EDUCATION FOR JUSTICE IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH: IN THE PURSUIT OF JUSTICE OUT OF COMPASSION

MYUNGJIN LEE

A dissertation

submitted to the Faculty of

the department of Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry

in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Boston College
Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences
Graduate School

September, 2020

Education for Justice in the Christian Faith:
In the Pursuit of Justice out of Compassion

Author: Myungjin Lee

Advisor: Dr. Thomas H. Groome

The unprecedented degrees and forms of injustice and inequality found in the world today call for renewed concern to educate for justice derived from critical reflection on the complexities of our present social reality. Responding to this pressing need, this dissertation is built on the premise that the central criterion of Christian living in the contemporary world should be the pursuit of justice; in this pursuit, the role of Christian religious education, in a life-giving way, is more crucial than ever. This dissertation seeks a theological rationale and a pedagogical approach that promote a critical social consciousness and a commitment to work for justice out of compassion as prompted by Christian faith. Grounded in Jesus's vision of the Reign of God, the Christian faith should attest that compassion and justice are integral to each other; justice must always be realized through compassion, and compassion ever needs to reach into the works of justice. Affirming such compassion-motivated justice in the Christian faith as care for others and commitment to the common good, this dissertation offers a reflective discourse and aims to renew an educational vision of being fully human in terms of the pursuit of justice. Rather than a theoretical delving into the definition of justice as an abstract concept, this dissertation addresses the questions of why justice matters, what justice should be sought in our historical context from a Christian perspective, and what crucial role Christian religious education can play in this quest.

Chapter 1 investigates the hindrances to education for justice in faith found both in our sociocultural context and in distortedly shaped Christian faith. The following three chapters explore the constituent aspects of compassion-motivated justice in Christian faith in terms of partiality, emotion, and agency. These are in contrast with three tendencies commonly associated with understanding justice—impartiality, undue rationality, and impersonal principles— respectively. Chapter 2 emphasizes Jesus' vision of the Reign of God as the foundation for Christians' pursuit of justice and the contemporary theological attentiveness to the reality of unjust suffering. Chapter 3 discusses the possibility of compassionate anger in the face of social injustice as a constructive force for commitment to the work of justice. Particularly drawing upon John Wesley's thought, Chapter 4 examines Methodism's unique understanding of human agency in a dialectic relationship with God's grace, and with emphasis on a person's authenticity and integrity in seeking social transformation. Chapter 5 searches for a pedagogical approach to shape Christians' commitments to the work of compassionate justice by promoting a way of knowing as praxis with which to integrate personal and social transformations in a life of lived Christian faith.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My deepest gratitude goes to my advisor, Professor Thomas Groome, whose unfailing support, hearty encouragement, and insightful guidance have significantly helped me in reaching this milestone. He provided invaluable advice directing my path whenever my thoughts wandered or became obscure, and his wisdom motivated me to move forward with confidence and courage whenever my will withered in the face of obstacles or setbacks. I am truly grateful to him for being such a tolerant, erudite, and compassionate adviser throughout my long journey.

I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to Professor Mary Elizabeth Moore for accepting my peculiar request that she join my committee, despite my being a student—about whom she knew little— from another school. I remember how she kindly welcomed me when I first visited her office at Boston University, offering me insightful guidance in developing my inchoate thoughts. I am especially indebted to her for the helpful comments based on her expertise in Methodist tradition. Her warm encouragement is greatly appreciated, and her constructive suggestions will guide my continuing work.

My sincere thanks go to Professor Colleen Griffith for her generosity and her eminent scholarship. She generously agreed to join my dissertation committee following a vacancy caused by a member's move to a different institution. Her course Theology and Body left an unparalleled impression on my theological mind, cultivating my desire to follow her example in articulating what must be articulated and constructing ideas in innovative ways. Through her insightful questions, she helped me to reexamine my thoughts and to clarify the goals I want to pursue in my future work.

I will remember my years at Boston College (BC) with deep gratitude. Learning from the outstanding faculty members in and beyond my department, I have honed my abilities to pose critical questions and seek transformative discernment in both my studies and life. My experience at BC has led me to ponder how to integrate my faith and life through my academic endeavors.

I feel incalculably blessed to have my son—the greatest gift I have been ever given. Being the mom of such a special boy has changed the course of my theological inquiries and reshaped my existential questions, teaching me to choose joy over absurdity. His happy smile, cheerful charm, bright mind, and energetic spirit renew my will, revitalize my strength to persevere in my studies, and keep me resilient in the face of life's twists and turns.

My affectionate gratitude goes to my husband—a passionate minister, loving father, and supportive spouse. I could not have completed this journey without his trust and help. His practical mind and his faithful commitment to his ministry always challenge me to keep my work relevant to the questions raised in the concrete context of our faith and life.

My gratitude to so many is ingrained in my heart as I aspire to carry on my theological and pedagogical inquiry into seeking justice out of compassion.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

In general, the goal of education in countries with increasing economic inequality, such as the United States, has been reduced to acquiring wealth, career achievement, and prestige. The question of the ultimate meaning of life or what defines a good person has faded away from educational settings. In our achievement-oriented culture, "success" is determined in economic terms—and it tends to characterize one's entire existence. Accordingly, education has become a business aimed at maximizing talent, skills, and academic achievement to attain social success rather than cultivating character or moral sensitivity. Furthermore, life is becoming insulated from ethical concern, and a "good" life is becoming more associated with materialism. In such a socio-cultural context, it is difficult to find an educational locus that promotes critical social consciousness or cultivates the ethical minds to make moral objections to injustice and inequality. By acknowledging these problems, this dissertation aims to renew our educational vision of being fully human in terms of the pursuit of justice. More specifically, this dissertation finds distinctive answers from a Christian perspective to the questions about why justice matters and what justice should be sought for in our historical context, and argues to situate the pursuit of justice at the center of educating for life in the Christian faith.

The issue of justice has been explored across many disciplines, so the existing literature is extensive. However, there is still a pressing need to explore justice as associated with the meaning of a good life from a Christian perspective, particularly with a pedagogical concern. I assert that the main concerns of Christian living in our social, political, and cultural reality should be injustice and inequality. These concerns call for Christians to renew their commitment to justice, which should be driven by compassion,

thinking critically and acting responsibly. I contend that justice and compassion are integral to each other in the Christian faith; justice must always be realized through compassion to actualize the vision of the flourishing for all humanity.

Thus, my approach to justice is an inherently societal one that sees justice as openness to others and commitment to the common good. Put differently, what I mean by justice as prompted by the Christian faith is not the same as righteousness, which reduces the meaning of justice to an individual's interiority and does not involve a sociopolitical dimension. In addition, justice in this dissertation does not denote God's retributive justice as punishment for sinful humanity. Rather, I propose justice driven by compassion as an orientation of attentiveness to the social reality of injustice, as a practical recognition of unjust suffering, and as engagement in the work to alleviate such suffering. I seek an understanding of justice in which the just person and the just society are united with the goal of transforming reality. The Christian response to the suffering caused by social injustice should not be a work of charity, but instead, it must be directed by a concern for justice as envisioned in Jesus' life and teaching. The pursuit of justice out of compassion should be the central criterion of Christian living in our contemporary world; for this pursuit, the role of Christian religious education in a life-giving way is more crucial than ever. Thus, the objectives of this dissertation are to explore the distinctive understanding of justice from a Christian perspective and to search for a pedagogy of compassion-driven justice in the Christian faith.

Chapter 1 investigates the hindrances to education for justice out of compassion as promoted by the Christian faith. This chapter addresses problems both in our socio-cultural context and in distortedly shaped faith. It argues that there are three external

hindrances to education for justice in our socio-cultural context: 1) secularism, 2) market-driven culture, and 3) the consequent distortion of the orientation of education. It also addresses the problem of *malformed* faith as an internal hindrance to education for justice, by which the life-giving potential of authentic Christianity is diminished.

The following three chapters explore the distinctiveness of justice prompted by Christian faith in relation to partiality, emotion, and agency, respectively. These three foci are contrasted with three terms commonly associated with justice—impartiality, undue rationality, and impersonal principles. Chapter 2 argues that justice should be pursued with attentiveness to the reality of unjust suffering and this pursuit necessarily implies a certain partiality. It explores the vision of the Reign of God as the central theme in Jesus' life and ministry, and it connects the vision with the contemporary liberatory theology focusing on the understanding of suffering.

Chapter 3 demonstrates how emotional dimension, going beyond undue rationality, can be crucial to the pursuit of justice by focusing on the specific emotion of anger and examining the compelling possibilities of compassionate anger for the work of justice. Employing an exegetical approach to Matthew 5:21-26, which gives Jesus' explicit teaching on anger, along with a thematic exploration and contemporary theological discussion of the theme, this chapter examines the complexities of the emotion of anger in the Christian ethical life. It is oriented toward identifying compassionate anger as a constructive power in the Christian ethical response to social injustice.

Chapter 4 explores the significance of agency in the pursuit of justice, asserting that the agency should be heightened when seeking justice as a matter of engagement

rather than as an abstract notion of impersonal principles. It takes up early Methodism's unique understanding of human agency grounded in the dialectic relationship between God's grace and human responsibility. It highlights the distinctive theological anthropology of John Wesley, which repudiates both "egoistic self-assertion" and "fatalistic passivity."[1] This chapter aims to retrieve the significance of agents' integrity and authenticity that cause an ethical responsibility to others in the Wesleyan heritage for the work of justice in the contemporary context.

The discussions in these three chapters call for a pedagogical approach to justice. If justice prompted by the Christian faith implies a certain kind of partiality (as discussed in Chapter 2), then there is a demand for a pedagogy that enables people to attend to the reality of unjust suffering and discern how to be *properly partial* for the work of seeking justice. If the pursuit of justice does not require undue rationality but is instead profoundly intertwined with emotion (as explored in Chapter 3), there is a demand for a pedagogy that helps people cultivate good emotions, such as compassion, as integrated with critical thought. If establishing the agency to participate in God's liberating and transforming work for all humanity is a constituent part of compassion-driven justice in the Christian faith (as examined in Chapter 4), there is a demand for a pedagogy that results in personal and social renewals and draws the connection between the flourishing of a person and that of others.

Thus, Chapter 5 responds to the demand for such a pedagogy by searching for an educational approach that is a humanistic and liberating praxis to advance compassion-driven justice as envisioned in the Christian faith. It takes up Paulo Freire's educational

---

[1] Phyllis Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 55.

philosophy to frame a vision of education as critical, dialogical, and praxis-oriented for personal and social renewals. Particularly, it heightens Freire's emphasis on problematizing social contradictions that cause injustice and on promoting critical consciousness to transform reality. Chapter 5 further examines Thomas Groome's shared Christian praxis, a "life to Faith to life" approach that enables people to be "agents-subjects-in-relationship,"[2] and its significant potential for education for justice. An example of an educational plan that implements shared Christian praxis follows.

---

[2] Thomas Groome, *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1991), 17.

Chapter 1

Where Are We in Education for Justice?

1.1 Introduction

> Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought. A theory however elegant and economical must be rejected or revised if it is untrue; likewise, laws and institutions no matter how efficient and well-arranged must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust.[3]

John Rawls, one of the leading figures in political philosophy, made this claim. He offers not only a theory of justice itself, but also a framework for addressing various counter theories or discourses on the issue of justice. Justice should be considered the very fundamental issue for all social institutions, including the Christian church. If one attends seriously to the unprecedented forms and degrees of injustice and inequality in the contemporary globalized world,[4] the question of justice becomes more crucial than ever. Many scholars have abstractly theorized or defined justice, as reflected in Rawls's conceptualization of "justice as fairness," to ensure neutrality and impartiality. However, my Christian faith prompts me to approach it as a matter of engagement that is to shape our educational perspective as a Church—as an influential social institution—in the midst of the world. Thus, my starting point is the historical reality which we face and the sociocultural context in which we are located, giving special attention to current educational problems.

---

[3] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* in edited by Michael Sandel, *Justice: A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 203.

[4] In fact, in our globalized world, the information about suffering from injustice is rapidly delivered everywhere, but such knowledge does not always create attentiveness to the reality of injustice and inequality with compassion. Pope Francis famously named such a phenomenon as the "globalization of indifference" when he met with migrants and refugees on the tiny Italian island of Lampedusa in 2013. Despite abundant knowledge of the reality, the dimension of indifference broadens beyond the individual dimension today in the globalized context. I suggest that not only the forms of injustice but also the forms of indifference have been unprecedented in our globalized world.

To approach the issue of justice in a manner that differs from deriving the principles of justice in the neutral and universal sense, I use this chapter to investigate hindrances to education for justice as prompted by faith. Such an investigation is twofold. In the first part, I deal with the external hindrance found in our sociocultural context by addressing the pervasiveness of secularism and the market-driven culture in our society, and the consequent distorted orientation of education in such a sociocultural context. In the second part, I argue that *malformed faith* is the internal hindrance to education for justice in faith, which aims at promoting critical consciousness and practical commitment out of faith-based compassion.

1.2 . The External Hindrance: The Challenges for Justice Education in Our Sociocultural Context

In the socio-cultural context of secularism and the market-driven culture, we face all the skeptical questions on values, religion, and religious conviction—and their relation to our moral choices, parenting in Christian faith, the role of the Church as social educator, and so on. A certain form of utilitarian calculus is pervasively instilled in every areas of our life. The role of religion as the primary humanizing force has been devalued, and the market-oriented reasoning has come to dominate our decision-making, values, and vision of the good life. Here, I explore three aspects of the external problem as sociocultural hindrances to education for justice in faith: 1) secularism, 2) market-driven culture, and 3) the distorted orientation of education in such a sociocultural context.

1.2.1. In an Age of Secularism: A Case of Higher Education as "a Secular Intellectual World"

We live in an age of secularism. I use "secularism," as distinguished from the secularization or the secular.[5] The cultural secularization process has consisted of removing the domination of religious institutions or religious symbols from society and culture. In modern Western history, "secularization manifests itself in the evacuation by the Christian churches of area previously under their control or influence."[6] Peter Berger points out, "As there is a secularization of society and culture, so is there a secularization of consciousness;" I extend his point by stating that as there is a secularization of consciousness, so is there a culture of secularism. Here, Huston Smith offers a concise but clear articulation on the distinction between secularization and secularism as follows: "The word 'secularization' is now typically used to refer to the cultural process by which the area of the sacred is progressively diminished, whereas 'secularism' denotes the reasoned stand that favors that drift; it argues on grounds that are cognitive, moral, or both that the desacralizing of the world is a good thing." [7]

Among the various manifestations of secularism in our contemporary world, universities emerge as the most significant entities to advance secularism in society. The university came to be the "secular intellectual world" of the secular mentality in the secularizing cultural trend, and such a process of secularization was intensified so that the

---

[5] The three terms—the secular, secularization and secularism—are often used without proper clarification. Put differently, since the binary secular/religion is itself elusive, the discussion around the meaning of the three categories has led to confusion. The distinction between the secular and the religious, which was dependent on the spirit of Enlightenment identifying religion with the supernatural and irrational in opposition to science and reason, seems to be reformulated in our contemporary context. To understand "secularism" and the associated terms, "secular" and "secularization" in a deeper sense, see Craig, Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, eds., *Rethinking Secularism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). This book contains an interdisciplinary project with leading scholars from various disciplines including sociology, political science and religious studies.
[6] Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday& Company, Inc., 1976), 107.
[7] Huston Smith, *Why Religion Matters: The Fate of the Human Spirit in an Age of Disbelief* (San Francisco: Harper One, 2001), 147.

university came to be dominated by secularism. Universities became the central agents to promote "the reasoned stand" for the secularized world. Accordingly, as Smith asserts, "the modern university is not agnostic toward religion; it is actively hostile to it."[8] Not only have the universities in the United States of America (USA) been secularized as part of the cultural process but they also have been "the crucial institutions for developing the knowledge to legitimate this understanding of the secular."[9]

As demonstrated by historical evidence—in the USA in particular, and in the West more generally—higher educational enterprises originally emerged in a religious context, sponsored by the faith communities. The first American colleges, including Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, were founded as religious institutions. Until the end of the nineteenth century, "The vast majority of American's hundreds of colleges were founded by religious denominations, governed by religious leaders, and guided by religious visions of knowledge and virtue."[10] However, at the turn of the twentieth century, religious influences, issues, and viewpoints had been thoroughly eliminated from the universities, and the religious character of the early American higher education had been radically transformed by secular concern. Higher education lost its original meaning and purpose as a context for religious education and for education that reflects upon the ultimate meaning of life inspired by faith. Higher education has not played the role of an educational locus aiming to cultivate the ethical mind to make moral objections to injustice and inequality in search for the meaning of life. As Miroslov Volf puts it,

---

[8] Smith, *Why Religion Matters*, 96.

[9] Stanley Hauerwas, *The State of the University: Academic Knowledges and the Knowledge of God* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 179.

[10] Christian Smith, "Secularizing American Higher Education," in *The Secular Revolution*, ed. Christian Smith (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 97.

"Especially in an age in which education needs to justify itself in economic terms, whatever accounts are offered of 'the value of education' center on instrumental reason and technical skill, not on the goals of human life as a whole and ways to achieve them—not on the character of a life worthy of being called human."[11]

Secularism as the reasoned stand for secularization is associated with "scientism." Smith clarifies that the problem is not with science itself, but with us, "forsaking clear thinking, allowing ourselves to become so obsessed with life's material underpinnings that we have written science a blank check…a blank check for science's claims concerning what constitutes knowledge and justified belief;"[12] on these grounds, the worldview came to be dominated by a narrow scientism. Smith continues:

> Scientism adds to science two corollaries: first, that the scientific method is, if not the *only* reliable method of getting at truth, then at least the *most* reliable method; and second, that the things science deals with—material entities—are the most fundamental things that exist. These two corollaries are seldom voiced, for once they are brought to attention it is not difficult to see that they are arbitrary. Unsupported by facts, they are at best philosophical assumptions and at worst merely opinions. [13]

Clarifying the distinction between science and scientism, Smith argues how scientism has been a dogmatic worldview which denies even the validity of all the unscientific

---

[11] Miroslav Volf and Matthew Croasmun, *For the Life of the World: Theology That Makes a Difference* (Grand Rapids: BrazosPress, 2019), 30.

[12] Smith, *Why Religion Matters*, 4.

[13] Ibid., 59-60. In this book, Smith presents a wide-ranging reflection on how and why religion matters in this age of spiritual crisis, drawing his insights from his own personal experience and various anecdotes and conversing with a vast number of authors. His argument is twofold: to demonstrate that our worldview is dominated by a narrow scientism, and to restore the role of the religious outlook as the map that can orient us to see "the ultimate nature of things" (25) and the role of religion as the primary humanizing force that has been devalued in the contemporary culture of scientism and materialism. Essentially, Smith's aim is to champion the traditional (religious) worldview that "allows for the fulfillment of the basic longing that lies in the depths of the human heart" (28). I appreciate his attempt to recover the importance of the religious dimension of human life in societies as well as in individuals. However, I find it problematic that he criticizes the main concern of postmodernism for justice as he criticizes modernism's obsession with science in order to advocate the worldview in the traditional age. In my view, concern for justice is the very element of the religious and moral dimension of human beings and the worldview that we should recover. Therefore, the postmodernism's recognition and rigorous address on the problem of injustice should not be criticized as a shortcoming but should instead be considered a beneficial addition that is the essential element in shaping our worldview.

questions. The universities, as the key agents in controlling the social definition of

knowledge, are ruled by scientism and thus the place of morality and religiosity has

diminished in modern higher education,[14] and in modern culture. Here is the main

concern for scientism's effect on our time and our collective mindset. In particular, the

universities' hostility toward non-scientific inquiries has pushed religion and morality to

the periphery, and, accordingly, the role of religion as the primary humanizing force has

been devalued.

One of the main problems with secularism for higher education is the narrowing

of epistemology—ways of knowing—to the rational alone. This encourages a scientism

and "the myth of objectivity"[15] based on the dichotomy of values and facts. The implicit

message behind praise for "value-free rationality" is that "values are merely or mainly

subjective preferences, irrational personal tastes, and only empirical discourse about

measurable facts is "objective."[16] Under the illusion of objectivity, it is assumed that

there is a neat distinction between value and fact; therefore, ascertaining the facts has to

be the purpose of the educational enterprise. However, facts and values are inseparable

and should be integrated in educational enterprises. As Julie Reuben writes:

> Scholars hoped that the distinction between fact and value would lead to more reliable
> knowledge as measured by greater agreement. The subsequent history of academic
> disciplines in the twentieth century indicates that this hope was illusory. We should then
> reevaluate whether agreement is the proper standard by which to identity "truth." If
> universities can learn to tolerate more conflict, we may be able to define cognitive

---

[14] Regarding the issue of marginalized religious studies in higher education, D.G. Hart provides a more focused argument on secularizing the discipline of religious studies. Pointing out that the major scholars who have worked on the issue of religion and higher education have ignored the significance of the change in the discipline of religious studies in universities, Hart attempts to trace the complicated history behind the value and character of religious studies in American higher education beyond satisfying "academic suspicion of religion" or the "scientific neutrality standards" of modern higher education. D.G. Hart provides a more focused argument in his book, *The University Gets Religion: Religious Studies in American Higher Education* (Baltimore&London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).
[15] Michael D. Aeschliman, "Why We Always Need Socrates," *The Journal of Education* 188, no. 3 (Boston: Boston University, 2007), 36.
[16] Ibid.

standards by which we can address moral questions. Since it has proved impossible to completely separate fact and value, we should begin to explore ways to reintegrate them.[17]

When educational practices are shaped by an obsession with objectivity, moral or spiritual questions are not considered "an intellectual or practical necessity."[18] As Reuben points out, "In pursuit of truth defined and obtained scientifically, the modern university lost its ability to grapple with moral issues."[19] It can be said that such a trend started with a good intention to be non-sectarian and thus, more inclusive for the world of pluralism, but it resulted in the unintended defect of separating knowledge and morality.

Moral and spiritual questions in higher education, —generally in our sociocultural context—have been excluded. It is difficult to find an educational locus that promotes critical social consciousness or cultivates the ethical mind so that individuals become able to make moral objections to the various forms of injustice. In the culture of secularism associated with scientism, a utilitarian question, *what use is it*, dominates all the spheres of life. In this socio-cultural context, there is no room for the question of justice that is bound up with the question about the nature of the good life in terms of moral and spiritual aspects at individual and communal levels.

1.2.2. Market-driven Culture

I argue that another phenomenon in our sociocultural context that functions as a cultural hindrance to education for justice in faith is related to the market-oriented

---

[17] Julie A. Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and Marginalization of Morality* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 269. In this book, from "an institutional approach," Reuben examines "the twentieth-century division between facts and values" (2)— the separation of knowledge and morality—in university education that has discouraged scholars and educators from engaging in moral issues.

[18] Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University*, 269.

[19] Ibid.

reasoning that permeates every sphere of our lives. As Michael Sandel declares, "We drifted from *having* a market economy to *being* a market society."[20] By "a market society" Sandel means "a way of life in which market values seep into every aspect of human endeavor."[21] Offering various examples of the increasing commodificationin our society,[22] Sandel attempts to show how market-oriented thinking has taken over the areas that did not previously belong to the market.

Considering some extended commodification, such as commodifying surrogate motherhood or selling a kidney, economists might argue that it creates mutual advantages between a seller and a buyer, providing certain economic benefits to the disadvantaged or the poor.[23] They might justify this stance using economic reasoning, which mostly relies on the utilitarian assumption of maximizing welfare. However, such temporal economic benefits, which economists might defend as extended financial benefits to the poor (efficiency), can malfunction to cover the severe underlying structural inequalities. In a market mechanism, the individuals, especially the disadvantaged and the poor, cannot make a free or voluntary choice in a real sense. In many cases, the choices they make are the ones that they are forced into making due to the necessities of their economic

---

[20] Michael J. Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012), 10. Author's emphasis.

[21] Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy*,10-11.

[22] According to Sandel's findings, almost everything is for sale today, including endeavors related to educational opportunity, such as admission to a prestigious university, or something related to medical needs, such as the cellphone number of a doctor. The examples of how market values play a great role in our social life offered by Sandel indicate the unlimited reach of market dominance in our society.

[23] Sandel provides a further argument on the need for integrating economic reasoning and moral assessment in a more specific sense. He argues that economics "with the claim to be a value-neutral science" fail to provide a convincing basis for making decisions on "whether this or that good should be allocated by the market or by nonmarket principles" (121). See Michael Sandel, "Market Reasoning as Moral Reasoning: Why Economists Should Re-engage with Political Philosophy," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 27, no. 4 (Fall 2013), 121-140.

situations. As Sandel suggests, marketizing social practices have produced new forms of

injustice that corrupt traditional non-market values.

Sandel repeatedly contends that "the reach of markets, and market-oriented

thinking, into aspects of life traditionally governed by nonmarket norms is one of the

most significant developments of our time."[24] In his analysis, the phenomenon of the

marketization of everything does not have a long history, but it is the most significant

sociocultural change in the last three decades and has rapidly permeated every sphere of

our lives. One of the examples Sandel provides is about how the social changes caused by

marketization have affected gift giving practices, which is associated with nonmarket

values.[25] Sandel criticizes the economic logic that applies standard market reasoning to

---

[24] Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy*, 7.

