama of salvation." (466) Suffering is thus but another way of demonstrating faithfulness.

In the final section of his comprehensive volume Vanhoozer reconsiders at greater length the authorial analogy. Referring to the thickly anthropomorphic language a good part of Scripture contains, he highlights the need for proper interpretative criteria. The Reformation's cardinal hermeneutical principle is identified as one particularly helpful reference: Scripture interprets Scripture, and the literal sense has primacy. As he has cogently and comprehensively argued in *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, the literal sense is simply the sense of the literary act.<sup>25</sup>

Narrative depictions of God must be interpreted in light of the more metaphysical statements (e.g. I am who I am—Ex. 3:14) and metaphysical attributes are simply distillations of His "biblically-attested theodramatic capacities." Paul Helm, in his review of RT is therefore wrong in assuming that Vanhoozer has skated over what he calls the "one liners," that is "short statements about God... which, even when they are de-

<sup>25</sup> Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge (Landmarks in Christian Scholarship)*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan, 2009), 304.

dramatised, express permanent truths about God, truths which transcend both actions of the divine drama and conversations between God and man.”<sup>26</sup> In fact Vanhoozer agrees that such metaphysical statements should act as a control in interpreting other types of biblical discourse. Likewise, the narrative form of the theodrama informs the metaphysical categories and conceptualizations properly descriptive of God’s nature and capacities, *contra* the proponents of the thesis that western theology is conceptually enslaved to Greek philosophical categories. Metaphysics has thus a ministerial, rather than a magisterial role in theology. It is successful insofar it aids the understanding and elaboration of some aspect of the triune economy, that is, the biblical *mythos*.

We appreciate the emphasis on God as communicative agent engaging His creatures through persuasive dialogue. The *analogia auctoris*, as presented in RT, presents however a few limitations. Since he has chosen to make use of Bakhtin’s model of dialogical authorship, we wonder, maybe naively and ignorantly, how meaningful is it to speak about the author dialoguing with his characters? How are novelistic characters free, in any substantial sense of the term? Are they not puppets at the sovereign hands of the puppeteer, to change metaphors and refer to the offensive characterization of Reformed conception of sovereignty?

It is ironical that, on the one hand, Vanhoozer is accused by those in the Reformed camp (e.g. Helm) as steering dangerously towards panentheism, yet on a closer look, his authorial analogy, properly examined, involuntarily moves his proposal much closer to classical theism. His treatment of Author-hero

<sup>26</sup> Paul Helm, “Vanhoozer V. Don’t Forget the Oneliners” <http://paulhelmsdeep.blogspot.com/2010/08/vanhoozer-v-dont-forget-oneliners.html> (accessed on 28.02.2011).

interaction seems to skate over the basic insight that a massive ontological wall exists between the world of the text, populated with characters, and the world of the author that moves in absolute freedom and whose writing, it seems to us, unilaterally determines the action and the characters of the novel. And it is here that we might have the heart of the problem. The *analogia auctoris*, we believe, suffers because it is developed in a model of novelistic authorship, rather than theatrical. Again, this is strangely ironic considering Vanhoozer's preference for the dramatic model amply developed in his *The Drama of Doctrine*. We dare suggest that theatrical authorship would have been a more suitable direction to develop the *analogia auctoris*, since it might have allowed for a more meaningful account of Author/playwright/director-actor interaction and of the performative/improvisational freedom of players.

There are other significant advantages of conceiving God as a divine playwright, as opposed to a generic or novelistic author. First, the dialogical nature of a play accords with the notion of God as the one who *acts* communicatively. There is also the significant explanatory power of the notion of God as divine playwright with regards to the immanent and economic Trinity, revelation and the ontological primacy of God the Author.<sup>27</sup> A human playwright, while revealing much about himself and his intentions, purposes, and attributes, nevertheless transcends his script/drama/production. The playwright is more than the play and is ontologically distinct from his play. The Creator-creature distinction fits naturally within this framework. It would indeed be somewhat childish to presuppose that, first, the playwright has fully emptied himself in his script, and, secondly, that interpreters may fully and immediately grasp the totality

<sup>27</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-drama. Theological Dramatic Theory. Prolegomena*, vol. 1 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 270.

of the playwright's being and purposes. He is, naturally, more than his drama discloses about himself. Nevertheless, there is a close and intimate connection between his being and the script, which is reliable for partial, yet increasing knowledge of the playwright. But knowledge of the script should not be conceived in terms of *scientia*, theoretical, detached knowledge, but in *sapientia*, wise-action-oriented knowledge.<sup>28</sup> Knowledge of the Divine Playwright means *acting* in sync with his purposes, participating fittingly in the unfolding drama which he sovereignly directs through his "two hands": Word and Spirit.