[25] Sandel's argument on the gift is mostly about how market mechanism has changed the culture of gift giving, which has lost its original values like thoughtfulness or attentiveness. Criticizing the economic logic against gift-giving relying on the utility-maximizing notion, Sandel attempts to show "how market reasoning smuggles in certain moral judgments, despite its claim to be value neutral" (103). However, the significance of the gift-giving needs to be discussed in a broader sense. In conceptualizing gift-giving act, it has been important to distinguish gift exchange from market exchange based on the distinction between the gift and the commodity. Understanding the gift is rooted in questioning another mode of interaction between human beings and between humans and objects outside of consumerism, and gift-giving has been presented as a solution to a "problematic" market system or individualism. From Marcel Mauss' narrative on the gift exchange, *The Gift* (1923), a simplistic dualism of "bad" market exchange and "good" gift exchange can be drawn. Based on his anthropological findings, Mauss shows how the gift exchange has been supplanted by market exchange and why the significance of the gift as an alternative to economic behavior should be recovered. In the discourses that challenge the market exchange with the logic of gift exchange, Mauss' three obligations—giving, receiving, and, most importantly, reciprocating—have been reframed in various ways and in particular, his notion of reciprocity has been expanded or questioned. Particularly, Jacques Derrida deconstructs the traditional Maussian narrative on the gift exchange by showing how any form of reciprocity, even (or especially) gratitude destroys the meaning of gift. For Derrida, the genuine or pure gift is devoid of the notion of reciprocity or expectation of a gift in return because when the circle of reciprocity exists in the sphere of obligation, the gift might be reduced to a disguised form of debt or an economic exchange. See Jaques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, translated by Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992). From the foundational narrative of the gift in Mauss' work to many following discourses, including Derrida's postmodern deconstruction of the traditional meaning of the gift, gift-giving has been discussed in an effort to solve the problematic aspect of the market exchange, which distorts the meaning of the act of giving and cannot boost gift-giving practices beyond economic exchanges. However, I think the question of the relationship of gift-ness and the expectation of a gift in return can be examined in a totally different context. If reciprocity is placed beyond a giver and a receiver (beyond self and other), there might be another possibility of understanding reciprocity as a primary element in gift giving. In other words, there is a possibility of gift with a comprehensive reciprocity without contradiction or separation by recovering a third context of giving, namely divine giving, as the ultimate example of giving for promoting the act of

gift-giving. He argues that the gift-giving act cannot be reduced to the logic of efficient

utility maximizing because the original values and virtues associated with gift giving

matter when we search for the meaning of the good life.

Agreeing with Michael Sandel's basic claim, "We drifted from *having* a market

economy to *being* a market society,"[26] Harvey Cox furthers the critique on the unlimited

reach of the market from a different perspective and with different languages. He draws

upon social scientists and economists as well as biblical sources to discuss how the

market has become "deified," how such a deified market has shaped a consumer-driven

culture and market mentality (or market-ism), and how it is related to the issue of

inequality and injustice. Cox suggests that it would all make sense when we put "the

market" instead of "a religion" in Clifford Geertz's well-known definition of a

functioning religion as follows:

> The Market (a religion) is (1) a system of symbols (2) which acts to establish powerful,
> pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men (3) by formulating conceptions
> of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of
> factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.[27]

Cox argues that "the Market has deified itself," contending that the Market has become

"omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent;" it is "not only around us but inside us,

informing our senses and our feelings."[28] Cox analyzes how the deified market has

imposed the distortions on more and more areas of life so that market reasoning

---

giving based on a different characterization of reciprocity in an alternative context. For such a possibility
for an alternative understanding of the reciprocal circulation of gift giving from a Christian perspective,
John Milbank offers an insightful argument based on his account of trinitarian ethics. See John Milbank,
"Can a Gift Be Given?: Prolegomena to a Future Trinitarian Metaphysics." *Modern Theology* 11:1 (Jan.
1995), 119-161; John Milbank, *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon* (London and New York:
Routlegde, 2003).

[26] Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy*, 10.

[27] Harvey Cox*, Market as God* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 256. Cox capitalizes the
market as "the Market" when he refers to "the deified market."

[28] Cox, *Market as God*.,18.

dominates our decision, our values, and our vision for the good life. Drawing upon

Sandel's critique on the market beyond its limit, Cox pays more attention to the

pervasiveness of the Market (market-ism or market mentality), and its effect on shaping

our worldview. The Market comes to function, Cox claims, as "a powerful and all-

compassing worldview" just like a functioning religion.[29] Cox's argument implies that

the more the market gets deified, the more the world gets dehumanized.

In a more specific sense, we must ask: Why is this market-driven culture so

problematic in relation to the issue of social justice? Sandel articulates two possible

arguments of objecting to the domination of market values in our social life: "the fairness

objection" and "the corruption objection." He clarifies the difference between the two

arguments as follows:

> The fairness objection points to the injustice that can arise when people buy and sell
> things under conditions of inequality or dire economic necessity. According to this
> objection, market exchanges are not always as voluntary as market enthusiasts suggest….
> The corruption objection is different. It points to the degrading effect of market valuation
> and exchange on certain goods and practices. According to this objection, certain moral
> and civic goods are diminished or corrupted if bought and sold. [30]

The fairness argument and the corruption argument are different ways to argue for the

moral limit of markets: the former is concerned with the worsening injustice, and the

latter focuses on the diminishing or corrupting non-market values. However, both have

the common point of showing how seriously the market-driven culture has affected our

reflection on the good life at communal as well as individual levels.

Creating unprecedented forms of inequality and corrupting our non-market norms

are not unrelated. Market thinking and market relationships that permeate every aspect of

---

[29] Cox, *The Market as God*, 6.
[30] Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy*, 111.

human activity numb our sense of justice, making us indifferent in the question of how we should respond to the injustice and inequality in the world. When our ethical sensitivity is dulled by the market mentality, we do not just neglect all the subtle forms of injustice that mostly manifest in institutional condition,[31] but we also fail to recognize even the explicit forms of injustice in the marketization of the things that should not belong to the market.

In addition, as Cox points out, the deified market has made the world's problems, such as the injustices of the global economy, harder to solve, and it drives people to be infected by "the contagion of acquisitiveness of which there is no known cure."[32] The culture of insatiability and envy makes it more difficult for people to engage in common tasks for the common good in the pursuit of justice motivated compassion. In the culture of the deified market and its related problematic cultural phenomena, "a compassionate and generous attitude toward the frailties of human beings—prominently including oneself"[33]—is hardly cultivated. In particular, the emotion of envy in our sociocultural

---

[31] Regarding the large-scale structural injustice, Iris Marion Young is the best scholar with whom to converse. Critically assessing contemporary theories of justice in which views related to issues of justice are treated mainly as distributive matters, Young presents her alternative view of the structural understanding of injustice with close attention to the matter of oppression. In her understanding, theorizing about justice should not be limited to "the concept of distribution to material goods" (8). Instead, she focuses on non-distributive issues of justice, such as decision-making, the division of labor, and culture, defining injustice as domination and oppression (9). Young conceptualizes "the five faces of oppression" to highlight many subtle forms of injustice—exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence (40-65). She shares Sandel's general critique of liberal theories of justice which reduce the issue into individual freedom or right, but she is not sympathetic with Sandel's communitarian approach, which merges questions of justice with questions related to the good life. I appreciate Young's understanding of injustice from a different perspective, but I do not agree with her critique on the discussion of justice in relation to the issue of the good life. In this dissertation, my interest in the issue of justice is closely related to the question of the nature of the good life at a personal as well as a communal level. For Young's full argument, see Iris Marion Young, *Justice and Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

[32] Cox, *The Market as God*, 278.

[33] Martha Mussbaum, *Political Emotion: Why Love Matters for Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 392.

context has a very negative impact.[34] Arguing for the importance of the political

cultivation of emotion, Martha Nussbaum presents envy as one of "compassion's

enemies,"[35] which poses special problems for cultivating compassionate citizenship along

with two other negative emotions—fear and shame. According to Nussbaum, envy

attacks compassion in two ways: "by narrowing the circle of concern and thus

encouraging the 'eudaimonistic thought' to focus on the self, or one's own group, and by

inhibiting the sense of similar possibilities and empathy that usefully accompanies it,

suggesting that the envied are 'other' or 'the enemy.'"[36] The expansion of market value

that dominates our sociocultural context is indeed a major problematic feature of the

contextual hindrance to education for justice out of compassion.

1.2.3. Problems with Current Education

In today's age of secularism and market-driven culture, education is reduced to

the business of preparation for the distant future to achieve economic success and social

prestige. The main question in educational practices today is likely limited to the very

question of utilitarianism, that is, *What use is it?* Or, more correctly, *What use is it for*

future economic success? Thus, as R.W. Hildreth points out, "In a variety of ways,

---

[34] In my view, social media—SNS, Vlogs, YouTube and more—functions to boost the culture of envy and maximizes the competition to broadcast an embellished self in a very negative sense. In *The Road to Character* (New York: Random House, 2015), David Brooks writes, "Social networking technology allows us to spend our time engaging in a hypercompetitive struggle for attention, for victories in the currency of 'likes'"(251) Brooks describes the social media maven as follows: "The social media maven spends his or her time creating a self-caricature, a much happier and more photogenic version of real life" and, thus, "people subtly start comparing themselves to other people's highlight reels, and of course they feel inferior"(251). I view this as a paradoxical phenomenon in the contemporary culture; people have more feelings of inferiority in a culture that excessively praises self-esteem. A culture of envy prevails in our society in a very negative way, making people lose the ability to find their authentic self. This might be an issue for another dissertation, however. Here, I only focus on the problem with the culture of envy in relation to the market-driven culture and its promotion of a *having* mode of existence.

[35] Nussbaum, *Political Emotion*, 345.

[36] Ibid.

education policy has become motivated by increasingly specific—and technocratic—aims of academic achievements."[37] Such a kind of education neither leads the leaners to question the status quo by developing their critical thinking, nor encourages the educational entities to question their role in perpetuating the current social problems of injustice and inequality. Consequently, education becomes amoral, and thus, it does not serve justice at both the personal and social levels. In the following section, I highlight two specific problematic aspects of the current education in our sociocultural context: 1) a problem with education for the distant future, and 2) a problem with parenting style boosted by increasing economic inequality.

1.2.3.1. Problem with Education as Mere Preparation for Future

To address the problem with current education as a mere preparation for the remote future, I draw on John Dewey's thoughts on education. In my understanding, Dewey is one of the most significant thinkers to whom we need to return in order to critically reflect on our current educational situation. As R.W. Hildreth argues, "Dewey's understanding of ends provides critical resources to help us both understand and respond to the increasingly narrow and technical focus of education practice and policy today."[38]

John Dewey (1859-1952), the foremost philosopher of education with a global reach, provides a lens to observe the central problems with current education. Writing on education as much as on philosophy, Dewey sought to reform education in his context, and his educational thought still offers a significant resource for critically observing the problems in educational practices today. As one of the early founders of American

---

[37] R.W. Hildreth, "What Good is Growth?: Reconsidering Dewey on the Ends of Education," *Education & Culture* 27 (2011), 30.
[38] Hildreth, "What is Good is Growth?" 30.

pragmatism, Dewey developed extensive views and ideas in various areas from metaphysics, logic, and epistemology, to ethics, aesthetics, philosophy of religion, and more. Within the larger picture of Dewey's thought, the focus here is on exploring how his thoughts on education can be useful for critically evaluating education in the contemporary context, especially in relation to the distorted orientation of current education.

In fact, Dewey attempted to resolve the controversy between the traditional approach to the education—what he called "old" education—and the progressive education—what he called "new" education—in his time, and he developed his philosophy of education beyond the debate.[39] For him, the point was not about choosing "either/or"—the old or the new, but about finding a productive combination of both. He criticized the traditional school as "a curriculum-centered" one that was based on "ready-made" organization and focused on transmitting information and skills worked out in the past to the new generation. Dewey also recognized the dangers in the "new" education that developed "its principles negatively rather than positively or constructively"[40] by exalting only the learner's interests and the current problems of a changing world. His chief critique of the "new" was on reducing education to what learners wanted to learn—

---

[39] In 1890, the debate between educational "romantics" (also called "new or progressive" education by Dewey) and "traditionalists" was fierce. The romantic alternative against the traditional education rejected the pedagogical method of traditional method as transmitting and advocated child-centered education. Dewey is remembered by many as the father of such progressivism in education and it is true that his philosophy on education played a significant role in the foundation of the movement. However, I argue that we need to be cautious about categorizing him with this child-centered educational progressivism. Clearly, for Dewey as a comprehensive thinker, the child was not the only starting point. It is more important to note that beyond the debate, Dewey's vision for the good education is associated with his vision of the good society as presented in his book, *Democracy and Education* (1916), and the relationship between thinking and doing is one of his main foci.
[40] John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Simon&Schuster, 1997, c1938), 20.

from their own experience—forgetting the needs of society and the traditions of learning handed down—what he called "the funded capital of civilization."[41]

Obviously, Dewey revealed stronger criticism on the traditional approach, but he found both the traditional and the progressive insufficient in themselves. He emphasized the need for a well-developed philosophy of experience and its relation to education. Pointing out how the history of educational philosophy had been marked by "opposition between the idea that education is development from within and that it is formation from without,"[42] Dewey called for a sound idea of education that combined the old and the new based on the understanding of "an intimate and necessary relation between the process of actual experience and education."[43]

Dewey sought to "reconnect philosophy with the mission of education-for-living" and he considered philosophy to be "the general theory of education."[44] For him, "education is life"[45] and education should consist in the reorganization or reconstruction of experience that enriches the subsequent experiences of life. Dewey developed an idea of "education as a necessity of life,"[46] which is "a self-renewing process."[47] He believed that "education must be conceived as a continuing reconstruction of experience" in which "the process and the goal of education are one and the same thing."[48] For Dewey,

[41] Dewey, *My Pedagogical Creed* (New York: Forgotten Books, 2015), 3.
[42] Dewey, *Experience and Education*, 17.
[43] Ibid., 20.
[44] David Hildebrand, "John Dewey," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/dewey/>. Accessed 12/10/19.
[45] Dewey, *My Pedagogic Creed*, 10.
[46] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction of Philosophy of Education* (New York: The Free Press; Later Printing edition, 1997), 1.
[47] Ibid. 9.
[48] Ibid., 13.

education is "a process of living," not "a preparation for future living,"[49]because such

preparation is not understood in "the principle of continuity." Dewey explains:

> Now "preparation" is a treacherous idea. In a certain sense every experience should do something to prepare a person for later experiences of a deeper and more expansive quality.That is the very meaning of growth, continuity, reconstruction of experience. But it is a mistake to suppose that the mere acquisition of a certain amount of arithmetic, geography, history, etc., which is taught and studied because it may be useful at some time in the future, has this effect, and it is a mistake to suppose that acquisition of skills in reading and figuring will automatically constitute preparation for their right and effective use under conditions very unlike those in which they were acquired.[50]

Dewey explains how education as preparation for the distant future can be mis-educative

when it is unrelated to the present experience and distorts "the principle of continuity." In

its true meaning, Dewey perceives education as a "continuous reconstruction of

experience" that is "marked off from education as preparation for a remote future, as

unfolding, as external formation, and as recapitulation of the past."[51] This does not mean

that Dewey ignores education as preparation. Dewey criticizes education as preparation

for a remote future that is not in continuity with the present experience. He states the

following:

> The mistake is not in attaching importance to preparation for future need, but in making it the mainspring of present effort. Because the need of preparation for a continually developing life is great, it is imperative that every energy should be bent to making the present experience as rich and significant as possible. Then as the present merges insensibly into the future, the future is taken care of.[52]

Dewey places his hope in the human capacity to learn from life, believing in the

possibility of growth and the ability to develop on the part of learners.[53] He maintains

that the process of experience is capable of being educative if it is reorganized and

---

[49] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 7.
[50] Dewey, *Experience and Education,* 47.
[51] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 80.
[52] Ibid., 56.
[53] Ibid., 42.

reconstructed properly; such education can be identified with growth, which cannot be toward a fixed goal because "the ideal of growth results in the conception that education is a constant reorganizing or reconstructing or experience."[54] Rejecting external ends for education, Dewey posits growth as the end of education as continuous reconstruction of experience. He affirms, "Since growth is the characteristic of life, education is all one with growing; it has no end beyond itself."[55] Dewey's understanding of the end of education as growth urges us to ask a series of critical questions about the problem with the definite end of current education shaped by an increasingly narrow understanding of academic achievement.

In thinking of education in terms of life-experience, Dewey points out the degree to which the traditional approach to education as preparation for the distant future is mis-educative and why education as growth should be "an ever-present process." He writes: "We always live at the time we live and not at some other time, and only by extracting at each present time the full meaning of each present experience are we prepared for doing the same thing in the future."[56] In such experiential education, good habits of thinking as reflection are essential elements. Dewey summarizes the process of reflective thinking as follows:

> …the pupil have a genuine situation of experience—that there be a continuous activity in which he is interested for its own sake; secondly, that a genuine problem develop within this situation as a stimulus to thought; third, that he possess the information and make the observations needed to deal with it; forth, that suggested solutions occur to him which he shall be responsible for developing in an orderly way; fifth, that he have opportunity and occasion to test his ideas by application, to make their meaning clear and to discover for himself their validity.[57]

---

[54] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 76.
[55] Ibid., 53.
[56] Dewey, *Experience and Education*, 49.
[57] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 163.

With his emphasis on education as continuous reconstruction of experience through the process of reflective thinking toward growth, Dewey presented an idea for overcoming the dichotomy of in-school education and out-of-school life experience. In his understanding, the psychological and social sides are organically related. For Dewey, the educational aim is not limited to personal growth but it does involve the social renewal to correct "unfair privilege and unfair deprivation, not to perpetuate them." [58]

Today, the goal of education is reduced to the individuals' economic growth and social prestige to be achieved in the future when formal education or schooling ceases. The narrow and technical focus of educational practices has generated the unprecedented form of competitive culture in a much-distorted way. Drawing on Dewey's thought on education, I contend that when education is considered as a mere preparation process for a distant future aimed just at getting a job or going on to higher education, it does not engage the learners as whole, and their present experiences. When the meaning of a good education is to achieve social success in the remote future, and when its end is limited to acquiring knowledge and skills, it does not involve the formation of character or cultivation of the ability to reflect on the nature of the good life for the person and the community—or provide ways on how one can live such a good life.

In his own historical context, Dewey harshly criticized educational practices that were not related to reconstructing experiences. His critique, however, continues to have validity in our time. Perceiving education as a way of living, Dewey calls us away from the increasingly narrow understandings of academic achievement, and urges us to think of the end of education as growth in a more fundamental sense for the individual and the

---

[58] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 119.

larger society. Today, we have a more distorted form of education than the one Dewey criticized in his time, with its excessive emphasis on academic testing and competition that leads to "academicism," and pushes students to focus on achieving individual success defined by future economic and social prestige. In such an educational trend, it is hard to find a place for an education for justice, which promotes critical consciousness motivated by compassion.

1.2.3.2. The Orientation of Parenting and Economic Inequality

Another problematic feature in current education is the changing orientation of parenting in the context of increasing economic inequality. The distortions of the aim of education are worsened when economic inequality is growing in our globalized and market-driven society. This context has also changed the role of parents[59] and the orientation of parenting in educating their children. The level of parental involvement in the lives of their children is increasing, but this involvement is oriented toward an obsession with making their children "successful" in an achievement-oriented culture in which external "success" defines one's entire existence. Such a narrow goal of education in an achievement-oriented culture has been boosted by economic inequality and has generated distorted orientations around parenting and education.

---

[59] In our rapidly changing society, the structure of family and the meaning of being a parent have changed. In the U.S., family living arrangements are becoming diverse, and the number of children living with their biological parents is decreasing. According to a study, less than 50% of children today are living in the traditional structure of family in which children are raised by their biological parents. (Pew Research Center, "Parenting in America," 12/17/2015, accessed on 11/10/19. https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/12/17/1-the-american-family-today/). Such change indicates that being a parent means more about fulfilling particular roles rather than being related biologically. In other words, being a good parent can be defined by the way the parent fulfills his/her role.

Regarding the relationship between the rise in economic inequality and parenting styles, Matthias Doepke and Fabrizio Zilibotti present an interesting study from an economic perspective.[60] They explore the issue of "how different patterns of inequality and parenting styles sustain and reinforce each other"[61] across countries and through history. In particular, they show how the growing economic inequality in the United States has reinforced the "anxiety-ridden helicopter parenting"[62] approach as the route to successfully raise their children. Since Haim Ginott, a child psychologist, first introduced the term "helicopter parenting" in 1969, the term has been used to refer to "heavily involved, time-intensive, controlling child-rearing approach."[63] Doepke and Zilibotti argue that such helicopter parenting is encouraged as parents' response to the increasing economic inequality in the US. Their findings show how a low degree of economic inequality leads to a parenting way that contributes to minimizing inequality in countries like Sweden.

The intensive parenting shaped by the achievement ethos for their children dominates our culture; in our society of increasing economic inequality, education to make a resume for career success is considered the only source for social mobility. As Doepke and Zilibotti correctly observe, the economic inequality increase intensifies

---

[60] Mattias Doepke & Fabrizio Zilibotti, *Love, Money & Parenting: How Economics Explains the Way We Raise Our Kids* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2019).

[61] Doepke & Zilibotti, Love, Money & Parenting, 13. Throughout their book, Doepke and Zilibotti use three main parenting styles—authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative—which were articulated by a developmental psychologist, Diana Baumrind, to describe the different parenting styles from an economic perspective. However, in their discussion, the distinction between authoritarian and authoritative parentings is not entirely clear, and it is more important in their argument to compare the more permissive method associated with low-economic inequality with a more intensive parenting style associated with higher economic inequality.

[62] Here, I am not dealing with the issue of whether "helicopter parenting" is problematic or effective, or if the level of involvement displayed within this parenting style is desirable. My concern relates to the problem with the orientation of the increasing parental involvement and its social and cultural context in which parents seems to be forced to choose this parenting style.

[63] Doepke and Zilibotti, *Love, Money & Parenting,* 51.

parenting styles; parents blindly follow the culturally-shaped objectives of the sought-after education, which is far from an education concerned with value, attitude or character. Putting it differently, in the face of increasing economic inequality, as Doepke and Zilibotti argue, parents are getting more obsessed with their children's future success, and they come to think that they have no choice other than focusing on a narrow education, which encourages their pushing their children harder to get good grades at school and help them survive in "a high-pressure meritocracy,"[64] far away from cultivating character or moral sensitivity. As the society becomes less equal and more competitive, it cultivates more unrealistic expectations around external achievements, and it leaves parents and children exhausted while being pushed "to live out one sort of insufficient external life," which is "the prevailing winds of culture."[65] In such a context, it is hard to find a space for educating learners to engage in struggles for achieving justice—thinking critically on the issue of justice as motivated by compassion.

1.3. The Internal Hindrance: The Problem with Malformed Faith

I have investigated the problems with the pervasive influence of secularism associated with scientism and market driven reasoning, and the distorted orientation of education in such a society as three aspects of exterior cultural hindrance to education for compassion-motivated justice prompted by the Christian faith. In this section, I address the problem of *malformed faith* as the internal obstacle. I attempt to show how the life-

---

[64] Brooks, *The Road to Character*, 252. In this book, Brooks criticizes contemporary society as "a high-pressure meritocracy" in which "the self is about talent, not character" (252). In light of such a society, he shows, how the meaning of character has changed and how qualities such as grit or resilience are praised as character traits to be cultivated for "success," whereas such traits as generosity or self-sacrifice that make "the worldly success" are losing their significance (253).

[65] Brooks, *The Road to Character*, 260.

giving potential within authentic Christianity can be diminished by *malformed* religious

faith and a distorted or immature understanding of God. I use Sigmund Freud's critique

of religious faith as the problem, as an important resource to critically explore the

problem of religious faith when it is neither shaped properly nor taught effectively.

1.3.1. Confronting Freud's Critique on Religious Faith

1.3.1.1. Religion as a Wish-Fulfilling Illusion

In *The Future of an Illusion* (1927),[66] Freud criticizes religion—religious ideas

rather than religious rituals or rites—as the problem. Using his harsh words to

deconstruct, he refers to religion a grand illusion that is derived from childish wishful

thinking for parental protection. As Kirk A. Bingaman interprets, "*The Future of an

Illusion* is Freud's attempt to determine, once and for all, if there will ever come a day

when human individuals can live without the 'illusion' of a God in heaven who consoles

and protects."[67] With the notion of illusion, Freud criticizes religious faith as "a childish

adaptation to the exigencies of human existence," [68] for it is based upon wish not reality.

> They [religious ideas] are illusions, fulfillments of the oldest, strongest and most urgent wishes of mankind. The secret of their strength lies in the strength of those wishes. As we already know, the terrifying impression of helplessness in childhood aroused the need for protection—for protection through love—which was provided by the father; and the recognition that this helplessness lasts throughout life made it necessary to cling to the existence of a father, but this time a more powerful one.[69]

---

[66] *The Future of an Illusion* (1927) can be considered the first and main critical work of Freud on religion, followed by the other major works on religion—*Civilisation and Its Discontents* (1930) and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939).

[67] Kirk A. Bingaman, *Freud and Faith: Living in the Tension* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 43.

[68] Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, translated and edited by James Strachey, with a biographical introduction by Peter Gay (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989), 38.

[69] Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, 38.

Freud severely criticizes religious ideas as illusionary beliefs that contradict reality. For him, religion is an illusion that serves only to alleviate infantile fears and functions to infantilize humankind, hindering its development to maturity.

The main point for which Freud attacks religious faith is its relation to the fundamental problem of human beings, which he refers to as their helplessness. His solution to such a problem is to be educated to reality by renouncing all illusions and withdrawing childish expectations about another world. Freud writes:

> Thus, I must contradict you when you go on to argue that men are completely unable to do without the consolation of the religious illusion, that without it, they could not bear the troubles of life and the cruelties of reality…. Perhaps those who do not suffer from the neurosis will need no intoxicant to deaden it. They will, it is true, find themselves in a different situation. They will have to admit to themselves the full extent of their helplessness and their insignificance in the machinery of the universe; they can no longer be the center of creation, no longer the object of tender care on the part of a beneficent Providence. They will be in the same position as a child who has left the parental house where he was so warm and comfortable. But surely infantilism is destined to be surmounted. Men cannot remain children for ever; they must in the end go out into "hostile life." We may call this "education to reality." [70]

For Freud, religious faith is the problem because it is an illusion derived from the helpless human beings' wishes for divine protection from life's perils and hardship.

1.3.1.2. The Image of God as an Exalted Father

According to Freud, all the wishes of human beings with prolonged feelings of helplessness both at the individual and communal levels are infantile, and such infantile wishful thinking creates the need for someone who can fulfill their wish for protection and consolation in the face of life's perils and hardships. Freud contends that the illusory nature of the image of God is represented by the God as the idealized and exalted father.

---

[70] Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, 62-63.

In his view, the father image is a common source for both the origin of religion and the

formation of the God image in individuals. Freud argues that God is a projection of the

image of the father, and the image of God as the father takes shape during the resolution

of the oedipal conflict when the desire for his mother is replaced by the identity with the

father. For Freud, both in the human individual and in the human race, the father complex

plays the main part and "longing for a father is the root of religious needs."[71] He states:

> Psychoanalytic investigation of the individual teaches with especial emphasis that god is
> in every case modeled after the father and that our personal relation to god is dependent
> upon our relation to our physical father, fluctuating and changing with him, and that god
> at bottom is nothing but an exalted father… if psychoanalysis deserves any consideration
> at all, then the share of the father in the idea of a god must be very important.[72]

Freud argues that even though the child has reached physical manhood, he still projects

the powerful father image formed in childhood into God the Father. Freud continues:

> Even the grown man, though he may know that he possesses greater strength, and though
> he has greater insight into the dangers of life, rightly feels that fundamentally he is just as
> helpless and unprotected as he was in childhood and that in relation to the external world,
> he is still a child. Even now, therefore, he cannot give up the protection which he enjoyed
> as child…. He therefore looks back to the memory-image of the overrated father of his
> childhood, exalts it into a Deity, and brings it into the present and into reality, the
> emotional strength of his memory-image and the lasting nature of his need for protection
> are the two supports of his belief in God.[73]

When Freud traces the process of the formation of the God image, he finds that "man's

relation to God could recover the intimacy and intensity of the child's relation to his

father."[74] Freud explicitly affirms that one's creation of his God is out of the object

relatedness to the father and also the formation of religion is built on the father complex.

---

[71] Hans Küng, *Freud and the Problem of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1990), 44.
[72] Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Resemblance between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics* (New York: Vintage, 1946), 190.
[73] *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, edited by James Starchey (London: Hogarth Press, 1966), XXII, 163.
[74] Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, 24.

He attributes the decisiveness of the early object relations—especially, relation to the father—to the formation of the image of God.[75]

1.3.1.3. Religion as Compulsion

In addition to his claim that religion is illusion and that the image of God is formed as the protective and controlling father image, Freud draws on the analogy between neurosis and religion. Freud applies the model of wish-fulfillment discovered in dreams and neurotic symptoms to the phenomenon of religion. He draws attention to the similarity between religious practices and obsessional neuroses. In Freud's view, neurosis is a private religion, and religion is formed as universal obsessive- compulsive acts; all the obsessional restrictions that religions carry on are the impediment to the process of growth of both individuals and all of humanity. Freud declares that "[r]eligion would thus be the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity; like the obsessional neurosis of children, it arose out of the Oedipus complex, out of the relation to the father."[76]

According to Kirk Bingaman, with the publication of his later work, *Totem and Taboo* (1913), it becomes more apparent for Freud to create a link between "the private religiosity of the neurotic with the universal neurosis of religious faith;"[77] this represents an important shift in Freud's thought. In Freud's later work, he compared the psyche of the human individual —that was, to his mind, male—to the collective psyche of primitive

---

[75] Ana-Maria Rizzuto clarifies this point by comparing Freud and Jung. She summarizes: "Freud and Jung agree on the inherited nature of the basic God-image and on the fact that the source of the God-image is the inner world of the individual. They disagree on the object-related origin of that image. For Freud, it is an internalization; for Jung, it is the self-filling out a structural formal archetype." Ana-Maria Rizzuto, "Object Relation and the Formation of the Image of God." *Journal of Medical Psychology* 48 (1974), 87.
[76] Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, 55.
[77] Bingaman*, Freud and Faith: Living in the Tension*, 34.

peoples, and he presented his historical reconstruction of how religion began and wanted "to agitate the sleep of all religious believers."[78] Freud was convinced that there were incontrovertible parallels between religious practices and obsessional neuroses, and thus those with religious faith fail to achieve maturity.

1.3.1.4. Religion as a Manifestation of Superego

Freud contends that in losing the sense of reality —or not being educated to the reality—, religious faith binds humans to a tyrannical superego and entails a return to childhood wishes and infantile behavior structures. Religious faith is shaped as a manifestation of the harsh superego, which is developed in a psychological developmental phrase of socialization.[79] The superego as "a special mental agency," Freud asserts, is in keeping with "the course of human development that external coercion gradually becomes internalized."[80] Religion, then, is the manifestation of the superego functioning as the sense of guilt. In Freud's view, such religion as the manifestation of the superego has the dogmatic or moralistic characteristics, and the image of God as the exalted father comes in many different shapes in its manifestation of the superego.

---

[78] Bingaman, *Freud and Faith: Living in the Tension*, 34.

[79] John J. Shea presents the notion of "the Superego God," drawing on Freud's making a connection between the superego and the religious faith. Shea develops the idea of "Superego God" as contrary to the notion of "living God." From his pastoral and psychological perspective, he describes the Superego God as the God of childhood and adolescence, which is characterized as all-powerful, all-knowing, all-controlling, and guilt-evoking. Pointing out that such imaging of the Superego God arises in early developmental phrases but stays throughout adulthood and permeates the culture, Shea argues for the transformation from the Superego God to the Living God. For more, see John J. Shea, *Finding God Again: Spirituality for Adults* (New York: Rowman&Littlefield Publishers, INC., 2005).

[80] Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, 13.

For Freud, oedipus-complex activity is the source that shapes the image of God as the child's image of a kind, protective or vindictive father, and it is the beginning of the superego, morality and religion. As Bingaman explains,

> …the superego, which we experience psychically as the conscience, can either be a restraining force intended to keep us in check, as in the case of instinctual renunciation, or a motivating force, inciting us to aim ever higher in our pursuit of the introjected parental and cultural idea, and thus it can be said that in either case, the superego can be particularly cruel and demanding.[81]

According to Freud's theory, the child's superego is formed by internalizing the parental standards and values during the oedipal phrase, and it expands to include the standards and values of other authoritative influences. As William J. Jones clarifies, for Freud, religious morality is entirely "a function of the superego with its harsh and unrealistic (and therefore neurotic) demands."[82] Freud, therefore, affirms that religion as a manifestation of the superego continually generates a sense of guilt with the fear of external authority.

1.3.2. Malformed Faith

As examined in the previous section, Freud harshly criticized religion as the problem and blamed religious ideas for preventing human development toward maturity. Freud's critique, of course, did not get everything right about the nature of religious faith and how it functions in every aspect. It might be correct to say that Freud is concerned only "with the psychological nature of religious ideas (as illusion), not with their truth content (as reality)."[83] I neither take a position in the long-held battle between

---

[81] Bingaman, *Freud and Faith*, 19.
[82] James William Jones, *Contemporary Psychoanalysis and Religion: Transference and Transcendence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 37. For many scholars, including Jones, to understand Freud's thoughts on religion, the notion of transference has been considered the key.
[83] Küng, *Freud and the Problem of God,* 47.

psychoanalysis and religion, nor attempt to attack Freud's attack on the religious faith in order to reject it. Rather, I attempt to confront his critique by recapitulating the important points in order to critically examine the distorted forms of the religious faith as barriers to education for justice in faith. In other words, drawing upon Freud's critique of religious faith as the problem, I discuss the problematic forms of religious faith that impede people from shaping the vision for justice out of compassion in faith.

If we—Christians—confront Freud in a spirit of self-criticism, we come to acknowledge that Freud rightly criticizes the features of *malformed* religious faith, which fail to attend to the reality and transform it with a constructive vision, just functioning as soothing mechanism. As Bingaman points out, Freud's harsh critique is to "agitate the sleep of mankind" in the contemporary context as well as in his time, raising a fundamental question that requires a crucial response from religious believers: "Is there not a healthier and more meaningful alternative to an individual's religious faith which passively tolerates the moral condemnation of God in exchange for God's eternal protection and consolation?"[84] I suggest that confronting Freud's critique of the religious faith can reshape the understanding of what faith means in an authentic sense overcoming dogmatic and moralistic faith.

In discussing the question of what "engaged faith" means in our pluralistic and globalized world, Miroslav Volf urges us to encounter the "malfunctions of faith," especially when considering the public role of religion in the contemporary context. Volf clarifies that he does not criticize the "religion as a malfunction," but questions the

---

[84] Bingaman, *Freud and Faith*, 43.

"malfunctions of faith," particularly those as reflected in Christian faith, which damage

its authentic nature as "a prophetic religion." Volf asserts:

> …the Christian faith has sometimes failed to live up to its own standards as a prophetic religion. Too often, it neither mends the world nor helps human beings thrive. To the contrary, it seems to shatter things into pieces, to choke up what is new and beautiful before it has a chance to take root, to trample underfoot what is good and true. When this happens, faith is no longer a spring of fresh water helping good life to grow lushly, but a poisoned well, more harmful to those who drink its waters than any single vice could possibly be….[85]

Volf articulates two major malfunctions of faith with the notions of "idleness" and

"coerciveness." By idleness of faith, he means a faith which "spins in one place, like a

tire stuck in an icy hole," just remaining as a form of demanding constrained by the

system of life and work, and not being relevant to contemporary issues. When faith

malfunctions in such a way, Volf affirms, it is like "a performance-enhancing drug, or a

soothing balm" rather than "a resource to orient" people's life in the world.[86] In addition

to criticizing such major malfunction of faith as "idle faith," Volf argues that it is when it

is responsible for violence with its "inappropriate assertiveness" that faith malfunctions

most seriously. Volf calls this malfunction the "coerciveness of faith."[87] I observe that

these two malfunctions of faith named by Volf appear commonly—in many cases as

combined, when faith is not shaped properly by effective religious education.

Supporting Volf's argument on malfunctions of faith—but approaching the

problem from an educational perspective—, I claim that the problem should be addressed

as *malformed faith* rather than malfunctions of faith. In other words, I assert that the more

fundamental problem concerns how faith can be malformed and why a pedagogical

---

[85] Miroslav Volf, *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2011), 4.
[86] Ibid., 23-24.
[87] Ibid., 37.

approach to faith as a way of living that is ethical and responsible to the Christian

mandate of justice is crucial. My point is that in addressing the problem with malformed

faith and its malfunctions, we can benefit from encountering Freud's critique on religion.

I contend that the features of the religious faith that Freud criticizes can be considered the

features of malformed faith. It seems to be true that most Christians as well as

theologians[88]have tried to "protect" the religious faith from Freud's devastating critique

by ignoring or rejecting it. However, when confronted with Freud in a self-criticism

spirit, it is not hard to find the forms of religious faith that Freud attacks in individuals or

in organized religious communities. As Melvin Keiser recognizes,

> [T]he manifest religion that Freud attacks is all too familiar: a projected and illusionary God, external to the self, who functions morally as a prohibitive and protective father, resolving guilt and helplessness, in whom we believe on external authority rather than experience—basically, a manifestation of the superego.[89]

In a more specific sense, as in Freud's critique, religious faith comes to be problematic

when it functions as a wish-fulfilling tool; when it relies on the immature image of God

---

[88] Among the few theologians and philosophers who were engaged in serious conversation with Freud, Paul Tillich is worth mentioning for his attempt to offer a Christian answer to Freud's critique. For Tillich, the mature view of reality, which was possible only when renouncing religious ideas in Freud's thought, should include a mature understanding of God that answers the ultimate questions of human beings. In Tillich's theology, using the method of correlation of existential questions and theological answers, asking questions of "ultimate concern" are imperative, not just permissible, to adequately understand the complexities of the reality. Regarding the issue of how Tillich agrees with Freud in part but does not agree with Freud's conclusion, John M. Perry's work is helpful. John Perry, *Tillich's Response to Freud: A Christian Answer to the Freudian Critique of Religion* (Landam: University Press of America, 1988).

[89] Melvin R. Keiser, "Postcritical Religion and the Latent Freud," *Zygon*, 25, No 4 (1990), 434. In this article, Keiser argues that on the "manifest" level, Freud severely attacks religion as the illusion but "on the "latent" level, he explores a different dimension of religion "as mystery deep in the psyche" (435). Developing his argument, he rightly points out the potential significance of Freud's critique in our discourse on religion and theology by attempting to understand it in relation to a "postcritical conception of religious maturity" (443). However, I suggest that he needed to offer a clearer notion of what he means by "religion," in particular when he discusses "Freud's latent religion" distinguished from an objective definition of religion. It might be right to say that Freud's life and work were quests for meaning in his own way, but the question is whether we can call them a "religious quest." Interpreting Freud's critique of religion from a postcritical perspective requires a deeper exploration. Again, my purpose of conversing with Freud is limited to investigating the problem of the defective forms of religious faith that distort the very nature of Christian faith in an authentic sense.

as an infantile projection of idealized father figure; when it is not renewed responding to the circumstances but stays stagnant; and when it becomes a manifestation of superego morality formed by fear of an objective external authoritative divine entity.[90] I contend that such features of malformed faith are the hindrances to education for justice out of compassion in faith, and they blunt the capacity of Christian faith, which is grounded on Jesus' vision of the Reign of God, to engage in a faithful and transformative manner with the social realties.

1.4. Concluding remarks

This chapter has investigated the hindrances to engaging in the issue of justice out of compassion in faith. It has aimed to understand the related context and the problems from an educational perspective. It has attended to the problems with the sociocultural context in terms of secularism, market-ism, and the consequent distorted orientation of education in such a context as the external hindrance. It also has critically examined the notion that a malformed faith can be an internal hindrance to education for justice in the Christian faith.

---

[90] Around this issue of the objective and external divine entity and human relation to such a supreme being in understanding God, Peter Homans provides an insightful argument comparing the notion of transference in Freud's thought and "the God of theological theism" in Paul Tillich's thought. See Peter Homans, *Theology after Freud: An Interpretive Inquiry* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970) and Peter Homans, "Transference and Transcendence: Freud and Tillich on the Nature of Personal Relatedness," *The Journal of Religion* 46, no.1 (1996), 148-164. Homans contends that the God of theological theism, which Tillich criticizes, is an objective God over/against us as subjects and it is just like the "transference-God" in Freud's system of thought. Since an such all-powerful and all-knowing God deprives us of subjectivity, Homans attempts to find a way to discuss the theological understanding of self-transcendence which moves beyond the subject-object relation by comparing Freud and Tillich. In Homans words, "The God above God of the theism emerges only when and insofar as the transference-God is destroyed, and the destruction of the transference occurs when and insofar as the subject-object relation is transcended." Homans "Transference and Transcendence: Freud and Tillich on the Nature of Personal Relatedness," 159.

Such an investigation raises further questions for the next chapter: *What, then, can the Christian faith, with its liberating and humanizing potential, distinctively contribute to the understanding of justice? What Christian resources can be used to discuss the issue of justice in terms of compassion?* To explore these questions, I will engage in the critical and prophetic dimension of liberation theology in connection with understanding of the symbol of the Reign of God as taught and practiced in Jesus' teachings and ministry. I will attempt to present a liberating theological exploration of God as incarnate in Jesus Christ and its ethical implication for Christian way of living in the pursuit for justice as an expression of compassion.

Chapter 2
The Liberating God of Life and Justice

2.1. Introduction

In its origin, Christianity developed the unprecedented understanding of God as incarnate in Jesus Christ who became the representative of the weak, the oppressed, and the excluded. This was contrary to the image of an all-powerful and wrathful Yahweh, and also contrary to the Greek philosophy of divinity as the order of the cosmos. The God who was revealed in Jesus was compassionate, with a passion for justice for all humanity. The humanizing and liberating message in Jesus' teaching and life creates a distinctive foundation for the pursuit of justice as an expression of compassion. Thus, the centrality of justice out of compassion should be recognized in seeking the way of living in the Christian faith. As Beverly Wildung Harrison claims, "We are not atheistic by virtue of our appreciation of the world as truly worldly, but by virtue of our rejection of the prophetic task of justice."[91]

By no means can I suggest an absolute notion or universal formula of justice that is sufficient to adjudicate all the various concrete moral dilemmas we confront. Separate from abstractionism in developing ideas of justice, my aim is to present a distinctive understanding of justice out of compassion in the Christian faith as a way of life with a primary focus on the reality and mandate to alleviate suffering. First, I explore Jesus' understanding of the liberating God of life in his historical context by focusing on his vision of the Reign of God. Then, I move on to discuss how Jesus' understanding of God

---

[91] Beverly Wildung Harrison, *Justice in the Making: Feminist Social Ethics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 21.

and the Reign of God is explored within the liberatory theological framework in the

contemporary context paying special attention to two particular issues—the

understanding of suffering and the matter of partiality.

2.2. Jesus' Understanding of the Liberating God of Life

2.2.1. Jesus in History and Christ of Faith

José A. Pagola presents one of the most significant works on understanding the

Jesus of history to build a bridge between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith.

According to Pagola, the purpose and the function of the historical research of Jesus are

to bring Jesus in history to people in the contemporary context. Pagola writes,

> My fundamental purpose is to "approximate" Jesus with historical rigor and in simple
> language, to bring his person and message closer to today's men and women. I hope to
> put in their hands a book that can guide them away from the attractive but false paths of
> so many science fiction novels, which ignore and contradict modern scholarship. But
> more than that, I hope to awaken in modern society, a "desire for Jesus," and suggest
> some "first steps" toward grasping that mystery.[92]

Pagola's attempt to "'approximate' Jesus with historical rigor" is more oriented to

bringing the person and message of Jesus to the contemporary context, rather than

focusing on collecting historically factual information about Jesus with little interest in its

significance for theological exploration in our context. In fact, many scholarly works on

the historical reconstruction of Jesus have been criticized because they leave Jesus *there*

and then, not making a proper and meaningful connection with us *here and now*.[93]

---

[92] Jose Pagola*, Jesus: A Historical Approximation* (Miami: Convivium Press, 2009), 16.
[93] For example, E.P. Sanders' work, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985) can be referred
to as one of the significant resources on the historical Jesus, especially for interpreting Jesus in the context
of his "Jewishness." However, Sanders' work does not seem to be interested in making a connection
between drawing an adequate picture of Jesus of the history and its implication for the contemporary
theological exploration. John Meier also largely focuses on Jesus' Jewishness in recovering the historical
portrait of Jesus. Compared to Sanders, Meier seems to leave more room for systematic theological

It is significant to search for the historical Jesus as we believe in the Christ of faith. The historical Jesus and the Christ of faith cannot be separated, but rather they should enhance each other. As Pagola describes it, "If by emphasizing his divine nature we forget that Jesus is a man, if we ignore his concrete human life, that can dissolve our faith."[94] It is indeed important to make a bridge between Jesus—who was a first-century Palestinian Jew living under Roman occupation—and us living in a totally different sociocultural context, and recognize that the historical research on Jesus offers another hermeneutical key to enrich our theological exploration. The quest for the historical Jesus cannot be a substitute for Christological exploration on the Christ of faith; however, its findings are not just compatible with but also necessary for theological exploration on the Christ of faith in our own historical context.

Agreeing with Pagola's assertion that it is when we recover "the human dimension of Jesus rigorously and vividly"[95] that we find Jesus' activity and message so relevant to us today, I engage in some significant findings of the historical research on Jesus in this section to explore how Jesus' teaching and ministry were grounded in his understanding and experience of God as a God of compassion and justice, and how Jesus' life and teaching can still stir our thoughts and lives *now and here* just as they did to his followers *then and there.* The task of reconstructing the historical Jesus is still uncompleted and unfinished, but it serves "a useful purpose," as William Herzog states,

---

discussion in connection with his findings. For more, see John Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus,* Vol.1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

[94] Pagola, *Jesus: A Historical Approximatio*n, 18.

[95] Ibid., 22.

enabling us "to catch a fleeting glimpse of the shadowy figure on the distant shore of history."[96] John Morris's description is helpful:

> [T]here is no need to wait until universal agreement is achieved on the Jesus of history before theological speculation can begin. A partial, tentative Jesus of history is the best we can hope for in any case. But history can help by proposing constructs, for example, whether Jesus is a revolutionary, a marginal Jew, a peasant, or whatever; whether Eucharist is a single unique event or a continuation of commensality. This will help the theologian in formulating the better model or paradigm of Christ.[97]

Situating Jesus in the context of Galilee in 30-33 CE and understanding the enormous inequality of resources in Jesus' own historical context and his response to such historical reality do not leave Jesus *there and then*. Rather, such a historical reconstruction of Jesus and the recovery of the humanity of Jesus and his ministerial vision enable us to critically reflect on our own situation in light of a life-giving and liberating vision. As Herzog affirms, Jesus' prophetic activity with his vision for the Reign of God became "the basis for Christological affirmation of his work."[98]

In my view, the most important asset gained through the historical research on Jesus is drawing sufficient attention to the concept of the Reign of God [99] as the central

---

[96] William R. Herzog, *Jesus, Justice, and Reign of God: A Ministry of Liberation* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1999), 254.

[97] John Morris, "Can Christology Benefit from 'Life of Jesus' Research? *Angelicum* 72, no. 2 (1995), 194. Morris prefers the term "life of Jesus" to "the historical Jesus" in agreement with Craig A. Evans. However, I do not find a significant advantage in replacing the quest for historical Jesus with life of Jesus research. Craig A.Evans, "Life of Jesus Research and the Eclipse of Mythology" *Theological Studies* 54 (March, 1993).

[98] Herzog, *Jesus, Justice and the Reign of God*, 254.

[99] This symbol of the reign of God is explored more in the following section. Here I want to address the appropriateness of this term. The term "the reign of God" has been used by many who prefer an inclusive as an alternative to "the Kingdom of God." In particular, for the feminist theologians-or scholars with inclusive intent-who have criticized and analyzed languages and images in the Christian tradition as perpetuating the structure of patriarchal oppression and injustice, it is crucial to recreate and purposely use new languages, symbols and images. In the feminist theological discourses, reshaping the existing terms itself can make a significant contribution to theological academia as whole. While the term the Reign of God is used by the majority of scholars, some scholars offer alternatives. For instance, Ada Isasi-Díaz uses the word "kin-dom" instead of the biblical term "kingdom," which she considers to be sexist, hierarchal, and elitist. According to her, "the word 'kin-dom' makes it clear that when the fullness of God becomes a day-to-day reality in the world at large, we will be all be sisters and brothers—kin to each other; we will indeed be the family of God." Ads Maria Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology* (Mray knoll: Orbis Books, 196),

vision of Jesus' ministry, especially in its relation to the contemporary concern for justice. There have been many disagreements among scholars in searching for the historical Jesus and various historical descriptions of Jesus have been offered. However, most scholars agree with the centrality of the Reign of God in Jesus' life and teaching, despite all the disagreements on portraying Jesus or choosing methods. In what follows, I explore Jesus' understanding of God as compassionate with passion for justice and I show how such an understanding shaped his vision for the Reign of God.

2.2.2. Jesus' Understanding of God

In Jesus, God was understood and experienced as "a friend of life," as Pagola puts it, and thus Jesus aimed all his activity at "establishing a healthier society."[100] Pagola asserts that experiencing God as such made Jesus "a prophet with passion for a fuller life for everyone;" for Jesus, "what God cared about was liberating the people from whatever dehumanized them and caused them suffering."[101] Jesus did not translate God's mystery into "an idol or threat," but he led people to believe in God as "a friendly and nearby presence," that is, "an inexhaustible source of life and compassion for all."[102]

If we recognize a historically undeniable fact of Jesus as a healer, we come to understand that Jesus, motivated by his experience of God as compassionate, was passionate about restoring the life of individuals and society for those who were suffering in a very real sense. Jesus' healing acts were grounded on his understanding of the

---

109. I appreciate the efforts of Isasi-Díaz and others to search for another option, but I prefer to use the term "the reign of God" as the alternative to the "Kingdom of God." However, I will not replace "Kingdom" with "Reign" when quoting from other scholars who still use the former.
[100] Pagola, *Jesus*, 111.
[101] Ibid., 106.
[102] Ibid., 24.

primary concern of the compassionate God for the suffering of the most unfortunate. As

Pagola clarifies, the manifestation in Jesus' healings was "a sign of God's compassion"

rather than "a proof of God's power,"[103] which was integral to his entire ministerial goal

to liberate those who were suffering. Pagola writes,

> The sources do not show Jesus walking through Galilee in search of sinners, to convert
> them away from their sins, but coming to the sick and demon-possessed, to liberate them
> from their suffering. His activity was not oriented toward reforming the Jewish religion,
> but toward alleviating the suffering of those who were burdened by evil and excluded
> from a healthy life. It was more about eliminating suffering than condemning various
> types of sin. [104]

Grounded in his experience of the sacred rather than in convention, Jesus taught "a

counter-wisdom, a subversive or alternative wisdom" that called for transforming "the

taken-for-granted cultural consensus of conventional wisdom."[105] He taught a way of life

based on a perception of reality that was different from established social conviction.