Concerning the notion that God engages his creatures dialogically, not causally, strategically, we sense this dialogical persuasion model for salvation risks making humans co-authors with God of their salvation or placing unduly emphasis on their participation in the process of salvation. As Helm points out,<sup>29</sup> Vanhoozer skims over the stage where, dead in our sins, we are incapable of communicating with God, where no amount of persuasive, dialogical interaction between us and the Spirit will make us alive. At this stage, God's action must be manipulative, strategic, and pragmatic rather than dialogical, inter-personal, relational. Helm illuminatingly inquires whether a person who drags a drowning person out of the water and pressing rhythmically and forcefully on his chest to bring him back to life operates in a manipulative, strategic or personal action, to which the answer is both! The same can and must be said of conversion. Dead in our sins and trespasses, we are brought to life in spite of our inability to dialogically interact with God. To be entirely fair, however, Vanhoozer does mention that God's effec-

<sup>28</sup> See Daniel J. Treier, *Virtue and the Voice of God. Toward Theology as Wisdom* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2006).

<sup>29</sup> Paul Helm, "Vanhoozer III - KJV and Lydia of Thyatira," [http://paulhelmsdeep.blogspot.com/2010/07/vanhoozer-iii-kjv-and-lydia-of-thyatira\\_01.html](http://paulhelmsdeep.blogspot.com/2010/07/vanhoozer-iii-kjv-and-lydia-of-thyatira_01.html) (accessed on 28.02.2011).

tive calling is His restoring and reorienting those spiritual and cognitive capacities taken captive to an unclean spiritual and cognitive environment. (p. 375) But this feels like a fuzzy way of referring to the unregenerate condition, especially given the strength of the biblical metaphor (i.e. dead in our sins). On the same point, he says: "It is through the process of dialogical consummation that human beings freely realize their personhood. Triune dialogical consummation is a matter of God's acting not *on* persons but *within* and *through* them in such a way that, precisely by so acting, God *brings them to their senses and makes them into the creatures they were always meant to be.*" (p. 371, italics mine) Or, in the final pages: "The efficacious inner persuasive discourse of word and Spirit ultimately move the heart, but in a properly communicative rather than manipulative fashion." (p. 494) We might then say, in Vanhoozer's defense, and qualifying Helm's critique, that Vanhoozer has chosen to focus on the "mechanics"—for lack of a better term—of regeneration, whereas Helm, in his critique, focuses on the moment in regeneration where the soul is helpless to produce its own life and is therefore acted upon unilaterally, causally-personal. Both are dimensions of the mysterious process through which God saves people, restoring them to a life of communion with Himself and enabling them to participate in the ongoing theodrama.

What Vanhoozer does not tell us, however, is if the divine dialogical activity affects both the elect and the non-elect in equal measure. Of the non-elect, what would we say in communicative terms? That they freely chose to resist the dialogical activity of the Spirit? Whence the strength to resist it? That their "true personhood" is that of the non-elect and consequently that God will pass over them?

By way of conclusion we might simply say that Vanhoozer has managed to tread the narrow *via media* between too ready and too reticent speech of God, between the mythic/mytholo-

gical cavalier speech about Him and the mystical silence. He has indeed shown us what can be properly said of God and his interactions with the world once we have attuned ourselves to the biblical *mythos*.

The triune Author-God Vanhoozer has presented in his volume is fundamentally a communicative being whose primary mode of interaction with his creatures is dialogue. He relates to human beings personally, dialogically, effectively and triumphantly as the sovereign Author. The purpose behind his communicative action is ultimately restoring communion with his creatures and enabling them to fittingly participate in the great drama of redemption which he has authored and which he continues to direct. A final thought on this point. It is somewhat disappointing that Vanhoozer has not sought to make more explicit connections between the theodramatic model for theology advocated in *The Drama of Doctrine* and the remythologized doctrine of God presented in RT. No attempt has been made, for example, to link the remythologized God with his role as Playwright/Protagonist/Director of the Divine Drama. We have already hinted at the potential explanatory benefits a properly dramatic conception of authorship may have for key loci in theology. But maybe this is asking too much from a volume such as this one, which has attempted to cover immense theological ground. This might well be the task of future fellow remythologizers.

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