The Parable[106] of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) was told on the basis of his

understanding of God as compassionate, and the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke

10:25-37) engaged with the ethical imperative to imitate the compassion of God. As

Marcus Borg affirms, "Jesus speaks of compassion not only as the primary quality of

---

[103] Pagola, *Jesus*, 174.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Marcus J. Borg, *Jesus: The Life, Teaching, and a Relevance of Religious Revolutionary* (New York: HarperOne, 2015), 167.

[106] Regarding understanding of the uniqueness of Jesus's parables, Sallie McFague offers an insightful argument from her theological perspective. Rejecting the views on the parables as "teaching devices" or "moral illustrations" she argues for viewing the parables as metaphors and "as models of theological reflection," emphasizing "[their] curious wedding of realism and strangeness" (80). In her view, the stories should be interpreted as a challenge for us to reflect on the problems of social injustice and inequality rather than be taken as history. McFague writes, "[T]he parables accept the complexity and ambiguity of life as lives here in this world and insist that it is in this world that God makes his gracious presence known" (7). She contends that the parables invite us to engage in theological reflection, which is a "risky and open-ended kind of reflection" (7), and to integrate our thoughts and life. In other words, parables are not riddles to solve and they are not primarily concerned with knowing but, rather, with doing. Thus, they should be read in the realm of "willing" rather than "knowing." For more, see Sallie McFague, *Speaking in Parables: A Study in Metaphor and Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).

God, but also as the primary quality of a life lived in accord with God."[107] Jesus' parables were "surprising, arresting, and thought-provoking,"[108] unlike the detailed explanations of the law provided by the other rabbis in his time who perceived reality from a legal perspective. The compassionate God in Jesus' parables was the one who was present in the hearers' lives as "a friend of life," as in Pagola's term, and urgently invited them to live their lives in a new way.

Throughout Jesus' messages, teachings, and practices, compassion as God's character and justice as God's passion always go together. As Borg clarifies, God's compassion in Jesus' understanding and experience was not "something added on to society as charity for those who need help."[109] Instead, it was something united with God's passion for justice beyond the individual dimension. In Jesus, God is revealed as the one who invites all humans to integrate "joy in living," "compassion for the least," and "tireless effort toward a more just world"[110] in their lives, so as to live out the vision of the reign of God, through which *a compassionate justice* is actualized.

2.2.3. Jesus' Vision of the Reign of God

According to Pagola, "the Reign of God" appears 120 times in the synoptic gospels and is the key to understanding Jesus' life, teaching and public ministry. Most scholars searching for the historical Jesus agree that Jesus' teaching and ministry cannot be properly understood without mentioning his proclamation of the Reign of God. Describing Jesus as "a prophet of the reign of God," Pagola contends that by exploring

---

[107] Borg, *Jesus,* 176.
[108] Ibid., 155.
[109] Borg, *Jesus*, 185.
[110] Pagola, *Jesus*, 24.

the meaning of the Reign of God as the central theme in Jesus' teaching and ministry, we

can grasp the essence of his being and activity. In other words, it is the central symbol to

understanding "what sort of person he is, what he defends, whom he approaches, his

attitude toward those who suffer, how he seeks justice, how he relates to women, how he

understands and live his religion."[111]

> Jesus' message had an impact from the beginning. His way of talking about God provoked enthusiasm in the simplest, least educated sectors of Galilee. This is what they needed to hear: God cared about them. The reign of God that Jesus proclaimed was the answer to their deepest hope: to live in dignity. All the sources point to one thing beyond any doubt: Jesus saw himself as the bearer of good news. Indeed, his message would inspire great joy among those poor, humiliated peasants, people without prestige or material security, for whom not even the temple held out any hope.[112]

Noting the more "subversive" aspects in Jesus' activity and message, Herzog portrays

Jesus as "the prophet of the justice of the reign of God"[113] who can be referred to as "the

pedagogue of the oppressed."[114] In comparison with Paulo Freire, Herzog shows how

Jesus was committed to establishing the justice of the Reign of God in his historical

context. The justice that Jesus sought was not aimed at "administering impartial justice

according to some putative universalistic standard."[115]As Herzog puts it, Jesus public

activity was "a form of praxis of the justice of the Reign of God," which was "a

combination of action and reflection for the sake of changing the world."[116]

---

[111] Pagola, *Jesus*, 24.
[112] Ibid.,106.
[113] William R. Herzog, *Jesus, Justice, and the Reign of God* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 47.
[114] Using the term, "the pedagogue of the oppressed," Herzog argues for the commonality between Jesus and Paulo Freire. Paying special attention to the parables of Jesus as conveying political, economic and social analysis rather than theological or moral stories, Herzog shows how the parables exposes the details of exploitation and oppression in Jesus' historical context using Freire's term, "codification." For instance, when he interprets the parable of the laborers in the Vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16), Herzog shows how the parable unveils the reality of "some determination of the man's social class" as the mode of codification (79-97). For more, see William Herzog, *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994).
[115] Herzog, *Jesus, Justice, and the Reign of God*, 69.
[116] Ibid.,110.

The scholarship searching for the historical Jesus has confirmed that there is no doubt about the centrality of the Reign of God in Jesus' ministry, teaching and life, but there are some disagreements on "what Jesus meant by the kingdom of God." More specifically, as Borg points out, there is a primary division in the contemporary scholarship about when and how Jesus thought this would happen, rather than about "the content of what the kingdom of God would be like."[117] Essentially, there are two different frameworks: one argues that it would happen by means of a dramatic intervention by God in the near future, and the other argues for human collaboration with God.[118]

Despite the divisions, the widespread agreement drawn from understanding "the kingdom of God as God's passion," is that "God's kingdom" is envisioned for the earth as well as for the transformed earth. Jesus did not coin the term "the Kingdom of God," but his teaching and ministry renewed its meaning and recreated hope in people's hearts. One of the significantly distinct points in Jesus' understanding of the reign of God is that it is not about a future manifestation of God. Jesus passionately proclaimed, "It is *among* you." According to Pagola, "Rather, he[Jesus] was trying to convince them (the Galilean peasants) that the coming of God to establish justice was not a terrible, spectacular intervention but a liberating force, humble yet effective, and that it was there *in the midst of life,* within reach of anyone who accepted it with faith."[119] The important point is that Jesus proclaimed the Reign of God as "a reality that requires the restoration of social

---

[117] Borg, *Jesus: The Life, Teaching, and a Relevance of Religious Revolutionary*, 188.
[118] Pagola, *Jesus*, 185-186.
[119] Ibid.,105. Emphasis added.

justice,"[120] not limiting it to being a merely private and spiritual matter; it calls humanity

"to a more worthy human and hope-filled life."[121]

The distinctiveness of Jesus' vision for the Reign of God becomes clearer when it

is compared to the proclamation of John the Baptist. Jesus was inspired by John the

Baptist, but he transformed the message of John the Baptist, proclaiming the compassion

of God rather than God's wrath. In other words, Jesus spoke of God who wants everyone

to live a life of happiness and dignity, not of God who is a wrathful judge. As Pagola

writes, Jesus replaced "the austere life of the desert with a festive life style."[122] Jesus was

with the people in the very midst of their everyday lives, not isolated from their everyday

reality, leaving behind "the language of the desert."[123] He was awakened with his new

conviction on "the saving nearness of God,"[124] and he invited people to look differently

at their lives and to have faith in the Reign of God.

Focusing more on the political dimension, Borg also asserts that the Reign of God

entails a vision for "the transformation of life in this world."[125] In other words, Jesus'

vision for the Reign of God includes the eschatological vision of a preferred future for

those who suffer and those who are oppressed. However, it is also concerned with

transforming social as well as personal reality in the midst of this life. For Jesus, "the

gravest sin" is "the sin of causing suffering or remaining indifferent to it,"[126] which

means resisting the Reign of God. Grounded in his experience of God as the one who

---

[120] Pagola, *Jesus*, 117.
[121] Ibid., 24.
[122] Ibid., 90.
[123] Ibid., 92.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Borg, *Jesus*,14. Borg heavily emphasizes Jesus' resistance against the dominant system in the political dimension, understanding the Reign of God as "a political-religious metaphor."
[126] Pagola, *Jesus*, 174.

wants to humanize life for everyone, Jesus never distinguished between God and the Reign of God. He criticized all dehumanizing effects and oppressive forces; showed special compassion toward the poor, the marginalized and the oppressed; and always defended life according to his vision for the Reign of God. In the next section, I further explore Jesus' vision for the Reign of God interpreting the Lord's Prayer as the prayer that makes a clear connection between the Reign of God and justice for the well-being of humanity.

2.2.4. The Lord's Prayer and Justice

There are two versions[127] of the Lord's Prayer in the Bible—one is in Matthew (6:9-13) and the other is in Luke (11:1-4). In Matthew, the prayer is placed as a part of the Sermon on the Mount; in Luke, a shorter version is given by Jesus to the disciples upon their request. Both versions convey the core of the prayer and Jesus' intention, but Luke's version omits the last petition, "*but rescue us from the evil one*" (Matthew 6:13b), which makes Luke's version asymmetrical compared to Matthew's version.

In Matthew, the location of the prayer is significant. Commentators have various ideas on the structure of the Sermon on the Mount, but most of them agree that the Lord's Prayer is located at the center of the Sermon in Matthew 5-7. Interpreting the Lord's

---

[127] In fact, there is a third version of the Lord's Prayer found in *The Didache*, known as *The Teaching*, which is a collection of Christian teachings for Christian practice from around the first century. Borg considers the existence of three different versions of the Lord's Prayer a good example of a developing tradition. He explains that though the core of the prayer probably goes back to Jesus, the prayer was developed in somewhat different ways by early Christian communities and then put into written form by the authors of Matthew, Luke, and the Didache (Borg, *Jesus: The Life, Teachings, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary,* 36). However, there is a different view on the fact that we have two different versions of the Prayer in the Bible. J.C. O'Neill claims that the Prayer was not given as "one prayer in two different versions," but there are the scattered Prayers that disciples preserved in two different collections, as in Matthew and Luck. J.C. O'Neill, "The Lord's Prayer," *Journal for the study of the New Testament* 16 no. 51 (July 1993):3-25. However, I follow the widespread agreement as in Borg's view that the core of the prayer was given as one prayer and some changes were made in each community.

Prayer as the heart of the Sermon, scholars understand it in relation to the whole context of the Sermon. For instance, Charles Talbert discusses it in terms of character formation, using the same interpretive rule he applies to other passages in the Sermon:

> The Lord's Prayer indicates what God thinks our needs are. As such it causes the auditor to *see* what his or her needs really are, what his or her petitions should really be—that, is to see prayer differently. As such, in effecting changes in one's perceptions, it leads to alteration in one's dispositions and intentions. Character is being changed. Prayer is being purified. [128]

Mary Hinkle offers another interpretation of the Prayer in the context of the Sermon as the ethics of empowerment.[129] She argues that as "an empowering prayer," it relates to what the hearers need to live out the Sermon on the Mount. In Hinkle's interpretation, the Lord's Prayer offers "a means of empowerment" in the midst of "a seemingly relentless barrage of imperatives."[130] In other words, she explains, "The Lord's Prayer is a way to ask for what is needed to enact the ethic that Jesus proclaims."[131] While appreciating the various significant interpretations, I approach the Lord's Prayer in terms of justice. I explore how the Prayer conveys the vision for the Reign of God, and how the Prayer is related to the practical reality of the hearers.[132]

---

[128] Charles H. Talbert, *Reading the Sermon on the Mount: Character Formation and Decision Making in Matthew 5-7* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic,2004),119. Author's emphasis.

[129] Mary Hinkle, "The Lord's Prayer: Empowerment for Living the Sermon on the Mount," *Word & World* 22, no. 1 (Winter, 2002): 9-17.

[130] Hinkle, "The Lord's Prayer," 17.

[131] Ibid.

[132] To understand the intersection of the biblical texts, including the Lord's Prayer and practical realities, Ellen David's work is helpful. She criticizes the misunderstanding and misuse of the Bible in using it selectively "to excuse our ignorance, to justify our wishes, or to condemn people unlike ourselves" (xi), and she presents an alternative way of understanding the text from the agrarian mind-set. Her purpose is to correct modern practices of the abuse of land and food in conversation with the biblical text from an ecological and agrarian point of view. The basic question which directs her argument is: "How do these [biblical] texts view the relationship between humans and the material sources of life as an essential aspect of living in the presence of God?" (3) For more, see Davis, Ellen. *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

With his proposal for "the interactive relationship between justice and prayer,"[133] John Dominic Crossan offers an insightful analysis on distributive justice as the radical vision of God in the bible, especially in the Lord's Prayer. His interpretation of the Lord's Prayer is much more focused and distinctively relevant to the contemporary concern for justice. Some criticize Crossan's interpretation as too narrowly drawn from his advocacy for justice and nonviolence, and see many points of his interpretation, such as the dismissal of substitutionary atonement,[134] as quite controversial. However, in my view, this very point—interpreting the prayer in terms of justice and collaboration — makes Crossan's interpretation more significant for the contemporary context.

Crossan interprets the Lord's Prayer as "a revolutionary manifesto" in its content, which claims a radical vision of justice, and as "a hymn of hope" in its format, which adopts poetic techniques as found in biblical poetry.[135] Making a connection between the prayers of the biblical psalms and the justice of the biblical prophets, he argues for "the interactive relationship between justice and prayer" with an emphasis on "the extraordinarily profound collaboration between divine Spirit and human spirit."[136] Crossan asserts:

> Maturity in prayer—and in theology—means working more and more *from* prayers of request (complaint or petition), *through* prayers of gratitude (thanksgiving or praise), and on *to* prayers of empowerment (participation or collaboration)—with a God who absolutely transcendent and immanent at the same time.[137]

[133] John Dominic Crossan, *The Greatest Prayer: Rediscovering the Revolutionary Message of the Lord's Prayer* (New York: HarperOne, 2010), 21.

[134] Further on, I critically discuss the atonement theories for understanding the meaning of Jesus' suffering in light of unjust suffering in our world from the perspective of feminist liberatory theologians.

[135] Regarding the poetic qualities of the Lord's Prayer, especially the Matthean form, Michael Wade Martin offers a helpful argument that explores them in relation to the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint. Martin contends that the Prayer belongs to the ancient Jewish liturgical poetry tradition and suggests two alternative forms of translation that better reflect the poetic qualities of "the symmetries of sound and thought" (371). For more, see Michael Wade Martin, "The Poetry of the Lord's Prayer: A Study in Poetic Device, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 134, no.2 (2015): 334-372.

[136] Crossan, *The Greatest Prayer,* 25.

[137] Ibid., 28. Author's emphasis.

Grounded in this understanding of prayer, Crossan frames his interpretation of the Lord's Prayer in terms of justice for all humanity, suggesting that it is "a prayer from the heart of Judaism on the lips of Christianity for the conscience of the world."[138]

When he uses the notion of justice, Crossan understands the primary meaning of justice as distributive, not retributive, because "to be just means to distribute everything fairly—even if that is retribution of punishment."[139] Analyzing the Lord's Prayer clause by clause, he argues that the "revolutionary vision of distributive justice" in the Lord's Prayer derives from "the well-run household," in which everything is distributed fairly—with a special care for the needy—in order for everyone to thrive. The God to whom the prayer is addressed is, Crossan asserts, "the Householder of the world house," who cares if everyone has "a fair, equitable, and just proportion of God's world." Thus, Crossan suggests that the biblical vision for justice can be more accurately called "household-ism" or "enough-ism" rather than "egalitarianism." In particular, when Crossan discusses the clause "your Kingdom come" in the Prayer, he emphasizes that it is important to correctly understand the intent of the terms:

> You could more accurately translate them as the "reigning" of God rather than the "kingdom" of God, because they stress the type and mode of divine rule—as distinct from the type and mode of imperial rule. The Greek equivalent is the feminine noun *basileia* and, once again, what is underlined is not so much *where* God rules the world as *how* God rules the world.[140]

The clearest connection between the Reign of God and the well-being of humanity is made in the first two petitions in the second half of the Prayer. Immediately following the clause, "your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven," the second half starts with the

---

[138] Crossan, *The Greatest Prayer*, 2.
[139] Ibid., 2.
[140] Ibid, 78. Author's emphasis.

petitions for "*our* daily bread" and then "forgiveness of *our* debt."[141] As Borg points out, bread and debt were "the two central survival issues in peasant life," and the Prayer is making a clear connection between "the Kingdom of God and the well-being of the poor and hungry."[142] Crossan contends that the petition for daily bread is not "just about food" but about "just food" for all.[143] He also asserts that what Jesus meant by "debt" in the petition for forgiveness of debt should be interpreted as more literal than metaphorical.[144]

In Crossan's interpretation, Jesus declared that "*God's kingdom is here, but only insofar as you accept it, enter it, live it, and thereby establish it.*"[145] Crossan clarifies that in the Prayer, Jesus intended to convey a message of collaboration, not substitution. It was a paradigm shift "from imminence by divine intervention to presence by divine-human collaboration,"[146] which demands works of justice and compassion in the daily reality to actualize the vision for the Reign of God. In a more real sense, "kingdom on earth" in the Prayer involves the transformation of the lives of the poor, the hungry, the marginalized, and the oppressed. As in many other parables and stories, Jesus demonstrated in this "Great Prayer" that God is present in daily life, demanding an urgent response. As Crossan states, the Prayer affirms that "God's kingdom did not, could not, and will begin, continue, or conclude without human collaboration."[147]

---

[141] Here it is important to point out that these are "our/us" petitions and recognize the prayer as "the prayer of community." Victor Westhelle further asserts that the Prayer is a prayer of community seeking justice. For more, see Victor Westhelle, "On Displacing Words: The Lord's Prayer and the New Definition of Justice," *Word&World* 1 (Winter, 2002): 27-35.

[142] Borg, *Jesus*, 188-189.

[143] Crossan, *The Great Prayer,* 133.

[144] Ibid., 159-161. Crossan suggests taking seriously its literal meaning and understanding that debt becomes sinful when it creates too much inequality, rather than making a transition from debts to trespasses to sins (160).

[145] Crossan, *The Great Prayer*, 90. Author's emphasis.

[146] Ibid., 92.

[147] Crossan, *The Greatest Prayer*, 94.

There is reciprocity between the symbol of the Reign of God, which the contemporary quest for the historical Jesus finds as the central theme in Jesus' message and ministry, and the theological orientation of the liberationist toward the work of justice in our contemporary context. In what follows, I discuss how Jesus' vision of the Reign of God can be theologically explored today.

2.3. A Theological Exploration on the Liberating God of Life

When exploring the question of what theology is and what its function is in the modern world, Jürgen Moltmann, a German political theologian, declares that "theology for the sake of God is always kingdom-of-God theology."[148] He shares the conviction of Gustavo Gutiérrez, a Latin American liberation theologian, that every theology must be oriented toward understanding the relationship between the growth of the Kingdom and the process of liberation. Gutierrez declares that "without liberating historical events, there would be no growth of the Kingdom," meaning that "though no historical event of liberation can be identified with the salvation in its fullness, the process of liberation is "the historical realization of the Kingdom."[149]

In my understanding, Moltmann and Gutiérrez develop their theology as "kingdom-of-God theology" in their own social and cultural context, commonly attending to the reality of suffering.[150] Rebecca S. Chopp categorizes German political

---

[148] Jürgen Moltmann, *A Passion for God's Reign: Theology, Christian Learning, Christian Self* (Cambridge: Wm.B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 1.

[149] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*, translated and edited by Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1973, revised edition, 2016), 104.

[150] The political theology intersects with the liberation theology in many ways. In fact, the liberation theology in the Latin American context is a relatively recent development compared to the broader notion of political theology, whose root can be traced to much earlier history before "a trend of political theology" in the postwar German context. As Elizabeth Johnson summarizes it, for the context of "unspeakable suffering" which shatters the belief in humanity as well as in God, three German theologians—Jürgen

54

theology and Latin American liberation theology as "two distinct voices within the paradigm of liberation theology." Chopp contends that the theologians of both approaches agree "not only on the major fact of contemporary life—events of massive, public suffering—but also on the need for new ways of understanding human existence."[151] She compares those two theological approaches and finds that they distinctively present their theologies in terms of "the praxis of suffering." However, as Elizabeth Johnson maps out, there are various other frontiers in liberatory theological exploration of God attending to public suffering in their own contexts, including feminist, womanist, or Hispanic theology. The liberatory theologies understand God as "a personal and communal God of great compassion," not as a metaphysical reality or a distant deity in our evolving world.[152] Despite the differences of context and sources, the fundamental claim of those approaches is "to reinterpret Christianity as a praxis of solidarity with those who suffer" as well as "to relocate human existence in praxis."[153]

I do not intend to compare particular theological approaches, but I instead aim to focus on two specific issues—suffering and partiality—within the paradigm of liberation theology. After discussing the challenge of liberation theology for shaping the meaning of justice, I then explore the way of understanding suffering in the pursuit of justice out of compassion[154] and a justifiable partiality toward the preferential option for the poor.

Moltmann, Dorothee Soelle, and Johann Baptist Metz—constructed such an approach of political theology. They redirected the traditional theodicy question, "Why did God permit this to happen" to the anguished query, "Where is God, where is God not" in the quest for the living God in the midst of unspeakable suffering. Elizabeth Johnson, *A Quest for the Living God* (New York: Continumm, 2007), 51.

[151] Rebecca S. Chopp, *The Praxis of Suffering: An Interpretation of Liberation and Political Theologies* (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1986), 4-5.

[152] Johnson, *Quest for the Living God,* 143.

[153] Ibid., 6.

[154] To be clear, the notion of compassion in my discussion is distinguished from charity or empathy. In many cases, compassion tends to be understood as identified with charity—addressing the needs of those who suffer—, or it tends to be understood as identified with empathy—feeling toward those who suffer.

2.3.1. Justice in the Liberative Theological Approach

When claiming "theology as critical reflection on praxis,"[155] Gutiérrez

concentrates on the critical function of theology. Emerging from a critical analysis of

social reality, especially the poverty in Latin America, Gutiérrez's theology of liberation

offers a crucial understanding of the social responsibility of Christian faith for the works

of justice and compassion. As Gutiérrez clarifies, "The question regarding the theological

meaning of liberation is, in truth, a question about the very meaning of Christianity and

about the mission of the church."[156] For him, "theology must be critical reflection on

human kind, on basic human principles,"[157] which is distinct from the traditional

understanding of theology as wisdom or rational knowledge. Such an understanding of

theology as a critical reflection leads to a different understanding of Christian faith and

the mission of the church. In liberation theology, faith and life are not separable, and the

unity of faith and life accounts for "its prophetic vigor and its potentialities" as "a

concrete and creative commitment of service to others."[158] Gutiérrez asserts:

However, what I mean by compassion is more about attentiveness to the reality of suffering with a willingness to eliminate the suffering by engaging in the work of justice. Compassion involves *emotion as thought* (following Martha Nussbaum) and *action as commitment*. As Maureen O'Connell describes, it is more "self-critical rather than self-comforting, political rather than private, empowering rather than paternal, and an expression of justice rather than charity" (34). Maureen O'Connell, *Compassion: Loving Our Neighbor in the Age of Globalization* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2009). In O'Connell's attempt to reconstruct the account of compassion using the story of the Good Samaritan, it is particularly significant that she calls to expand our understanding to transform "the Jericho Road" itself (177), which is considered the wider social reality. Drawing on Martha Nussbaum's view on "political compassion," O'Connell shows how crucial it is to analyze the structural and systematic causes of suffering with alternative ideas about human flourishing collectively grounded in the Christian faith.

[155] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation,* 5.

[156] Ibid., xiv. Gutiérrez clarifies the meaning of "liberation" as necessary to transform the reality in Latin America and other third world contexts in contrast to that of the term "development." Pointing out that "*developmentalism* came to be synonymous with *reformism* and modernization," he shows how it has not achieved a real transformation for the poor and the oppressed (24-25). For him, it is clear that the ultimate solution to the concrete situation of suffering is "integral liberation," which is distinguished from "development aid" (which can be translated into "charity").

[157] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation,* 9.

[158] Ibid., xix.

The theology of liberation attempts to reflect on the experience and meaning of the faith based on the commitment to abolish injustice and to build a new society; this theology must be verified by the practice of that commitment, by active, effective participation in the struggle which the exploited social classes have undertaken against their oppressors. Liberation from every form of exploitation, the possibility of a more human and dignified life, the creation of a new humankind—all pass through this struggle.[159]

Thus, a new understanding of justice in liberation theology was drawn from a critical analysis on the reality of injustice. Its "prophetic denunciation of the grave injustice rampant in Latin America" was the starting point to comprehending the meaning of justice.[160] In this sense, referring to liberation theology as "a theory of injustice," Karen Lebaquz notes: "Liberation theology does not give us a tight philosophical theory of justice. But it gives a sense of the fullness of justice—of the intrusion of justice into every arena of human life. Above all, it gives us the sense of a justice known primarily through the experience of injustice."[161]

Since it emerged in the 1960s as a very new conception, liberation theology has contributed to opening "a vibrant new chapter of quest for living God" in the contemporary context, discovering God "not in the sense of deducing abstract notions but in the sense of encouraging divine presence and absence in their[people's] everyday experiences of struggle and hope, both ordinary and extraordinary."[162] In fact, the liberative theological approach has not been limited to the Latin American context but has also been a new language of God in a variety of contexts, speaking of God as a *liberating God of life* who is compassionate with passion for justice in the midst of suffering. According to Johnson,

---

[159] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*,174.
[160] Karen Lebacqz, *Six Theories of Justice: Perspectives from Philosophical and Theological Ethics* (Minneapolis, Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), 104.
[161] Lebacqz, *Six Theories of Justice*, 115.
[162] Johnson, *Quest for the Living God*, 13-14.

> Naming God the liberator does not just craft one more symbol to add to the treasury of divine images. It puts a question mark next to every other idea of God that ignores the very concrete suffering of people due to economic, social, and politically structured deprivation. Thus, this call for the praxis of justice is important not just for the faith of Latin Americans but for the faith of the worldwide church.[163]

Johnson asserts that the theological approaches in the liberative framework are the ways of speaking of the living God. They commonly claim that God is "a liberating God of people who loves and redeems their humanity" and that faith should be understood as "the radical conviction that at the heart of the world this kind of love exists as a reality greater than any other, and this must be expressed in praxis and corresponds to God's own heart."[164] Therefore, in the liberative framework, our discourse about God cannot be separated from involvement in the historical process of liberation. As Johnson affirms, "[T]he practice of justice and peace actually mediates a profound experience of the mystery of God."[165]

The central affirmation of the liberation approach to justice is that justice and compassion are integral to each other. Attending to the suffering in a concrete sense, as that which is experienced by the oppressed as an unjust and dehumanizing reality, the liberation approach seeks justice not as a formula or law in a narrow sense, but as eliminating the reality of suffering in a fundamental sense. In his distinctive message, Jesus advocates for justice out of compassion. When we understand that compassion starts with attention to the reality of suffering and that it naturally leads to a passion for justice as the way of reducing this suffering, a question about the meaning of Jesus'

---

[163] Johnson, *Quest for the Living God*, 86.
[164] Ibid., 83.
[165] Ibid., 88.

suffering on the cross needs to be discussed in relation to the understanding of our
suffering.

2.3.2. The Understanding of Suffering

2.3.2.1. Atonement and Suffering

The way the story of Jesus, and especially his suffering on the cross, is told

deeply affects how we understand our suffering and God in the midst of suffering. I argue

that Jesus' suffering and death should not be understood in the framework of

"substitutionary atonement" when we attend to the reality of suffering. As Pagola asserts,

> What saves humanity is not some "mysterious" saving power in blood spilled before
> God. Suffering in itself is evil; it has no redemptive power. It does not please God to see
> Jesus suffer. The only salvific thing about Calvary is the unfathomable love of God,
> incarnate in the suffering and death of his son. There is no saving power outside of that
> love.[166]

In other words, when the suffering of Jesus itself, not God's love revealed in Jesus, is

glorified in any way as "salvific" suffering, there is a danger that our understanding of the

reality of suffering can be distorted.

Feminist theological exploration of the suffering of Jesus in its discourse on

soteriology[167] can further our discussion on the meaning of Jesus' suffering on the cross

not as atoning for sin but as *liberating human beings from suffering*. Basically, feminist

liberation theologians agree that Jesus understood his vision for the Reign of God in

---

[166] Pagola, *Jesus: A Historical Approximation*, 411.

[167] In my understanding, the feminist theological discourse on soteriology can be summarized by three main issues: 1) the problem with salvific suffering (suffering and salvation); 2) the problem with the "male" Christ (gender and salvation); and 3) the problem with salvation just for individuals' after-life (salvation for life in fullness). I do not intend to engage with all these issues, but I must note that the basic contention in discussing them from a feminist perspective is that it is problematic when salvation is conceived as a deductive meaning drawn from the absolute truth rather than as an inductive meaning based on various lived contexts. In other words, it is problematic that salvation has nothing to do with the current cries that produce histories of suffering and oppression caused by social, political, economic, gender, and racial injustice.

terms of collaboration, not of substitution. They have problematized the glorified

suffering and the harm of the sacrificial suffering. Attending to women's experiences and

contexts, feminist theologians have scathingly criticized how traditional theological

models of atonement have glorified suffering and justified sinful structures of oppression

and injustice, which harm both men and women. The traditional ideas of atonement have

been developed throughout history in various tones and forms, grounded in the basic

assumption that sinful humankind was saved because Jesus suffered and died on the

cross. Whatever its name—a ransom theory of atonement, satisfaction atonement, a

substitution theory of atonement, or something else—is, all the theories of atonement

have been misused to justify the abusive, unjust, and oppressive system and to

romanticize the suffering of the oppressed. The abusive potential of such a framework

should be detected.

Basically, theories of atonement presuppose that "saving human beings from

separation from God primarily involves atoning for sin rather than delivering human

beings from some kind of bondage, repairing human nature, or something else."[168] As

Michel Murry summarizes, three of the most well-known and widely-discussed theories

of atonement are: 1) the ransom theory known as *the Christus Victor* theory, which was

the dominant theory of the Patristic period; 2) the moral exemplar theory, which

emphasizes Jesus' sinless life as relevant to his salvific suffering and death on the cross;

and 3) the satisfaction theories, which follow the Anselmian satisfaction model in various

---

[168] Michael J. Murray and Michael, Rea "Philosophy and Christian Theology," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/christiantheology-philosophy/. Assessed January 20, 2020.

ways.[169] Whatever it is named, the common problematic point in all atonement theories is the emphasis on the absolute salvific meaning of Jesus' suffering and death on the cross, rather than on Jesus' embodiment of the Reign of God in his life and ministry.

Feminist theological discourses[170] approach Jesus' suffering on the cross differently, in light of the reality of unjust suffering in the world, using women's experience of suffering and oppression as a starting point. However, taking women's experience as the starting point and as the context of doing theology does not mean that their theological approaches are limited to gender issues in a simple dualistic dichotomy of male verses female. Just as other approaches of liberation theology, feminist theologians expand their analysis "to comprehend the multiplicative structures of taking a specific case of women's oppression."[171]

---

[169] Murray and Rea, "Philosophy and Christian Theology," assessed on January 20, 2020. As the authors point out, these three kinds of theories are "not mutually exclusive." In other words, they are not like the "wholly distinct camps in the history of soteriological theorizing." In fact, some mixed forms have been observed in theological positions taken at institutional or personal levels.

[170] As critical and praxis-oriented theology aiming to recover and actualize the liberative potential of Christianity in a true and full sense, feminist theological approaches take three steps: 1) deconstructing the patriarchal thought system and androcentric logic in Christian doctrinal formation; 2) constructing a new theological discourse in a new framework built upon the uniqueness of women's experience valuing the creativity of female imagination; and 3) searching for the ways to transform inside and outside of Christian communities in a very practical sense. These steps question the traditional way of theologizing from a feminist perspective, explore the issues in a renewed framework of thought, and search for clues for transformation.

[171] Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet: Critical Issues in Feminist Christology* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 13. For a complex systematic analysis of the multiplicative structures of oppression beyond gender analysis, Fiorenza developed her notion of "kyriarchy" as a redefinition of the concept of patriarchy in her method of "critical feminist analysis." She presents the term "kyriarchy" as a broader concept than patriarchy to name "the rule of the emperor/master/lord/father/husband over his subordinates," based on her critique of the feminist use of "patriarchy" in the sense of gender dualism. She points out that women have suffered from oppression and injustice in "a complex social pyramid of graduated dominations and subordinations." According to Fiorenza, women's lives have been placed "at the bottom of the kyriarchal pyramid" and women's experiences are imbued with multiple forms of oppressions and intensified by multiple factors of injustice. For more summarized explanation of the term kyriarchy, see Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Interpretation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2001): 118-122.

2.3.2.2. The Meaning of Jesus' Suffering on the Cross

Using women's experience of oppression and suffering as the starting point for soteriological discourse requires a more careful consideration of the meaning of Jesus' suffering on the cross. In other words, the focus on suffering as central to salvation and redemption must be seriously questioned. When understanding God as compassionate, as portrayed in Jesus' teaching and ministry, suffering cannot be justified in the name of God's will or as some necessity for God's redemptive work. Jesus' suffering on the cross cannot be glorified as salvific suffering. As Johnson clarifies, the cross is not "the will of God" but, rather, "against the will of gracious God."[172] Johnson confirms:

> Along with other forms of political and liberation theology, feminist theology repudiates an interpretation of the death of Jesus as required by God in repayment for sin…. Rather, Jesus' death was an act of violence brought about by threatened human men, as sin, and therefore against the will of a gracious God.[173]

Thus, the cross becomes a symbol of deconstructing the unjust structure and system which Jesus challenged. Johnson continues:

> Above all, the cross is raised as a challenge to the natural rightness of male dominating rule. The crucified Jesus embodies the exact opposite of the patriarchal ideal of the powerful man and shows the steep price to be paid in the struggle for liberation. The cross thus stands as a poignant symbol of the "kenosis of patriarchy," the self-emptying of male dominating power in favor of the new humanity of compassionate service and mutual empowerment.[174]

The critique of the cross as the redemptive image and Jesus' suffering on the cross as the salvific suffering is expressed in a different tone and in a different context by Delores Williams. Rejecting the traditional image of redemption as substitutionary atonement, Williams articulates the issue of redemption by imagining it in relation to the surrogacy

---

[172] Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992), 158.
[173] Johnson, *She Who is,* 158.
[174] Ibid., 160-161.

experience of African American women. In her view, salvation has nothing to do with "any kind of surrogate or substitution role of Jesus;"[175] thus, there is no salvific meaning in any form of surrogacy of African American women's historical experience. For her, the suffering and death of Jesus is not salvific at all, but it is Jesus' life and ministry that are redemptive. Salvation is assured, Williams confirms, "by Jesus' life of resistance," which destroys "the mind of destructive forces prohibiting the flourishing of positive, peaceful life" and proclaims the ministerial vision of life for all humanity.[176] Williams asserts:

> Redemption had to do with God, through the ministerial vision, giving humankind the ethical thought and practice upon which to build positive, productive quality of life. Hence, the kingdom of God theme in the ministerial vision of Jesus does not point to death; it is not something one has to die to reach. Rather, the kingdom of God is a metaphor of hope God gives those attempting to right the relations between self and self, between self and others, between self and God as prescribed in the Sermon on the Mount, in the golden rule and in the commandment to show love above all else.[177]

[175] Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 165.

[176] Ibid.,164-165. Williams develops her womanist proposal for new hermeneutics based on the story of Hagar to construct a theology for African American women's experience of God's presence in their struggle for survival and quality of life. In her reading of the Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar story (Genesis 16-1-16 and Genesis 21:9-21), she approaches the story through the eyes of Hagar, calling into question any simple, static and generalized description of God as a liberator. Williams calls our attention to another possibility of interpreting biblical narratives in light of the suffering of "a neglected character," not of main characters. According to her interpretation, God's response to Hagar in the desert can exemplify the "non-liberative flow" of the biblical stories in which God seems to overlook acts of oppression. Williams interprets God in Hagar's story as a partner for "survival and quality of life in the wilderness" rather than as a generalized liberator God. In Williams' view, using Hagar's situation as an example, God listens to the oppressed women, particularly, black women, who experience the reality of wilderness, and gives them the means to survive, initiating interpersonal relationships with them. However, Williams' interpretation has been criticized for relying on a narrow understanding of salvation and liberation. For example, as Stephanine Michem finds, Anthony Pinn, who is a renowned black theologian and has also made a harsh critique of "redemptive suffering," criticizes Williams' view of a God who may grant only survival, not liberation, accusing Williams of reducing the salvific activity of God to providing only the necessities for survival. However, starting with the historical experience of African-American women, I find Williams adding a very fundamental dimension of salvation as liberation. In my understanding, her discourse seeks to emphasize that when the basic quality of life itself is the problem, the liberative God is revealed as the survival partner. Following Stephanine Mitchem, who insightfully responds to the major criticism on womanist works (including that of Williams), I agree that Williams argues that "survival skills become gateways for liberation" (95). Stephamine Michem, "Womanists and (unfinished) constructions of salvation," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 17, no. 1 (2001): 99-117. Here, I converse with Williams, focusing on her interpretation of the cross and suffering, not intending to argue the validity of her use of Hagar's story in constructing an idea of liberation.

[177] Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 165-166.

In Williams' interpretation, Jesus' suffering on the cross resulted from "the evil of humankind trying to kill the ministerial vision of life in relation that Jesus brought to humanity."[178] Contending that Jesus on the cross is an image of oppression and injustice and the suffering itself cannot contain any kind of salvific power, Williams declares:

> The cross is a reminder of how humans have tried throughout history to destroy visions of righting relationships that involve transformation of tradition and transformation of social relations and arrangements sanctioned by the status quo…. Humankind is, then, redeemed through Jesus' ministerial vision of life and not through his death. There is nothing divine in the blood of the cross…. As Christians, black women cannot forget the cross, but neither can they glorify it. To do so is to glorify suffering and to render their exploitation sacred. To do so is to glorify the sin of defilement. [179]

2.3.2.3. Understanding of Suffering in the Pursuit of Justice out of Compassion

Johnson affirms that Jesus' suffering and death on the cross are "against the will of God" and Williams, analyzing the African American women's experience, strongly rejects any kind of salvific meaning associated with the cross and suffering. Though they approach the issue differently, both recognize that making meaning out of suffering as substitutional sacrifice is problematic and dangerous. Thus, in correcting mis-interpreted Jesus in the patriarchal system, feminist liberative theologies aim to escape the danger of justifying suffering and passivity in suffering.

In summation, Jesus' suffering and death on the cross did not signify that God's honor is satisfied through substitutional sacrifice. The God revealed in Jesus' life—one who fully engaged with the marginalized and the oppressed—was compassionate and liberating. I argue that the theological models of atonement should not be the interpretive lens through which our suffering is understood, and should not be used to glorify or

---

[178] Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, 165.
[179] Ibid., 167.

justify suffering or to valorize passive acquiescence to sinful structures that generate various forms of unjust suffering. As Johnson writes, there is "no logical or theological answer to the mystery of the reality of suffering" but "there is a mystical-political way to live that goes on opening a pathway through the history of suffering."[180] The liberatory feminist theology grounded in the vision of the Reign of God starts with women's experiences as criteria for a reconstructive direction in doing theology. Its ultimate task, however, is to seek a transformative possibility in solidarity with all the marginalized voices to seek human flourishing in a holistic sense.

When justice is sought with a practical recognition of the reality of suffering, then the next question might consider the partiality in such a pursuit of justice. In other words, if justice and compassion are integral to each other when we attend to the reality of suffering in the Christian faith, the typical praise for impartiality as crucial for justice needs to be questioned. To explore this, in the following section, I discuss the "preferential option for the poor," which is a key theme in liberation theology.

2.3.3. A Preferential Option for the Poor: A Justifiable Form of Partiality

2.3.3.1. The Significance of the Preferential Option for the Poor

> Our context today is characterized by a glaring disparity between the rich and the poor. No serious Christian can quietly ignore this situation. It is no longer possible for someone to say, "Well, I didn't know" about the suffering of the poor. Poverty has a visibility today that it did not have in the past. The faces of the poor must now be confronted. And we also understand the causes of poverty and the conditions that perpetuate it. There was a time when poverty was considered to be an unavoidable fate, but such a view is no longer possible or responsible. Now we know that poverty is not simply a misfortune; it is an injustice.[181]

---

[180] Johnson, *Quest for the Living God*, 68.

[181] Daniel Harnett, "Remembering the Poor: An Interview with Gustavo Gutiérrez," America: The Jesuit Review, 2/3/2003, accessed January 20, 2020.
https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2003/02/03/remembering-poor-interview-gustavo-gutierrez.

Poverty is not a new issue for our time. There have been always the wealthy and the poor; however, today the ever-widening gap between them, as Gutiérrez affirms, is a form of injustice; therefore, the suffering of the poor should be placed as a priority in our theological reflection. According to Chopp, Gutiérrez, through his unique testifying to "the experience of God in the journey of the poor," offers "a new understanding of human existence, a new interpretation of Christianity, and a new form of theological reflection."[182] Recognizing the suffering caused by economic inequality more seriously than any other theological approaches do, liberation theologians offer a new paradigm for theology, especially for understanding of the meaning of justice in the Christian faith.

Based on the understanding of poverty as injustice, liberation theology's primary concern for justice manifests in its advocacy for "a preferential option of the poor." It concludes that poverty is an injustice because it is not simply a condition or circumstance, but is structured and systematized.[183] As Karen Lebacqz explains, "[T]he misery and exploitation of the poor do not just 'happen' but they are due to the very logic of the system, not to neglect."[184]

A preferential option for the poor has been a key theme of liberation theology. It offers a significant insight for the sake of all, not just for the sake of some, providing a guideline for the kinds of transformation that is necessary to bring greater justice into an unjust world. In my view, if it is not misinterpreted, it is the most significant insight that the discourses of liberation theology contribute to the theological community as a whole. The typical objections to this phrase are generated from a misunderstanding of it as

---

[182] Chopp, *The Praxis of Suffering*, 46.
[183] Lebacqz, *Six Theories of Justice*, 104.
[184] Ibid.

"partial and exclusionary in its option (only) for the poor."[185] As Enriquez recognizes, the preferential option for the poor is often criticized in that "it can and has led to partial, dualistic, and exclusionary language, attitudes, and actions," betraying Christian belief in the "universal love of God." [186]

However, if adequately understood, the language of the preferential option for the poor is not partial or exclusive but, rather, an inclusive one aimed at liberation for all. According to Moltmann,

> Since the option is called preferential, it must not be understood in a one-sided exclusive sense. It is meant in a one-sided *inclusive* sense. God has mercy on the poor so that through them he can save the rich too. The poor are saved through their liberation, the rich through God's judgment on their unjust wealth. So, through the one-sided and 'preferential' option, all will finally be saved. For the different dimensions of theology touched on here, the 'preferential option for the poor' is the preliminary decision, or preliminary understanding (precomprensión), for absolutely every liberation theology."[187]

In other words, it is "the intentional action to see reality more clearly" by seriously attending to the reality of "the invisible world of the suffering of the poor."[188] Enriquez elaborates:

> The option for the poor then serves as a corrective to our tendency to not see, whether consciously or not, specific forms of suffering around us. It is *the epistemological move necessary for a more inclusive grasp of reality*. It is a counterbalance against our tendency to not look at those margins but to stay in the comfortable middle, a readjustment of our perspective helping us realize that we may not even be in the middle but have already taken sides by looking merely at the dominant story lines and the stories of power, and not the story of the underside and the powerless. [189]

2.3.3.3. The Understanding of Partiality

---

[185] Karen B. Enriquez, "Expanding the Cultivation and Practice of Love and Compassion in our Suffering World: Continuing the Dialogue between Liberation Theologians and Engaged Buddhists," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 36 (2016), 69.

[186] Enriquez, "Expanding the Cultivation and Practice of Love," 70.

[187] Jürgen Moltmann, *Experience in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology*, translated by Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 233. Author's emphasis.

[188] Enriquez, "Expanding the Cultivation and Practice of Love," 71.

[189] Enriquez, "Expanding the Cultivation and Practice of Love," 71. Emphasis added.

As Johnson affirms, "[I]n situation of misery God is not neutral" and "the living God" takes a side "with oppressed peoples in their struggle for life."[190] The God of life is the one who wants all creatures to flourish and such a God loves all creatures with "liberating partiality" out of love; this is another dimension of God's universal love. In Johnson's words, "[T]he sole reason for this partiality is divine love, which freely sides with the poor not because they are more saintly or less sinful than others, but because of their situation."[191] Johnson continues:

> Preferential option for the poor signals who ought to get first attention because their suffering is so great. The motive for this divine preference is what gives new color to the notion of God as holy mystery. This motive is nothing less than love, the free, gratuitous, unmerited character of divine love, which generously searches for those whom society marginalizes and which elects to be in solidarity with the weak and abused of history. Precisely through this particularity for the oppressed, God's love is revealed is universal—no one is left out, even the most socially outcast.[192]

Siding with those who are oppressed is the response of God as liberator to the reality of suffering, and the particularity and the universality of God's love does not conflict in this commitment.

Regarding the properness of this kind of partiality in the pursuit of justice, Stephen Pope offers a helpful argument to show that such partiality is "morally justified, and indeed, required."[193] Addressing the problems with a critique on the preferential option for the poor as "a form of unjust partiality," Pope argues "that the preferential option, properly understood, appeals to an *expansion* rather than *contraction of* love and wisdom, and that this form of partiality must not be associated with those forms which

---

[190] Johnson, *Quest for the Living God*, 73.
[191] Ibid., 74.
[192] Ibid., 82.
[193] Stephen J. Pope, "Proper and Improper Partiality and the Preferential Option for the Poor," *Theological Studies* 54 (1993), 242.

encourage a disregard for fairness, a distortion of truth seeking, and a narrowing of the

universal love of God."[194] At this point, to understand the *proper* partiality underlying the

preferential option for the poor, it is necessary to question the place of impartiality in our

ethical thinking.

In fact, when linked with morality, especially the issue of justice, impartiality is

mostly considered positive and ideal. Whether it refers to a consequentialist impartiality

(seeking the consequences of more good for more people) or a deontological impartiality

(seeking the right principles of the individuals), impartiality, as free of bias or prejudice,

is considered a kind of requirement in the pursuit of justice. In any case, the very notion

of impartiality is regarded as fundamental to morality.[195] However, as Iris Marion Young

rightly points out, "[N]ot only is impartiality impossible, but commitment to the ideal has

adverse ideological consequences."[196]According to Young:

> The ideal of impartiality is an idealist fiction. It is impossible to adopt an unsituated
> moral point of view, and if a point of view is situated, then it cannot be universal, it
> cannot stand apart from and understand all points of view. It is impossible to reason about
> substantive moral issues without understanding their substance, which always
> presupposes some particular social and historical context; and one has no motive for
> making moral judgements and resolving moral dilemmas unless the outcome matters,
> unless one has a particular and passionate interest in the outcome.[197]

If admitting the impossibility of impartiality and acknowledging no moral role which

impartiality can play in our real-life context, then the question is: What is the *proper*

---

[194] Pope, "Proper and Improper Partiality," 242. Author's emphasis.
[195] For a review on justice as impartiality and key points in the debate between impartialists and partialists,
Brian Barry's work is helpful. Barry argues for justice as impartiality, offering a solution for power
struggles among conflicting ideas of a good life in different religions and nations. This work seeks to
restate the approaches to justice as impartiality, defending its rationale and responding to the critique on
impartiality. Brian Barry, *Justice as Impartiality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
[196] Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990),
112. In particular, Young strongly criticizes the ideal of impartiality in relation to the problem of cultural
imperialism as one of the aspects of oppression. According to her, "Impartiality feeds cultural imperialism
by allowing the particular experience and perspective of privileged groups to parade as universal" (10).
[197] Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, 104.

partiality in searching for justice? More specifically, the question in relation to the term of preferential option for the poor would be; What kind of partiality is associated with the preferential option for the poor, if properly interpreted and understood?

Pope summarizes various criticisms of the preferential options for the poor in three points: 1) it violates "agape" by defining the non-poor as "class enemies" as the ones to be overcome rather than loved; 2) it violates justice by championing a particular side, that is, the one of the poor in every case of political conflict, regardless of the concrete facts of the matter; and 3) it violates the universality of God's salvation by assuming material poverty as "a privileged source of religious truth."[198] In summation, the underlying suspicion of all the criticisms is that "the preferential option advocates an unjustifiable partiality or bias in favor of the poor."[199]

Against such criticisms, Pope explores an approach to justice that includes the criterion of need, away from a meritarian conception of justice, in order to offer a proper understanding of divine partiality in the preferential option for the poor. He also points out the importance of making a critical distinction between "love" and "care" because the divine partiality in the preferential option for the poor is not something akin to "favoritism" but it rather concerns "special care for the needy" out of God's love for all.[200] Despite its crucial significance, this distinction between "love" and "care" seems to be ignored in advocating the preferential option for the poor. Pope contends that the distinction makes preferential love for the poor understandable because such love is "under its subcategory of 'care' or 'caring love.'"[201]

---

[198] Pope, "Proper and Improper Partiality," 243-244
[199] Ibid., 244.
[200] Ibid., 258.
[201] Ibid.

Indeed, the preferential option for the poor is a form of "justifiable partiality" in the "divine preference of care for the needy,"[202] which includes other categories of the needy as well as the poor. However, Pope clarifies that partiality is justifiable when it fosters inclusiveness in three spheres—epistemological, moral, and religious;

> First, the preferential option advances epistemological inclusiveness by attending to all the relevant evidence, including that of the experience of the poor, and by promoting less ideological construals of current social arrangements… Second, the preferential option advances moral inclusiveness by insisting on the full participation of all people within the political, social, and economic life of local communities… Third, the preferential option advances religious inclusiveness by its affirmation of both God's preferential care and universal love.[203]

In sum, the preferential option for the poor is not "undue partiality" but, rather, "a due partiality"[204] for those who suffer. It seeks to expand the cultivation of compassion in our suffering world for the sake of justice. No contrast exists between compassion and justice in such a commitment; rather, in the preferential *care* for those who suffer, compassion and justice are united. The preferential option for the poor seeks to draw *attentiveness* to the suffering and the structural causes of such reality of oppression including poverty. Furthermore, it is a practical engagement with an alternative vision beyond just interrogating or unmasking reality, aiming to promote hope in the midst of suffering—the hope ultimately motivated by God's love that shapes our effort to be in solidarity with those who suffer.

2.4. Concluding Remarks

I have discussed Jesus' understanding and experience of God and the humanizing and liberating message in his teaching and life, drawing upon the contemporary quest for

---

[202] Pope, "Proper and Improper Partiality," 265.
[203] Ibid., 265-267.
[204] Ibid., 267.

the historical Jesus to show how the symbol of the reign of God demands works of justice out of compassion (i.e. compassionate justice). I have also explored how this original message is theologically constructed in the contemporary context and creates a distinctive foundation for understanding justice out of compassion in the Christian faith. Throughout this chapter's exploration, my intention has been to assert that the primary quality of the Christian life is determined by the unity of compassion and justice that can be achieved by living in accordance with Jesus' vision for the Reign of God in which God's character as compassionate and God's passion for justice are united.

It is my understanding that Jesus experienced God as the one who wants to humanize life for everyone. In his vision of the Reign of God, compassion must recognize the reality of unjust suffering and justice must be sought to eliminate suffering. Jesus' commitment to justice out of compassion requires critical social consciousness to address the social or economic causes of the suffering, envisioning an alternative possibility for transformation. I believe that Jesus' vision of the Reign of God should be the very basis for Christians' vision of the good life and ethical responsibility for the flourishing of all humanity.

The understanding of justice out of compassion in the Christian faith is a holistic approach, not one limited to the rational dimension. This approach, for instance, is distinguished from John Rawls' notion of "justice as fairness" which seeks an equality of distribution to benefit the least advantaged derived by *rational* choice in a *fair* setting.[205]

---

[205] This refers to Rawls's way of drawing the principles of justice chosen by people behind "a veil of ignorance" as a hypothetical social contract in an "original position of equality." Rawls constructed his theory of "justice as fairness" with his effort to resolve the tension between freedom and equality in establishing a fair society. For more details, see John Rawls, "A Theory of Justice*,"* in *Justice: A Reader,* edited by Michael Sandel (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 204-209.

My approach recognizes the link between emotion and cultivating an ethical mind in the Christian faith, and critically attends to the role of emotion in the search for justice. In the next chapter, I explore this issue by focusing on the emotion of anger with the following question; *Is it possible to evaluate the moral status of anger as a positive and constructive force toward establishing justice when it is aroused by compassion in the Christian faith?*

Chapter 3

Anger in the Christian Life and Justice:
Toward a Possibility of Compassionate Anger

3.1 Introduction

> Lust, anger, envy and pride are [evil] emotions. Although we condemn rape, aggression, belittling and strutting, the typical action consequences of the "bad" emotions, my intuition favors the idea that the sinfulness of the emotions is independent of the evil or absurdity of their manifestations.[206]

There have been many philosophical discussions on the nature of emotion that have assessed *bad* emotions as being morally repugnant in themselves. However, when emotion—its nature, its role and its relationship with thought—is considered more carefully, it is no simple undertaking to clearly distinguish *bad* emotions from *good* emotions. In taking on the complex task of understanding emotions rather than simply dismissing them as irrational and involuntary based on the problematic opposition between reason and emotion, several questions have emerged: How have the rationalists neglected the emotional dimension in their understanding of human beings? What kind of role does emotion play in our thinking and ethical decision-making processes? Is it possible to understand emotion as independent of its action consequences? Can emotion be developed like cognitive capacity? In the case of anger, is it in itself always to be characterized as a bad or wicked emotion? How should the subtlety of the emotion of anger be understood and how should its ethical significance be assessed?

---

[206] Rom Harre, *Personal Being* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 221. Quoted in Robert C. Roberts, "What Is Wrong with Wicked Feelings?" *American Philosophical Quarterly* 28 (1991), 13. Roberts extends the philosophical attention that Harre directed the significance of the feeling itself in displaying ourselves as socially unique beings to a discussion of how feelings can be morally assessed in themselves. In his analysis, anger as envy/pride or contempt does is in itself morally offensive; thus, it can be morally assessed as a wicked feeling.

Recent interest in emotion across academic disciplines has produced an extensive amount of research, including studies on philosophical development in emotion theory that attempt to answer the normative question of whether emotions are rational as well as the descriptive questions of what emotions are—in and of themselves. Indeed, it is difficult to define emotion. When simplistically classified, it might be correct to say that "emotions have historically been conceptualized in one of three main ways: emotion as experience, emotion as evaluation, and emotion as motivation." [207] Additionally, there are "object-directed emotions," (emotions with target objects), and "emotions without objects," (emotions with propositional objects).[208] The emotion of anger might be one of the most elusive and complicated. Anger is an emotion that has many-layered dimensions and is differently perceived in different realms of our lives. I believe that when exploring the link between emotion and cultivating an ethical mind in the Christian faith, anger is one of those emotions that need to receive the most critical attention.

In a context recognizing the importance of the emotional basis for the Christian way of life, this chapter aims to explore the issue of whether anger is *absolutely vicious* or *possibly virtuous* in the Christian faith. Since this exploration is conceived with an educational interest, the underlying basic questions are these: *Should and could Christians be educated to practice the prohibition of anger under any circumstance? Could and should Christians be educated to experience anger for any constructive purpose?*

---

[207] Andrea Scarantino, and Ronald de Sousa, "Emotion," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/emotion/>. Accessed on 02/20/20.
[208] Ibid.

I chose the most explicit teaching of Jesus about anger from the Sermon on the Mount (SM) as my starting point and extended my discussion to a broader biblical and cultural context encompassing contemporary theological and ethical exploration. The Sermon on the Mount (SM) is the longest single segment of Jesus' teaching in the New Testament and is often considered the heart of Jesus' ethical teaching. I do not see the SM as a kind of handy moral guidebook for individuals regardless of the context of each situation but I do recognize the crucial significance of the SM as a description of the Christian ethical ideal in Jesus' vision for the Reign of God.

Through a close reading of the biblical teaching described in Matthew 5:21-26, and by exploring the theme of anger in a broader context, I argue that in the Christian faith, anger can be an assertion of compassion[209] and concern for human dignity in the face of the reality of injustice when the objects of anger are critically examined; furthermore, such anger can move individuals toward transformative and compassion-driven actions, not causing them to dwell in anger that is negative and destructive.

In the first part, I employ an exegetical approach to Matthew 5:21-26 to closely examine the explicit teaching of Jesus on anger in the passage. This approach considers 1) problems of translation; 2) the structure, outline and rhetoric pattern of the text; 3) the context within the larger context; and 4) the first-century cultural context. In the second part, I thematically explore anger in a broad context by doing the following: 1) investigating anger in other New Testament (NT) authors and in the Hebrew Bible; 2) drawing comparisons with early Buddhism; and 3) examining the contemporary

---

[209] I will propose *compassionate anger* rather than virtuous anger at the end.

discussion on anger. Lastly, I provide concluding reflections from an educational

perspective.

3.2 Exegetical Examination on Matthew 5:21-26

> 21) "You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder';
> and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment,' 22) But I say to you that if you are
> angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother
> or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool,' you will be liable to
> the hell of fire. 23) So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that
> your brother or sister has something against you, 24) leave your gift there before the altar
> and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. 25)
> Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or
> your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be
> thrown into prison. 26)Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last
> penny. (Matthew 5:21-26)[210]

3.3.1 Issues Related to Translation

The first problem regarding translation**[211]** is whether there was a phrase meaning

"without a cause" in verse 22a in the original text. In fact, it is hard to find an English

translation that includes the phrase, "without a cause," in verse 22a. To the best of my

knowledge, the insertion of "without a cause" is found only in the *Authorized Version* as

follows: "But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with this brother *without a cause*

shall be in a danger of the judgment" (Matthew 5:22a).[212] Many modern commentators

seem not to think of this problem as primary, but David Alan Black argues that the

correct translation of this verse is still an open question, and he shows how the teaching

---

[210] Translations from the Bible used in this dissertation are the *New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)*
unless otherwise indicated.
[211] In fact, here my findings on the problems related to translation are limited. I rely on the *New Revised
Standard Version* with which I am most familiar and attempt to find some issues by comparing NRSV with
other translations into English.
[212] This is taken from the *Authorized Version* with emphasis added.

might be significantly softened by the insertion of "without a cause."[213] If the phrase, "without a cause" is added, it seems to grant that there can be justifiable anger with a just cause. By including the phrase, the important question would be changed from *whether* we can be angry to *why* we are angry. The teaching would become more about discerning why we are angry or at what our anger is directed, not about an exclusively negative judgment on anger. Agreeing with Black, I suggest that we need to attend to this translation problem of the inclusion or omission of the phrase "without a cause" and keep the question open for a better understanding of this passage.

The second issue pertains to the addition of "a sister" in modern translation versions. Compared with the *New American Bible (NAB)*, the *Revised English Bible* (*REB*), and the *New Jerusalem Bible* (*NJB*),[214] a significant difference is evident where the phrase "or sister" after, "a brother" is added in the *New Revised Standard Version* (*NRSV*) to achieve inclusive translation. Such an addition is the main difference between the *NRSV* and its older version, the *Revised Standard Version* (*RSV*)[215] in this passage. Dale C. Allison questions the appropriateness of this inclusive translation in the *NRSV*.

---

[213] David Alan Black, "Jesus on Anger: The Text of Matthew 5:22a Revisited," *Novum Testamentum* XXX, 1 (1988);1-8. As Black argues, inclusion or omission of the phrase, "without a cause" can make a difference in interpreting the text; however, most scholars agree that considering the radicality of all six antitheses, the translation without the phrase, "without a cause," can be more consistent with the overall context. I appreciate Black's point because this issue of translation is not just limited to the problem of whether the insertion of the phrase in this particular passage is more accurate or not, but it might also extend to a problem when the Christian teaching on anger is interpreted in a broader context.

[214] *The Complete Parallel Bible* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) facilitates my comparison of the *NRSV* with *REB, NAB,* and *NJB*. Additional versions such as *NIV* and *RSV* are also compared.

[215] According to the *RSV*, the passage is translated as follows: "You have heard that it was said to the men of the old, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, 'you fool!' shall be liable to the hell of fire. So, if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:21-24, RSV).

Allison's critique is not just about the accuracy of the translation of the original text but also about the problem of interfering with "the latent intertextuality."[216] Allison argues that this passage from Matthew concerning anger (vv.21-24) alludes to the story of Cain and Abel in the Hebrew Bible (Genesis 4) and, therefore, the inclusive translation would not be helpful in reminding readers of such an allusion to the story of two brothers and would hinder a better understanding of the passage.[217] If this reference is intended, as Allison argues, then it might be problematic to use an inclusive translation for this passage because if it is alluding to a particular form of anger in a particular story, that of Cain and Abel, the prohibition of anger in this passage should be understood in its limited context.

3.2.2 Structure, Outline, and Rhetorical Patterns

Matthew 5:21-26 is the first of six antitheses in the Sermon on the Mount. In these six antitheses, the two-fold formula—"you have heard…but I say to you"—is repeated; in each, a new interpretation of the Law as a general ethical principle is followed by some illustration or clarification of its application in concrete circumstances.[218] The two-fold formula is not unique to Matthew;[219] however, compared to other Gospels, Matthew

---

[216] Dale C. Allison JR., *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 78.

[217] Allison, *Studies in Matthew*, 78. Allison might be right in criticizing the problem of the "inclusive translation" in the *NRSV* version if this reference is intended in this passage, but I will just leave this problem and continue to rely on the *NRSV* because the Matthean teaching here is more about a new righteousness beyond the law in a general sense.

[218] According to Hagner, the first antithesis (Matthew 5:21-26) is the most such material, while the third (Matthew 5: 31-32) is the least. Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13: Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, 1993), 111.

[219] Pointing out that Matthew did not create this formula—"you have heard…but I say to you"—from nothing, Keener offers some examples found in other books in the NT and he mentions that Paul uses exactly the same formula in 1 Corinthians 7:10-12 when applying one of Jesus' sayings in the context of a

organizes Jesus' ethical teaching more effectively and cohesively by repeating this rhetorical pattern.

There is an exegetical question of whether 5:21-26 contains "two or three originally isolated pieces,"[220] but for the most part, I follow Charles H. Talbert's view on the structure of this passage, which divides it into the antithetical statement and two specific illustrations to clarify the general principle.[221] In verses 21-22, the content of the first antithesis is presented:

> You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times,
> 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment'
> But I say to you
> if you *are angry with* a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment;
> and if you *insult* a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council;
> and if you *say, 'You fool*,' you will be liable to the hell of fire. [222]

This formula for offering a new interpretation of the Law is already a known rabbinical form of expression, but as Greg Strecker clarifies, it is important to distinguish "the antithetical framework" from "the substance of the antitheses"[223] in order to understand the real distinctiveness of the new interpretation of the Matthean Jesus. The prohibition against being angry is expressed in three ways—a general statement in v. 22a and two sharpening concretions: insulting a brother or sister in v.22b and calling a brother or sister a fool in v.22c. Verse 22 as the antithesis to the Law against murder cited in v.21 means that being angry is problematic not just when it results in killing but whenever it

---

new situation. Other Jewish teachers have also offered similar phrasing. Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary Continental Commentaries* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989).

[220] Allison, *Studies in Matthew*, 66.

[221] Charles H. Talbert, *Reading the Sermon on the Mount: Character Formation and Decision Making in Matthew 5-7* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 69.

[222] Emphasis added. Regarding these verses, Keener contends that Jesus seemed simply to repeat the same concept in three different ways. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 184. However, I think it is to be noted that Jesus is moving from a broader concept of anger to concrete examples of expressing anger, such as insulting someone and calling someone a fool.

[223] Georg Stracher, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Exegetical Commentary*, translated by O.C. Dean, Jr. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 65.

destroys relationships with others even through banal language. It implies that the prohibition of anger should be understood in relation to forming one's character in a more holistic sense.

After the declaration of the first antithesis, two illustrations to concretely exemplify it are as follows: 1) restoring a broken relationship with an unreconciled brother or sister and 2) restoring a relationship with a legal adversary. According to Ulrich Luz's commentary, "what the antithesis itself formulated negatively" is then formulated positively in these illustrative verses. [224] In other words, "It is no longer just the issue of avoiding words that kill but positively of reconciliation, i.e., of love for the brother or sister."[225] Verses 23-24 illustrate the first specific example of taking initiative to restore broken relationships ruptured due to anger and acting in anger. Since the Galilean hearers might have had to travel several days to reach the Jerusalem temple to reconcile with their brother or sister and then return if this illustration were taken literally, it can be said that this is a hyperbole designed to make a point; however, it should be noted that the prohibition against getting angry is related to the theme of forgiveness and reconciliation. The second illustration (vv.25-26) also pertains to the urgent need to restore the relationships with the example of how to make amends with a trial opponent before the court session. As in the preceding illustration, the key point in Matthew 5:25-26 is also that "the need to overcome the effects of anger requires a certain urgency."[226]

---

[224] Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary. Continental Commentaries* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 289.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Hagner, *Matthew 1-13: Word Biblical Commentary*, 118.

3.2.3 Context in the Larger Work

Before he reports on the six antitheses, Matthew offers a kind of introduction for the main part of the Sermon on the Mount[227] in 5:17-20. In particular, verse 17 affirms "the abiding validity of the commandments of the law" and verse 20 asserts the requirement of righteousness "greater than the scribes and Pharisees" for entering the kingdom of heaven.[228] Talbert summarizes the relationship of Matthew 5:17-20 to 5:21-48 as follows: "It [Matt. 5:17-20] functions as a control on the way 5:21-48 is to be read;" thus, "it aims to protect against any interpretation of what follows that depicts Jesus as doing away with the observance of the Law or the prophet."[229]

Immediately after telling his audience that their righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 5:20), the Matthean Jesus teaches the first antithesis concerning anger and continues his teaching with the other five antitheses—the second concerning adultery, the third concerning divorce, the fourth concerning oaths, the fifth concerning retaliation, and the sixth concerning love for enemies. Matthew 5:21-48 seems to provide concrete examples of the "better righteousness" taught in 5:20, and, in a broader sense, as Robert A Guelich emphasizes, "[Matthew] 5:20 is pivotal to Matthew's understanding of Jesus' coming and its implication for the Law."[230] In the overall context of Matthew, the six antitheses are very clear and specific examples of the Matthean portrait of Jesus as the true interpreter of the

---

[227] According to Luz, the main part of the Sermon on the Mount consists of two sections—5:21-48 (six antitheses) and 6:19-7:11 (interpretations regarding other central questions, such as true piety.). Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 255. Luz mentions those two sections as "the main part" because he sees the sections containing the explicit ethical principles and concrete guidance for conduct.
[228] Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 255.
[229] Talbert, *Reading the Sermon on the Mount*, 59.
[230] Robert A. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Foundation for Understanding* (Texas: Work Books, 1982), 171.

Law as well as Jesus as teacher. The very strict ethical principle that prohibits being

angry needs to be understood in terms of the Matthean pursuit for better righteousness.

3.2.4 The First-Century Cultural Context

We cannot seek to find "pure" Christian values and beliefs without considering

their interaction with the surrounding culture, as Wayne A. Meeks points out:

> What was Christian about the ethos and ethics of those early communities we will discover not by abstraction but by confronting their involvement in the culture of their time and place and seeking to trace the new patterns they made of old forms, to hear the new songs they composed from old melodies.[231]

To understand the conditions of the early Christian communities and their ethical

teachings, we need to understand "the cultural context in which the ethical sensibilities of

the early Christians have meanings."[232] Taking "one central insight into the genealogy of

morals" from Aristotle, Meeks points out that "individuals do not become moral agents

except in the relationships, the transactions, the habits and reinforcements, the special

uses of language and gesture that together constitute life in community"[233] Thus, to

understand how the early forms of Christian morality were produced, we need to look at

the cultural context—that in which Mathew's community developed its moral

sensibilities.

Although similar to the other three canonical Gospels—Mark, Luke and John, the

book of Matthew more emphatically stresses the need to reinforce and reshape the beliefs

and commitment of the followers. Compared to the Pauline letters, it is not easy to

---

[231] Wayne A. Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986), 97.
[232] Ibid.
[233] Ibid., 8.

outline the cultural context of the Gospels; nevertheless, Meeks describes certain features

of Matthew's community:

> He [the author of Matthew] writes in Greek to a Greek-speaking church, probably in an
> eastern city; most scholars think this was the great metropolis of Antioch in Syria,
> sometimes in the last quarter of the first century. There may have been many small
> household groups of Christians in Antioch at that time, however, and quite likely there
> was a certain diversity among them. Not all may have shared the history and perspectives
> that Matthew assumes.[234]

In and around the Antioch, there were the rivals of the Christian groups in the large

Jewish communities that were probably led by the forerunners of the later rabbinic

academics. According to Hagner, it is not appropriate to describe Matthew's community

as "a sect within Judaism," and if "the degree, character, and significance of the

newness" in Matthew's document is properly and fully understood, it is best described as

"a Jewish form of Christianity." [235] More clearly, Hagner explains,

> The differences [of Matthew's community from Judaism] are too significant to be
> described as mere 'deviance' from other Jewish groups…. Matthew reflects as *a new
> community* within *a new focus* of a revolutionary kind that puts it in strong contrast with
> all other contemporary Jewish communities. An eschatological turning point has been
> reached and this requires a radical reorientation of previous perspective.[236]

For Matthew's audience, the Sermon on the Mount serves as a summary of Jesus'

teaching. Both in the Jewish and Greco-Roman traditions, philosophers set before their

hearers a way of ethical living leading to *happiness*.[237] The themes in Matthew's teaching

were not new to the hearers; they were probably already familiar with what other popular

philosophies of the day taught on those themes. In particular, the theme of anger was

---

[234] Meeks, *The Moral World of the First Christians*, 137.

[235] Donald A. Hagner, "Matthew: Apostate, Reformer, Revolutionary?" *New Testament Studies* 49 (2003),
208.

[236] Hagner, "Matthew: Apostate, Reformer, Revolutionary?" 208.

[237] All the major schools of Hellenistic Roman philosophy affirm that "happiness" (Greek *eudaimonia)* is
the desire of everyone and the ultimate goal of a well-lived life. In particular, for the Stoics, there is a very
distinct difference between *being happy,* which can be achieved by a life-long learning process about how
to live in accord with nature using the tool of reason alone, and *feeling happy,* which is more about
transient pleasure.

extensively discussed in Stoic philosophy. The emotion of anger and its negative effects

on the pursuit of moral perfection were already an old issue even in the first century

context.

In Stoic philosophy, the development of self-control was essential for ethical

well-being and, anger was regarded as a destructive emotion that was to be overcome. In

the words of Seneca, "There is in anger, consequently, nothing great, nothing noble, even

when it seems impassioned, contemptuous alike of gods and men."[238] Seneca shows how

anger is to be prohibited even in face of extreme wrongdoing:

> What then? You ask; "Will the good man not be angry if his father is murdered, his
> mother outraged before his eyes?" No, he will not be angry, but he will avenge them, will
> protect them. Why, moreover, are you afraid that filial affection, even without anger, may
> not prove a sufficiently strong incentive for him?...The good man will perform his duties
> undisturbed and unafraid…; and he will in such a way do all that is worthy of a good man
> as to do noting that is unworthy of a man. My father is being murdered—I will defend
> him; he is slain—I will avenge him, not because I grieve, but it is my duty….For a man
> to stand forth as the defender of parents, children, friends, and fellow-citizens, led merely
> by his sense of duty, acting voluntarily, using judgment, using foresight, moved neither
> by impulse nor by fury—this is noble and becoming. [239]

In the ideal ethical life pursued by the Stoics, anger should be eliminated completely.

Even in the face of an extremely unjust situation, the "good man" should take action

derived only from a sense of duty. In Stoic philosophy, anger cannot be virtuous under

any circumstance, and its ethical thought was an important element that shaped the

cultural context in which Matthew's hearers lived.

---

[238] Seneca, "On Anger," in Seneca, *Moral Essays*, Edited by T.E. Page, Translated John W. Basore
(London: William Heinemann LTD,1928), vol. I, 165. Lucius Annaeus Seneca (4 BC-AD 65) has a central
place in understanding the Stoic thought and especially, Seneca's writings on the destructive effects of
unrestrained emotion has become the main resource for understanding the Stoic thought. Modern
philosophical attention to emotion has brought renewed interest in the theory of emotions in the Stoic
thought in relation to its emphasis on self-control.
[239] Seneca, *Moral Essays*, 138-139.

3.3 Thematic Examination on Anger

3.3.1 Anger in Different NT Authors and in the Hebrew Bible

The theme of anger is found in other New Testament writings as well. For instance, the following is written in the Epistle of James: "You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, *slow to anger*; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness" (James 1:19-20, emphasis added). Compared with the strong expression of prohibition in Matthew 5:22, this passage uses relatively weak language, i.e., "slow to anger." Thus, it can be said that this passage leaves more room for righteous anger than Matthew 5:22 does. D.J. Moo interprets this passage as follows: "While James does not forbid all anger [there is a place for "righteous indignation"], he does prohibit the thoughtless, unrestrained temper that often leads to rash, harmful and irretrievable words."[240]

Martin Dibelius offers another interpretation, pointing out that the admonition to be "slow to anger" is offered as a kind of "intensifying appendix to the second admonition" to be "slow to speak."[241] This might mean that "whoever is not able to become a master of his tongue also does not know how to bridle his anger."[242] This passage uses the rhetorical form of antithesis,—"quick" and "slow"—similar to Matthew's passage, but here, the prohibition against being angry is aimed at attaining God's righteousness. Compared to Matthew's strict prohibiting of anger, this uses a relatively weak expression such as "slow to anger," but it is strong enough to negatively judge the emotion of anger affirming that anger does not engender God's righteousness.

---

[240] D.J. Moo, *The Letter of James: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 327-328.
[241] Martin Dibelius, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James,* translated by Michael A. Williams (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 110.
[242] Ibid.

Additionally, Ephesians—one of the Pauline letters—includes warnings against anger: "Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger" (Ephesians 4:26). Five verses later, it says, "Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:31-32).[243] Both verses appear to be common proverbs about anger. In these verses, the Matthean teaching in 5:21-26 seems to be clearly reflected, although Ephesians 4:26 appears more concerned with the sinful results of being angry rather than the state of being angry itself. The Ephesians verses offer a softened warning against being angry compared to the one written in the Matthean teaching.

However, in the following admonitions, especially in Ephesians 4:32, Paul teaches that it is necessary not just to do something to control your anger but to take the initiative to restore one's relationship with others, as the Matthean Jesus teaches. Both of these passages from Ephesians and Matthew 5:21-26 link the prohibition of being angry with the theme of forgiveness and reconciliation; however, in Ephesians verse 32b, Paul's different approach to the Law and righteousness is implied. Roger Mohrlang describes the difference between Matthew's and Paul's views on the Law and righteousness, despite the common strong Jewish background of the two writers as follows:

> Both writers recognize the need for a radical kind of righteousness that functions on a far deeper level than mere compliance with the letter of the law; but whereas the evangelist sees it attained by thoroughgoing and determined obedience to the deepest intent of the law, the apostle views it as possible only if one is freed from the law to live by faith in

---

[243] In addition, Colossians 3:8 and Galatians 5:19-21 can be mentioned as the explicit teaching on anger in the Pauline letters. In particular, Colossians 3:8 seems to show a closer connection with the Matthean warning against insulting and calling someone a fool in relation to the prohibition against being angry. It says: "But now you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth" (Col 3:8, *NRSV*).

the power of the Spirit. For both it is Christ that makes real righteousness possible; but their perceptions of how this happens are quite different.[244]

Thus, the ethical guidance including the prohibition of being angry is provided in different ways. While in Matthew, the problem of anger is dealt in a more legal context, in Paul, the ethical teaching on avoiding anger and forgiving each other is provided within a deeper recognition of the grace of God. In Paul, since righteousness as "God's gift and grace to man" rather than as "God's demand upon man" has stronger meaning, the teaching on anger is also offered in the context of Paul's understanding of the power of the Sprit to reconcile.

In addition to the teaching in the NT, it is true that Hebrew Bible speaks of human anger frequently, even though the role of God's anger has much greater significance. In particular, there are some passages that absolutely prohibit being angry in Proverbs (6:34; 15:1; 16:14; 19:19; 27:4). According to Black, "the exclusively negative judgment of anger in man" found in Proverbs might explain "why the NT assessment of human anger is mainly recusant."[245] However, Talbert approaches Matthew's relation to the Hebrew Bible on anger differently. Reviewing how the theme of anger is treated in the Hebrew

---

[244] Roger Mohrlang, *Matthew and Paul: A Comparison of Ethical Perspective*s (London: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 45. The difference between Matthew and Paul in their understanding of "righteousness" is more seriously considered in Benno Przybylski's work on the Matthean concept of righteousness. Benno Przybylski, *Righteousness in Matthew and His World of Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980). Basically, Przybylski attempts to demonstrate that the Matthean concept of righteousness is "essentially a Jewish concept" and totally different from the Pauline perspective. His conclusion is that "not only the meaning of the Matthean concept of righteousness, but even the shift to another concept is paralleled in the Jewish Palestinian background literature" (123). I suggest that Przybylski's work is helpful in understanding the Jewish roots of the Matthean concept of righteousness, but it overlooks the centrality of Matthew's understanding of Christ in his use of the concept of righteousness and, more importantly, Matthew's concept of "better righteousness."
[245] Black, *Jesus on Anger*, 5. In fact, I cannot fully support Black's interpretation on these passages in Proverbs. In my reading, the general idea in Proverbs is not that the emotion of anger is absolutely forbidden but that the wise are to be very careful about being angry and acting in anger (especially, in Proverbs. 14:29 and 29:11). I assert that it is not correct to think that Proverbs absolutely prohibits being angry under any circumstances.

Bible with two foci—anger for a righteous cause and anger to be refrained—, Talbert concludes: "In no place in the threefold context of the Sermon is the emotion of anger ever prohibited in an absolute way; What is prohibited is the holding on to anger and the expression of anger in negative ways."[246] Therefore, while Black finds the grounding for the Matthean teaching on an absolute prohibition of anger in the Hebrew Bible texts, Talbert finds the clue to a more appropriate interpretation of the prohibition of the emotion of anger in Matthew 5:22 by reading the Bible as a whole. In fact, for Talbert, the Hebrew Bible texts function to soften the Matthean teaching. He repeatedly emphasizes that Matthew 5:22 teaches an absolute ethical principle of prohibiting the emotion of anger that fits "into the larger biblical stream of prohibition against one's holding on to his or her anger and expressing it in harmful ways toward others."[247]

3.3.2 Comparison with Early Buddhism regarding Anger

Peter J. Vernezze argues that there are significant similarities between the Stoic and Buddhist views on human anger in contrast to Aristotelian conception. For early Buddhism just as for Stoicism, the emotion of anger in itself is always a bad thing and should be avoided even in the most extreme cases. There can be no occasion on which the emotion of anger is appropriate. Vernezze finds some markedly similar descriptions of "the phenomenology of anger" in both systems of thought.[248] Like the Stoics, the early

---

[246] Talbert, *Reading the Sermon on the Mount*, 73-74.

[247] Ibid., 74.

[248] Peter J. Vernezze, "Moderation or the Middle Way: Two Approaches to Anger," *Philosophy East & West* 58, no.1 (January 2008), 4. Vernezze examines the similarities between the Buddhist and Stoic views of anger and contrasts those views with the common Western stance, which is Aristotelian. Presenting the Buddhist account as the common Eastern account on anger and finding its Western ally in the Stoic thought, he attempts to offer it as the alternative to the Aristotelian view on anger. While his examination of the similarity between the Buddhist and the Stoic views is appropriate, I maintain that there is room for

Buddhists categorically condemned even "anger-inspired thought"[249] as well as speaking in anger or acting in anger. The rejection of anger in early Buddhist thought, as Vernezze describes, "is consistent with, and indeed is seen as involving, an initial eruption of the emotion;" furthermore, in the face of unjust situations, even the possibility of such an "initial emotional disturbance" should be completely eliminated.[250]

In the Aristotelian view, anger can be a good thing; what is important is to be angry at a proper level, which means "to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way."[251] Contrasting with the Aristotelian stance on a proper level of anger, early Buddhism views anger "as the product of faulty reasoning" and "an alteration of our emotional state," urging that anger and other emotions be dealt with by eliminating them through cognitive means.[252] Thus, simply put, while for Aristotle, anger only needs to be moderated, for Buddhists as for the Stoics, it should be eradicated because it is the poison of the mind.

The comparison with the complete rejection of the emotion of anger in early Buddhism can offer us a clearer understanding of the Matthean teaching on anger from another angle. In Buddhist ethical teaching based on its early materials, anger is regarded as "the most deadly barrier that any striving for enlightenment might face" and "the most difficult to cure." [253] Due to the centrality of the issue of anger in Buddhist teaching with regard to control of the mind, there are extensive materials on this theme. According to

---

debate regarding his categorization of the Buddhist view as the common Eastern stance and the Aristotelian view as the common Western stance.

[249] Vernezze, "Moderation or the Middle Way," 3.

[250] Ibid., 4.

[251] Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics* 1125b 30, in Richard McKeon, ed., *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941).

[252] Vernezze, "Moderation or the Middle Way," 6-7.

[253] Dale S Wright, *The Six Perfections: Buddhism and the Cultivation of Character* (New York: Oxford University, 2009), 111.

early Buddhist teaching, by allowing oneself to become angry with others, one will be led

not to "enlightenment or even to a favorable rebirth in the world" but to "his downfall or

to manifold sufferings in a miserable state."[254] In fact, early Buddhism teaches that

becoming angry with others leads to one's own harm. The following example from a

classical Buddhist text presents a conversation between Buddha and a monk who asks

permission of Buddha before going to a barbarous region to teach Buddhism to those who

are cruel and abusive.

> Buddha: If they abuse, revile, and annoy you with evil, harsh and false words, what
> would you think?
> Monk: In that case, I would think that the people are really good and gentle fold as they
> do not strike me with their hands or with stones.
> Buddha: But if they strike you with their hands or with stones, what would you think?
> Monk: In that case, I would think that they are good and gentle folk, as they do not strike
> me with a cudgel or a weapon.
> Buddha: But if they strike you with a cudgel or a weapon, what would you think?
> Monk: In that case, I would still think that they are good and gentle folk, as they release
> me from this rotten carcass of the body without much difficulty….
> Buddha: Monk, you are endowed with the greatest gentleness and tolerance…Go and
> teach them how to be free, as you yourself are free.[255]

As this conversation shows, Buddha's teaching does not simply prohibit anger under any

circumstances but it also demands tolerance of any form of mistreatment or abuse. In

particular, early Buddhist teachings, such as the above example, are more about extreme

tolerance and the absolute prohibition of anger rather than about the limits of tolerance in

the face of injustices. As Dale S. Wright points out, "In fact, stories concerned with

protecting others against violence and injustice are not featured in classical Buddhist

literature;" however, "what we find in the classical texts are stories that valorize selfless

tolerance of harm to oneself alone, rather than narratives that instruct Buddhists about

---

[254] Wright, *The Six Perfections,* 111.

[255] Har Dayal, *The Bodhisattava Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner &Co., Ltd.,1932), 214. Quoted in Wright, *The Six Perfections*, 112-113.

how to act in face of injustice to others."[256] Thus, it can be said that in early Buddhist teaching, being angry is absolutely disallowed, and overcoming the emotion of anger is essential to reaching the state of enlightenment and freeing oneself from suffering.

Clearly, both in this early Buddhist teaching and in the Matthean teaching, being angry and acting in anger are among the most serious obstacles to reaching a *higher* state of being, namely, the state of enlightenment in early Buddhist teaching and the state of *better righteousness* in the Matthean teaching. However, more importantly, I find a significant distinction in the Matthean teaching on anger. While in early Buddhist teaching, the prohibition of anger is aimed at a type of self-actualization, in the Matthean teaching, it is taught as a more relational matter. In other words, by disallowing anger under any circumstances while tolerating any harmful situation, one can reach a higher state of being, ultimately being free from suffering in early Buddhist teaching; however, in the Matthean teaching, tolerance is not the ideal to be pursued. The Matthean ethical teaching about not being angry involves active work to restore interpersonal relationships—and demands reconciliation and forgiveness.

A scholar of Buddhism, Robert Thurman affirms that anger is certainly the deadliest and most destructive emotion and he harshly criticizes that the contemporary religious West has not defined anger as a real problem.[257] By the religious West, Thurman means Christianity and its teachings on anger, which he believes are often used to justify this destructive emotion against others by allowing a righteous anger in the tradition of the wrathful God. I label this critique as an invalid one based on a narrow understanding. Christian teaching does not offer one guidance to fit all situations. As I

---

[256] Wright, *The Six Perfections*, 113.
[257] Robert Thurman, *Anger: The Seven Deadly Sins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

have examined, even the explicit teachings of Matthew on anger cannot be understood out of context. It is crucial to understand anger in relation to active actions of reconciliation and forgiveness—not passive tolerance. Furthermore, it is essential to find clues to the constructive power of anger, which becomes obvious when considered in connection with Christianity's humanizing and liberating potential.

3.3.3 Contemporary Discussion of Anger for a Christian Way of Living

Examining how early Christianity assessed human anger, William V. Harris presents his final evaluation:

> Thus, the early Christianity tradition about the suppression of human anger was somewhat ambiguous. Paul was generally against the angry emotions but was not an "absolutist," while the message which one received from the Gospels would depend on the branch of the tradition one happened to hear, and what one wanted to hear. Jesus himself was not represented in the Gospels as being consistently without angry emotions.[258]

Harris criticizes Christianity delivering "an ambivalent message"[259] on the issue of suppressing anger. As the first reason for his criticism, Harris argues that a consistent message cannot be drawn even from Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:22a, which is regarded as an explicit teaching on the subject of anger, because the Matthean verse exists in two crucially different original forms—one with the phrase *without a cause* and the other not having such a phrase.[260] Harris contends that a degree of ambiguity in the NT teachings already existed before the historical development of the debate on this issue in

---

[258] William V. Harris, *Retraining Rage: The Ideology of Anger Control in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 309. What Harris calls being "absolutist" or "absolutism" means the ideal for "total elimination" of anger in the context of eliminating all the emotions, aiming at "the victory of reason," just like "the apparent rigor of the early Stoics about the passion" (407).

[259] Harris, *Retraining Rage,* 309.

[260] I have dealt with this problem of translation in the beginning part of this chapter. It is one of the main problems regarding the translation of this particular biblical verse; however, I do not believe this problem can be a decisive factor in evaluating the clarity of the Christian teaching on anger in general.

Christianity. The second reason that Harris highlights for more ambivalence regarding anger in Christian messages pertains to the duality of the biblical account on the divine anger and the anti-anger message reserved for moral imperatives for human beings. Harris' conclusion is that by combining "a belief in the anger of their God with the belief that humans never ought to get angry," Christians fail to resolve "the problem of distinguishing between sinful and acceptable anger."[261]

I find Harris's evaluation unconvincing; while he acknowledges the complexities of defining the emotion of anger and assessing its function, he does not seem to apply such a recognition to his evaluation of early Christianity. If we fully acknowledge the complexities of the emotion of anger and its role—negative or positive—in our ethical life, we cannot expect a clear and simple ethical rule about getting angry from a particular biblical passage. We cannot interpret Matthew 5:22a as an isolated passage removed from the overall context of what Jesus taught through his teachings and life. Moreover, Harris does not offer a proper explanation of the divine anger described in the Bible. His recognition of all the various kinds of anger and their effects becomes questionable when he links divine anger and ethical guidance regarding human anger in the Bible to point out the inappropriateness of the duality. Thus, further reflection is needed.

3.3.3.1 The Complexities of Defining the Emotion of Anger

Martha Nussbaum is one of the leading philosophers to pay special attention to the topic of emotion.[262] In her view, emotions are understood as "intelligent responses to

---

[261] Harris, *Restraining Rage*, 399.

[262] I do not examine Nussbaum's theory on emotion per se, but I instead draw on her discussion to show how emotion is important in shaping our ethical life in the political realm as well as the personal realm, and how we need to attend to the complexities of defining emotion, in particular, the emotion of anger. To

the perception of value."[263] She argues that "emotion is thought" and that emotion as thought can make a significant contribution to the ethical life. Her emotion theory is significant for understanding the cognitive dimension of emotion from a philosophical perspective as well as for understanding the importance of "political cultivation of emotion."[264] For instance, her reflection on why and how love is important for justice invites us to reflect on the centrality of emotions in the quest for justice. Nussbaum affirms that "a compassionate and generous attitude toward the frailties of human beings—prominently including oneself—is a linchpin of the public culture,"[265] and she proposes "love-infused compassion" as the central emotion to be cultivated in shaping and conveying political principles. With regard to her discussion on love-infused compassion, I observe that she develops her idea on compassion from her view on anger as "an assertion of concern for human well-being and human dignity"[266] elaborated in her earlier work.

---

understand her full theory, among many, the following books are central: *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (New Jersey: Princeton, 1994); *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); *Anger and Forgiveness: Resentment, Generosity, Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

[263] Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1.

[264] Martha C. Nussbaum, *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 3.

[265] Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 22. In her further discussion, she refers to three negative emotions—fear, envy, and shame—as "compassion's enemies" that pose special problems for compassionate citizenship. In particular, I find that her analysis on "envy and fairness" offers a very relevant insight for discussion on the issue of justice in the contemporary culture of social media and consumerism in which one becomes a "slave of envy." In Nusbaum's words, "Envy has threatened democracies ever since they began to exist" (339). Just like the emotion of anger, the emotion of envy cannot be simply categorized as a "bad" emotion in itself; however, our socio-cultural context is problematic as it promotes envy in negative ways that result in boosting new forms of injustice. It would take another chapter or even a dissertation to investigate the problem of the emotion of envy in our socio-cultural context and the educational approach to a way to constrain such negative emotion. Here, I just want to point out the significance of how Nussbaum develops her ideas with her special attention to emotion and its effects.

[266] Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire*, 404.

Considering all the complexities inherent in defining anger, we at least need to understand two different aspects as Nussbaum describes them:

> On the one hand, anger is closely connected to brutality and a delight in vengeance for its own sake. Seeking others as anger sees them—as people who ought to suffer—is a way of distancing oneself from their humanity; it can make it possible to do terrible things to them. And this ferocity is, in turn, a diminution of one's own humanity...On the other hand, not to get angry when horrible things take place seems itself to be a diminution of one's humanity. In circumstances where evil prevails, anger is an assertion of concern for human well-being and human dignity; and the failure to become angry seems at best "slavish" (as Aristotle put it), at worst a collaboration with evil… Can the Aristotelian have rage without losing humanity? Can the Stoic have humanity while losing rage? [267]

Based on Nussbaum's description, we can further our reflection. If someone regards anger as the more admirable response to evils and wrongdoings, and is, therefore, *capable* of getting angry in the face of injustices, the question would be: *Can she/he experience anger without losing love?* Or, if someone regards anger as something to be terminated and therefore, seeks the extirpation of anger under any circumstance, the question would be: *Can she/he experience the compassionate love while eliminating anger?* In fact, this doubleness of anger is more complicated in reality. The boundary between anger as a destructive force and anger as having a constructive purpose cannot be clarified in every case.

If it is fully acknowledged that anger is indeed a subtle emotion, the question of its moral status in a very practical sense requires further exploration. Here, I explore the contemporary theological and ethical debate on the possibility of anger as a good emotion examining two contrasting views: 1) the inevitability of anger being destructive, and 2) the possibility of anger being constructive.

---

[267] Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire*, 403.

3.3.3.2 Anger as Destructive and Corrosive to Character

D.M. Yeager explores the problematic character of anger when it is related to the issue of justice.[268] She questions the notion of "good anger" and challenges all the Christian arguments on anger as an essential emotion for the struggle against injustice. Yeager remains unconvinced that the emotion of anger helps one to responsibly react to social injustice in a Christian way of living. She appreciates the intent of the arguments for "good" or "just" anger and admits how some scholars offer powerful and appealing arguments on such anger as the source of "the energy to act" against social injustices.[269] For her, however, questions about the validity of such arguments still remain when seen from a Christian point of view. Emphasizing how forgiveness and reconciliation in Christian teachings and narratives are achieved by eliminating the emotion of anger, Yeager argues that from a Christian perspective, anger is, in every case, "evidence of lack of trust and hope; it stands in the way of forgiveness; it subverts our humanity; its tumult wedges us away from the love of God."[270]

In her understanding, even when it is aroused in the face of injustice, anger is corrosive to one's character, "not because it is unjust or disproportionate, not because one fails to be angry constructively, and not because it is directed at inappropriate objects, but because there is something intrinsically wrong and destructive in this passion."[271] With her concern on the intrinsic destructive nature of the emotion of anger, Yeager clarifies her point about the problematic aspects of the notion of good anger within the framework

---

[268] D.M. Yeager, "Anger, Justice, and Detachment," *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* 17 (1997): 167-188.

[269] Yeager mentions the works of Giles Milhaven and John Casey, both of whom argue for re-evaluating just anger as a prophetic and godly emotion as examples. Giles Milhaven, *Good Anger* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1989) and John Casey, *Pagan Virtue: An Essay in Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

[270] Yeager, "Anger, Justice, and Detachment," 186.

[271] Ibid.

of the Christian concern for social justice: "Anger may be justifiable, but a concern for justice does not legitimate anger because anger is not essential to the concern for justice and in many cases constitutes a very considerable obstacle to the achievement of justice.[272] Criticizing the argument for good anger constructed within the framework of the Christian concern for justice, Yeager presents a framework of gratitude and trust as the opposite of anger.

By offering literary examples of how even justified anger corrodes one's character, Yeager mounts a critical challenge to the discussion that espouses good anger against injustice with the aim of establishing justice. She extends her discussion by interpreting the character from Georges Bernanos' *Diary of a Country Priest* and Charles Dickens' *Dombey and Son.* She finds two different visions of anger, with one ultimately destructive in nature and structurally contrary to gratitude and trust —anger as "a moral middle ground" at best in Bernanos' work—, and anger as "always sinful," even when it is directed at a true injustice as in Dickens' book.[273] According to her reading of the two novels, Bernano presents the view that "anger is a failing, but not a grave sin unless it turns to hatred of self or of others or God;" however, Dickens provides "a more binary world divided between the generous characters who live well and the self-protective characters who live badly; anger is built into the structure of self-protection and is inimical to love."[274] Yeager's reading of Dickens reinforces her affirmation of the intrinsic inclination of anger toward destruction. Through her extended discussion of two

---

[272] Yeager, "Anger, Justice, and Detachment, 187.
[273] I appreciate Yeager's attempt to make her point by using literature, but I question whether her literary choices are appropriate to support her argument for challenging the notion of anger as a constructive power in the face of injustice.
[274] Yeager, "Anger, Detachment, Justice," 186.

novels that exemplify the corruption of anger in the lives of characters, Yeager shows that "anger forecloses rather than precipitates change" and that "the struggle of Christian life is the struggle to grow beyond anger"[275]

I can offer two reasons why I disagree with Yeager's challenge to the possibility of good anger in Christian faith. First, her insistence on the intrinsic destructiveness of anger does not convey the complexities of the emotion of anger, which cannot be judged as a problem in itself but rather needs to be conceived of in relation to its associated ideal, its motivational belief or conviction, and its circumstances and conditions. Second, her argument for gratitude and trust as the opposite of anger cannot be applied when confronted with unjust social situations of oppression and privilege, that is, systemic injustice. Since her vision of justice is limited to perceiving justice as "the righting of past wrongs,"[276] her framework of gratitude and trust cannot replace the framework of concern for justice when considering the possible justifiability or possible virtuosity of anger. How, then, should we understand the possibility of *good* anger in the Christian faith?

3.3.3.3 The Possibility of Anger as a Positive Power

Beverly Wildung Harrison proposes an insightful argument on anger as a positive power for pursuing justice from a feminist perspective. Her essay, "The Power of Anger in the Work of Love,"[277] offers an explicit expression of the notion of "good anger," which means anger as a feature of the struggle against various forms of injustice.

---

[275] Yeager, "Anger, Justice, and Detachment," 171.
[276] Ibid., 187.
[277] Beverly Wildung Harrison, "The Power of Anger in the Work of Love" in ed. Carol S. Robb *Making the Connections* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985): 3-21.

Pointing out how the long standing "body-denying Christian tradition"[278] has reinforced "the avoidance of anger in popular Christian piety," she advocates a recovery of an appreciation of feeling[279] in Christian living. She criticizes how the dualistic view of body/mind has functioned:

> However, fewer men in the field of Christian ethics have grasped the connection between body/mind dualism and the assumption many moral theologians make that we are most moral when most detached and disengaged from life-struggle. Far too many Christian ethicists continue to imply that "disinterestedness" and "detachment" are basic preconditions for responsible moral action. And in the dominant ethical tradition, moral rationality too often is *disembodied* rationality.[280]

By criticizing such "disembodied rationality," she emphasizes anger as a feeling of particular importance—a kind of embodied response of human beings. Based on the feminist recognition of the bodily existence and the significance of relationality, Harrison condemns the dominant ethical tradition in which "moral rationality too often is *disembodied* rationality."[281] Advocating a feminist recovery of an appreciation of feeling

---

[278] In fact, this "body-denying Christian tradition" needs special attention to renew our understanding of our religious selves. Throughout its history, Christianity has developed the idea of the "hierarchical ordering" of soul and body in various claims and practices in many different historical contexts. In such a thought system, "body" is somehow a constitutive element of the human being; however, "body" is definitely perceived to be dependent on "soul" and, thus, is regarded as less valuable and inferior to "soul." Furthermore, in such a hierarchical ordering of body and soul in religious life, "body" is not just a less significant element for structuring human communion with God, but it is also regarded as an obstacle; therefore, the bodily existence is ignored or excluded in perfecting the image of God. Also, since a union with God is considered something to be realized in "some otherworld of soul" beyond the bodily existence, the redeemed life hardly includes the social dimension of being human in relation to others in this earthly life. This issue itself would take another dissertation. Here, I just emphasize the significance of reconsidering our "bodiliness" in Christian living to reconstruct our theological exploration of the meaning of the good life and human flourishing in this world. For a comprehensive description of our bodiliness to correct the understanding of body in a hierarchical ordering or dualistic view of body and soul, Colleen Griffith's work is important as it provides a threefold description— "body as animate organism," "body as socio-cultural site," and "body as product of consciousness and will." Griffith explains how "each highlights a significant aspect of the body that cannot be ignored if we are to live our corporeality with awareness and intentionality as the location of our spirituality." For more, see Colleen Griffith, "Spirituality and the Body," in Bruce T. Morrill, ed. *Bodies of Worship: Explorations in Theory and Practice* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), 67-84.

[279] Harrison uses the term of "*feeling*" in her work. Considering the context in which she uses the term, I believe it is interchangeable with the term "*emotion*" in this essay.

[280] Harrison, "The Power of Anger in the Work of Love," 13.

[281] Ibid.

as "the basic bodily ingredient that mediates our connectedness to the world," she argues that "all serious human moral activity, especially action for social change, takes its bearings from the rising power of human anger" and "such anger is a signal that change is called for, that transformation in relation is required."[282]

In Harrison's argument on anger as a constructive force against injustice, anger is not just something that can be good; rather, it is essentially good because it is necessarily aroused by a passion for justice. Harris argues that the radicality of love that Jesus showed throughout his life and ministry provides us with a vision of the justice we should pursue and how we should respond to the opposite reality of justice with urgency. In her thought, the sacrifice Jesus accepted was "for the cause of radical love, to make relationship and to sustain it, and above all, to right wrong relationship which is what we call 'doing justice.'" [283] By wrong relationship she refers to the forms of relationship caused by injustice that "deny, distort, or prevent human dignity from arising."[284]

In this sense, Harrison contends that there cannot be any conflict between anger and love in Christian ethics; rather, the emotion of anger should be understood as an energy that empowers transforming action to accomplish a radical love through active involvement in the face of social injustices.

> Anger is not the opposite of love. It is better understood as a feeling-signal that all is not well in our relation to other persons or groups or to the world around us. Anger is a mode of connectedness to others and it is always a vivid form of caring. To put the point another way: anger is – and it always is – a sign of some resistance in ourselves to the moral quality of the social relations in which we are immerses. Extreme and intense anger signals a deep reaction to the action upon us or toward others to whom we are related.[285]

---

[282] Harrison, "The Power of Anger in the Work of Love," 15.
[283] Ibid., 19.
[284] Ibid.
[285] Ibid., 14.

In Harrison's argument, the importance of responsiveness in the Christian ethical life is more strongly emphasized and the feeling of anger is revalued as a kind of prophetic powerful force for the struggle against injustice. She points out that "because we do not understand love as the power to act-each-other-into-well-being, we also do not understand the depth of our power to thwart life and to maim each other."[286] Discussing the theme of anger in the framework of the concern for justice, she asserts that anger is not the opposite of love but rather an expression of the power of love. Thus, Harrison's thinking stresses that "the moral question is not 'What do I feel?' but rather 'What do I do with what I feel?'"[287] Anger, in Harrison's view, is "a mode of connectedness to others and it is always a *vivid form of caring*."[288]

William Werpehowski continues the logic of Harrison on the role of anger in the Christian ethical life but from a different perspective. In his definition, anger is "a painful affection arising from some moral wrong suffered by oneself or others with whom one is connected;"[289] thus, getting angry is "an occasion for vividly and truthfully grasping important features of one's identity."[290] After examining "pride" as sin in comparison to self-respect, and how this sinful pride is "at work in the disdainful dismissal of anger that masks our own self-protective wrath," Werpehowski argues that "anger and conception of our own worth are tied together;" it is important to "de-center" the norms of justice and to aim to reestablish "right relations" to make anger virtuous.[291] He acknowledges

---

[286] Harrison, "The Power of Anger in the Work of Love," 11.
[287] Beverly Wildung Harrsion, "The Power of Anger in the Work of Love: Christian Ethics for Women and Other Strangers," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 36 (1981), 49.
[288] Ibid. Author's emphasis.
[289] William Werpehowski, "Do You Do Well to Be Angry?" *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* 16, (1997), 59-60.
[290] Werpehowski, "Do You Do Well to Be Angry," 67.
[291] Ibid., 71.

the complex nature of anger and the frequency of anger that is marred by other vicious features such as pride. In his account of virtuous anger, however, the truthful standards of justice transformed by the work of love in Christian life is significantly emphasized.

Harrion and Werpehowski argue for the possibility of good anger by pursuing different emphases, but both celebrate the right place of anger within the work of love toward transformation. Following both insightful views, I assert that anger can function as a constructive power and transformative energy in the Christian life to do the work of love and compassion. However, it should be noted that when anger is aroused by narcissistic interest or "sinful pride" (to use Werpehowski's expression), it will lose its capacity to be a morally helpful emotion as well as its orientation toward the future of justice as an energy promoting action. To constrain the negative forms of anger and cultivate the positive force of anger, I claim that education is the most effective device.

3.4 Concluding Reflection: The Possibility of Compassionate Anger

I have examined the theme of anger in the Christian faith through an exegetical exploration of Matthew 5:21-26, which includes the explicit teaching on anger found in the heart of Jesus' ethical teaching, the Sermon on the Mount, and through a thematic exploration on anger in the broader biblical context, in comparison with early Buddhism, and in the contemporary discussion. As this examination has revealed, even though it is a very explicit teaching on anger, Matthew 5:21-26, like all biblical passages, should not be read as an absolute ethical rule to control the entire ethical decision-making process. Furthermore, despite the complex nature of the emotion of anger and the necessity of critically assessing it, it must be asserted that anger in the Christian faith can be good and

virtuous, and its moral status should be evaluated as a positive and constructive force toward establishing justice when it is aroused by compassion. In this concluding reflection, I highlight three further points.

First, I prefer *compassionate anger* to virtuous or righteous anger to resist the injustice through a Christian way of life. As stated in the previous chapter, the primary quality of the Christian life is the unity of compassion and justice achieved by living in accordance with Jesus' vision for the Reign of God in which God's compassionate and God's passion for justice are united. In contrast to viewing anger as a vicious emotion, virtuous anger has been defended; however, I contend that the notion of *compassionate anger* is more appropriate in the Christian faith to advocate the capacity of getting angry when we are confronted with massive injustice and when we attend to unjust suffering in the political as well as interpersonal realms. Here, compassionate anger has a clear motivational element to initiate action toward justice because it is aroused by compassion.

Second, I contend that this notion of compassionate anger is compatible with the prohibition of anger for the sake of reconciliation and forgiveness, as taught in the Matthean text and other biblical passages. The prohibition of anger in the biblical passages is not that of the Stoic ideal of the good life or the Buddhist goal of reaching self-enlightenment by eradicating the emotion of anger. In my view, "social anger"[292]

---

[292] There cannot be a clear boundary between "social anger" and anger in interpersonal contexts, which are also social as Michael P. Jaycox argues. Jaycox makes an argument that "social anger," as the one distinguished from anger in the interpersonal realm, has to be described as "a cognitive interruption of the ideological rationalizations for privilege and oppression," (123) based on his assumption that there is a clear line between those two kinds of anger. Michael P. Jaycox, "The Civic Virtue of Social Anger: A Critically Reconstructed Normative Ethic for Public Life," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 36, no.1 (2016): 123-143. Jaycox's proposal urging Catholic ethicists to more critically reflect on the moral status of the distinctive expression of social anger has a significant meaning, but I assert that his distinction between the two kinds of anger does not sufficiently consider the complex nature of anger.

cannot be separated from anger in interpersonal contexts. The anger prohibited in Matthew and other biblical passages is the anger that destroys the right relationships and blocks the rectification of the wrong relationships. Compassionate anger is aroused as the power and energy for righting wrong relationships as manifested in all different kinds of distorted relationships such as the explicit or implicit forms of racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, and so on. In Christian teaching, anger is not something to be overcome or eliminated; rather, it is something to be rightly aroused by authentic faith and conviction. Here, compassionate anger possesses an evaluative element to discern what causes wrong relationships at the political level as well as the interpersonal level.

Third, I comprehend compassionate anger in connection with critical consciousness. In modern psychotherapeutic literature, anger is treated as some kind of problem or disease that requires therapeutic intervention. In our dominant cultural view connecting anger with aggression, anger is more dangerous than valuable in the ethical life. As a mode of embodied knowing, anger in the Christian faith can be a response of "emotion as thought"[293] to anger-inducing unjust situations based on thinking about oneself, others, and God, and critically reflecting on the relationships among three entities. Here, compassionate anger in the Christian faith includes an epistemic element that involves critical reflection on personal awareness at a deeper level and critical analysis of social reality in relation to the transcendental dimension. Compassionate anger should reflect a critical consciousness of social injustice.

---

[293] This is from Nussbaum's view on emotion. As briefly examined in the previous section on the complexities of defining the emotion of anger, in Nussbaum, especially in her earlier work, emotion is understood as "intelligent responses to the perception of value" (Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought,* 1); thus, the ethical dimension of emotion should be recognized in public life. In such sense, anger is understood as a major and necessary force for social justice. Regarding the cognitive dimension of emotion including anger from a philosophical perspective, Nussbaum offers the most comprehensive exploration.

From an educational perspective, when shaping a Christian way of life with the vision inclined toward the Reign of God both in its content and in its method, every aspect of Christian religious education should be intentionally organized to form people's character in a holistic way. Thus, the kind of knowing that religious educators need to encourage through the whole educational process is not simply reduced to only a cognitive dimension. For educational purposes, it should be recognized that the boundary between anger as destructive force and anger with a constructive purpose is often not crystal clear in reality, but anger motivated by compassion in the face of injustice with right evaluation and critical reflection is an emotional response that should be virtuously habituated. I affirm that it is when we are capable of getting angry out of compassion that we take action toward the future of justice as a responsible moral agent in our faith.

This leads me to more deeply explore the issue of agency in the pursuit of compassion-motivated justice, asking the following question: *What does it mean to be a responsible agent empowered by God's liberating and transforming grace for the work of justice in the Christian faith?* In the next chapter, I will examine the distinctive understanding of agency in early Methodism and its significance for the contemporary context.

Chapter 4

Agency in Early Methodism and Justice

4.1. Introduction

>…if Kantianism abstracts in moral thought from the identity of persons, utilitarianism strikingly abstracts from their separateness. This is true in more than one way. [294]

The well-known objection to two major moral theories—utilitarianism and

Kantianism[295]—has been formulated in terms of their abstraction from the situations of

agents and the integrity of persons as they capture our ethical life into moral theories.

Both of these *impersonal* theories have difficulty in explaining the importance of the

agents' integrity or authenticity, being concerned only with producing good

consequences in a utilitarian way or remaining subservient to the universal duty with the

deontological commitment reflected in Kant. The concept of agency, which can be

defined as ethical responsibility beyond freedom or autonomy, cannot be found in either

theories.

Agreeing with the criticism regarding the impersonality and the impartiality of

both utilitarianism and Kantianism, this chapter explores the issue of agency defined as

responsibility. If "in very general terms, an agent is a being with the capacity to act, and

---

[294] Bernard Williams, *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers, 1973-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 3.

[295] Bernard Williams is a leading figure in such criticism. Basically, he rejected "the self-contained theories" of morality, such as Kantianism and utilitarianism. In particular, his famous "integrity objection" to the impartiality of utilitarianism emphasizes the importance of subjective authenticity and the agents' characters, which are identified with their deep values and commitments acknowledging the complexity and absurdity of the situations with which that each agent deals. In William's view, there cannot be a universal "decision procedure of moral reasoning." Sophie-Grace Chappell, and Nicholas Smyth, "Bernard Williams", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/williams-bernard/. Accessed on 04/05/20. For more on Williams' criticism of utilitarianism, see *Utilitarianism: For and Against*, with J.J.C. Smart (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

'agency' denotes the exercise or manifestation of this capacity,"[296] then, by agency, I mean the *ethical agency* to act with compassion in the pursuit of justice that is rooted in Christian faith and motivated by the inner qualities of the agents. In this chapter, I establish a connection between the issue of agency and the Wesleyan tradition, finding that early Methodism developed its own definition of agency, which is distinct from the notion of agency as autonomy and self-determination in the Enlightenment tradition. Wesleyan thought can offer a rich contribution to our sense of personal and social moral agency in today's post-modern world.

My assertion is that the unique understanding of human agency in the Methodist tradition needs to be reconsidered in light of the contemporary issues regarding the pursuit of justice and that such a reconstruction of the Wesleyan heritage is much-needed today. I begin this chapter by examining the characteristics of early Methodism in terms of its context and move on to discuss the distinctive emphasis on experience in Wesleyan thought. Then, I explore how human agency is emphasized and understood in Wesleyan thought and how the paradox of God's grace working through human agency in Wesleyan heritage can be retrieved for the contemporary context.

4.2. Early Methodism as a Religion *for* the Heart

Methodism began in the late 1730's as a religious renewal movement in England; according to David Hempton, it expanded to become "the most dynamic world missionary movement of the nineteenth century."[297] It was founded by John Wesley (1703-1791), an Anglican minister who advocated for "a full renewal in the divine

---

[296] Markus Schlosser, "Agency," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2019 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/agency/. Accessed on 05/20/20.
[297] David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 2.

image" that meant purifying the hearts by faith. Some commentators have incorrectly insisted that the rise and growth of Methodism was representative of the history of evangelism as "a story of dehumanization and repression."[298] They judge the early Methodist movement as the practice of "emotionalism" meant to manipulate the emotionally vulnerable and needy people by charismatic leadership and strictly disciplined religious practices. Although such a hostile evaluation was not univocally accepted, it has used as a ground for historians to view Methodism as a religion of heart, in contrast to the so-called religion of the head, which emerged as a reaction against the intellectual atmosphere of the eighteenth century. Such an antagonistic evaluation of Methodism has promoted a misleading image of the early Methodists as people without agency or autonomy.

However, keeping in mind Wesley's primary concern and the whole structure of Wesleyan theology, I contend that it is more appropriate to refer to early Methodism as a religion *for* the heart, rather than a religion *of* the heart— as one that developed a distinctive notion of agency that was also well-grounded in reason. The early Methodist movement was concerned with the condition of heart that constitutes agency, and its aim was to reach *the holiness of heart and life* by honing the person's capacity for

---

[298] For instance, E.P. Thomson, an influential historian in the twentieth century, denounced early Methodism in his widely accepted book, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York,1966). Thompson uses a very negative tone to describe the influence of the early Methodist movement on the evolving working-class identities in England. As many critiques of his view recognize, Thompson's social consciousness seems to be rooted in his experience as a son of a Methodist missionary and in his education at a Methodist boarding school, but his interpretation has generated a very hostile historiography of Methodism, especially in relation to its theological and social significance ignoring the vitality of the movement as a renewal movement. Thompson based his view on his radical critique of the relationship between religion and society to show how religious social formation was problematic in the industrializing society. However, early Methodism was only a specific religious faith and practice that he analyzed, and his treatment of Methodism has drawn severe criticism. The two main historians with whom I primarily converse in this chapter, David Hempton and Phyllis Mack, are important scholars who correct Thompson's distorted view on the rise of Methodism and its interrelation with its social context.

compassion toward others as well as self. Wesley's way of conceiving how the grace of

God is related to and works in the world and how the divine grace interacts with human

agency needs to be reconsidered in its own contexts and in relation to its contemporary

relevance. The deepest concern for Wesley was the actual transformation of heart and life

at the social as well as at the personal level.

4.2.1 The Context

As David Hempton argues, Methodism in the 1730s was "a religious movement

with the capacity to grow with explosive energy from very unpromising origins"; by the

end of the nineteenth century, it had developed from "a transnational movement of

ordinary people" into "a major international religious movement."[299] Understanding the

relationship between early Methodism and its surrounding culture is crucial in order to

recognize the distinctiveness of Methodism's theological formulation and its style of

religious practice that were developed in a particular time and space. A comprehensive

historical investigation is needed to explain the complex relationship between Methodist

growth and the other important trends and changes in eighteenth-century England; an

explanation based on a simplified parallel should be avoided. For example, it would be a

critical mistake to make a direct connection between the spread of the free markets and

consumerism and the "free-choice salvation open to all" in Methodist Arminianism.[300] As

Hempton points out, it is misleading to attempt to find some conceptual clarity by means

---

[299] Hempton, *Methodism*,13.
[300] Ibid., 16-17. As Hempton argues, some historians including Richard Carwardine explore the relationship between the rise of Methodism and "market revolution" and equate the two. Criticizing such a simple parallel, Hempton shows the complex relationship between the growth of Methodism and the related trends in the new world order using two concepts from evolutionary biology—"competition and symbiosis." For more details, see Hempton, *Methodism*, 11-31.

of a simple equation ignoring the complexities involved in the relationship between the

Methodist messages and practices and the surrounding culture.

However, it would be also a mistake to attribute the rise and growth of

Methodism exclusively to its own theological or organizational traits by attempting to

find a de-contextualized explanation. On the one hand, the rise and rapid growth of the

Methodist movement in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was not only due to the

appeal of its message but also because of the favorable social and cultural conditions—

and how Methodism effectively responded to such conditions and the human needs they

produced. On the other hand, despite facing "the general wickedness of the age" that

includes "the progress of rationalism and deism, the decline of Church courts, the

existence of new proto-industrial populations wild and free from religion,"[301] Methodism

survived by developing its distinctive principles and praxis "with a greater capacity to

adapt to the changing conditions of a new world order."[302] To understand this context,

two important aspects need to be highlighted: 1) the social changes that resulted from the

Industrial Revolution, and 2) the cultural changes brought about by the Enlightenment.

First, it is important to point out that England in the eighteenth century, as "the

birthplace of the Industrial Revolution,"[303] went through various unprecedented social

changes. Significant challenges were posed by the rapid urbanization and the continuing

---

[301] Hempton, *Methodism*, 13.

[302] Ibid., 19.

[303] According to Robert C. Allen's explanation, at the heart of the Industrial Revolution was the technological revolution accompanied by the demographic revolution, the urban revolution, the agricultural revolution, and the commercial revolution. These changes caused a severe division between the prosperous and the impoverished, despite the expectations for improving the life of the masses based on a rosy picture of progress. Allen analyzes the key features of the Industrial Revolution in England and its impacts on the different social groups using the style of an introductory work. It is particularly interesting that he explores the reasons why England became the birthplace of the revolution and what specific triggers were already present in England. For more details, see Robert. C. Allen, *The Industrial Revolution: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

suffering of poor and working-class people, despite the economic improvements experienced by the middle and upper class due to the mechanization of labor. The masses moved toward the industrialized centers, and the uprooted people had new spiritual needs that the established Anglican Church could not meet as people struggled due to economic perils. Scholars agree that in such a context, the informal and vibrant style of Methodist religious practice appealed to the people's needs and brought the industrial masses into the movement. According to Justo L. González's evaluation,

> The success of Methodism was partly due to the degree to which it responded to new needs resulting from the Industrial Revolution. During the latter half of the eighteenth century, England was undergoing a process of rapid industrialization. This created a mass movement of population to the industrial centers. Such people, uprooted by economic circumstances, tended to lose their connection with the church, whose parish structure was unable to respond to the needs of the new urban masses. It was among those masses that Methodism filled a need and found most of its members.[304]

In fact, there are continuing debates among historians regarding the issue of how to evaluate early Methodism's influence on the industrialized society and its political consequences. However, most scholars agree that the Methodist humanitarian concerns and practices for social improvement had a powerful influence that shaped England in the eighteenth century and afterwards. In the context of the rapid social changes accompanying the Industrial Revolution, Methodism in its own way strove to solve the problems generated by the industrialized society, including an unprecedented level of poverty, massive technological unemployment, lack of education for the working class, rising doubts about the possibility of a better life in such an unstable economy, and other issues. Not only being influenced by but also influencing the industrializing society, early

---

[304] Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity Vol.2: The Reformation to the Present Day* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1985), 215-216.

Methodism sought after personal experience of holiness that was clearly connected to the struggle for political justice.

Second, when describing the eighteenth-century England, "the Enlightenment" is another important factor, and the rise of Methodism needs to be interpreted within the structure of enlightened thought. In fact, the label "enlightenment," rather than being limited to naming a certain historical period, can be applied to many thinkers in various places at different times. However, the eighteenth century is referred to as the Age of Enlightenment being portrayed as "the century of philosophy *par excellence*." [305] In considering the Age of Enlightenment—or the Age of Reason—as the context for the rise of Methodism, the important question asks "how ordinary men and women understood the seismic shift from the religious culture of the seventeenth century to the so-called 'disenchantment of the world' that developed on the wake of the Enlightenment." [306]

William Bristrow summarizes the core of the Enlightenment as "the aspiration for intellectual progress and the belief in the power of such progress to improve human society and individual lives."[307] The rise of the new science was accompanied by the dramatic success in explaining the natural world, and such success led to unprecedented confidence in human reason. Although the Enlightenment in England took a different shape than it did in other countries, following the path of empiricism instead of Cartesian rationalism, fundamentally, it still shared the optimistic emphasis on human progress and the new understanding of human agency based on freedom and autonomy.

---

[305] William Bristow, "Enlightenment," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2017 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/enlightenment/. Accessed on 05/04/20. This is the characterization of Jean le Rond D' Alembert, a leading figure of the French Enlightenment.
[306] Phyllis Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment: Gender and Emotion in Early Methodism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 8.
[307] Bristow, "Enlightenment."

For social commentators, the opposite of Enlightenment was "Enthusiasm," a term that refers to a religious movement disapproved of by so-called intellectual superiors. This antithesis between religious enthusiasm and enlightened philosophy has been used to explain the uniqueness of eighteenth-century England. Until recently, Methodism used to be regarded as "a movement located somewhere near the polar opposite of Enlightenment" and interpreted as a form of Enthusiasm which was considered "the intellectual opposite of Enlightenment" in the eighteenth century.[308] However, recent scholarship has reconsidered how Wesley and early Methodism were also significantly influenced by the spirit of the Enlightenment, revealing a complicated relationship between Enthusiasm and Enlightenment in the process of the Methodist movement development. As Hempton points out, "For Wesley, a gradual improvement of grace and goodness, along with the disciplined practice of moral duties, offered a better route to spiritual enlightenment than the 'Enthusiasm' into which the English people had been led during the Times of Anarchy and Confusion."[309]

4.2.2. John Wesley: A Reasonable Enthusiast

The distinctiveness of Methodism resulted from Wesley's relationship to the social and cultural context in which he lived, was educated, and practiced his ministerial works. According to John Kent, a religious historian, Wesleyanism succeeded because Wesley responded to "the actual religious demands and hopes of the hearers, many of whom thought that religion ought to function as a way of influencing and changing the

---

[308] Hempton, *Methodism*, 32.
[309] Ibid., 33.

present."[310]Attending to the needs of his historical context, Wesley developed his practical theology in opposition to dogmatism and understood faith as a way of life that was distinct from a populist form of religion. He was "a restless advocate of self-improvement and the improvement of society; in his view the ideal Christian life was one of ceaseless, cheerful activism."[311]

Considering Wesley's relationship to the Enlightenment and Enthusiasm, it is fair to say that he was neither a "rationalist" nor an "enthusiast," but *a reasonable enthusiast* as long as "enthusiast" means having "a vigorous and earnest faith," not "false claims to divine inspiration."[312] Wesley, who insisted on the partnership of faith and reason, attempted to unite reason and faith in the context of the rationalist tradition or scientific materialism. He clarified his view on religion that is not divorced from reason as follows:

> You go on. "It is a fundamental principle in the Methodist school, that all come into it, must renounce their reason." Sir, are you awake? Unless you are talking in your sleep, how can you utter so gross untruth? It is a fundamental principle with us that to renounce reason is to renounce religion: that religion and reason go hand in hand, and that all irrational religion is false religion"[313]

Recent scholarship has reconsidered the importance of Enlightenment for Wesley and has reinterpreted Wesley's theology as being constructed in the patterns of enlightened thought. In my view, assessing Wesley as a "counter-enlightenment figure" means not

---

[310] John Kent, *Wesley and Wesleyans: Religion in Eighteenth Century Britain* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 2.

[311] Hempton, *Methodism*, 42.

[312] Ibid., 35. For Wesley, the distinction between "acceptable and unacceptable forms of enthusiasm" (37) was clear, and he distinguished Methodism from other populist forms of religious enthusiasm by its unique theological and organizational disciplines.

[313] John Wesley, *A Letter to the Reverend Dr. Rutherforth*. M. A. Late Fellow of Lincoln-College, Oxford, And Chaplain to the Right Honourable the Countess Dowager of Buchan. Bristol, M.DCC.LXVII. [1767][1768], retrieved from Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale. Boston College, 15. http://find.gale.com.proxy.bc.edu/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=mlin _m_bostcoll&tabID=T001&docId=CW3319788545&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version =1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE. Accessed on 05/03/20.

only failing to properly understand him in relation to his context, but also losing a

possibility of retrieving his thought and practice as relevant for the contemporary context.

However, it is not correct either to simply portray Wesley as "a man of

enlightenment" without understanding the complex fusion of enlightened thought and the

enthusiastic faith he was proposing. Just as Wesley had a complex relation to enthusiasm,

so did he develop his theological formulation as the complex mixture of his reaction

against the Enlightenment and his indebtedness to it. Recent scholarship confirms such a

proposal by highlighting a strong connection between the Enlightenment and Wesley's

thought. It has clarified that Wesley was deeply influenced by the spirit of the

Enlightenment, especially in his fundamentally optimistic view on human progress, and

in various specific practices, including "his defense of religious toleration, advocacy of

slavery abolition, concern for bodily and mental health, and dislike of all persecution and

violence."[314] In characterizing Wesley as *a reasonable enthusiast* whose primary concern

was to transform personal and social reality, it is important to examine his emphasis on

lived human experience.

4.3. The Distinctive Emphasis on Experience

For Wesley, experience is more important to faith than rational speculation.

Emphasizing the primacy of experience to faith, the Wesleyan movement established a

distinctive religious style. Recent studies have highlighted the obvious influence of

Lockean empiricism on Wesley's epistemological position. The close relationship of

Wesley's thought to Locke's epistemology has been considered to be an important

---

[314] Hempton, *Methodism*, 41.

evidence of the Enlightenment's impact on Wesley's theological framework. Examining Wesley's indebtedness to John Locke is necessary to understand how Wesley came to call for a creative and critical theological reflection on reality guided by a vision for transformation in faith.

4.3.1. John Locke and Wesley

John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) is regarded as one of the foundational texts of empiricism. For Locke, the most important goal was to determine the limits of human understanding. In Books I through IV, he discussed the difference "between what is and what is not comprehensible by us."[315] The first book particularly argues that "we have no innate knowledge," which means that we have "no innate speculative principles" and "no innate practical principles."[316] Locke claimed that the human mind is "a sort of blank slate on which experience writes."[317] Arguing against the existence of innate ideas, he stated the following:

> It seems to me a near contradiction to say, that there are truths imprinted on the soul, which it perceives or understands not; imprinting if it signify anything, being nothing else but the making certain truths to be perceived…. To say a notion is imprinted on the mind, and yet at the same time to say, that the mind is ignorant of it, and never took notice of it, is to make this impression nothing.[318]

Locke also made a strong claim in Book II that "ideas are the materials of knowledge and all ideas come from experience." [319] In Locke's words,

> Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas; how comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store, which the

[315] William Uzgalis, "John Locke," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2020 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/locke/. Accessed on 04/08/20.
[316] Ibid.
[317] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding: Collated and Annotated, with prolegomena, biographical, critical and historical, by Alexander Campbell Fraser.* Vol. 1. Oxford [Oxfordshire], 1894, 40.
[318] Ibid.
[319] Ibid., 67.

busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this *I answer in one word, from experience*: in that all our knowledge is founded, and from that it ultimately derives itself.[320]

In his day, Locke's empiricist claim was a bold innovation because most philosophers from Plato to Descartes had insisted that knowledge is something *already within,* instead of being identified with perception and derived from or mediated through experience. Some philosophers before Locke had suggested the limitation of human understanding, but Locke was the first philosopher who carried out the project in the full. Considering the source and nature of human knowledge, Locke explicitly formulated his idea that human knowledge was impossible without reference to experience. He put forth two kinds of experience: "sensation," which tells us about "things and processes in the external world" and "reflection," which tells us about "the operations of our own mind."[321]

Wesley was significantly influenced by Locke's theory of knowledge[322] in developing his own epistemology. As Frederick Dreyer notes, Wesley had already read Locke's work during his undergraduate studies, and later repeatedly recommended it as "a suitable reading to devout Methodists," even including a lengthy extract in the *Arminian Magazine* (1778) and commenting that "it[Lock's work] contains many excellent truths."[323] Following Locke's rejection of innate ideas in favor of experience

---

[320] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* 67. Emphasis added.

[321] Uzgalis, "John Locke." Accessed 04/09/20.

[322] This does not mean that Wesley was influenced by Locke's view on religion or faith as much as he was by Locke's epistemology. In fact, Locke with his "deistic sympathy" aimed to establish "the comparability of reason and teachings of Christianity" in his work *On the Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695). Locke was not considered "a deist" but his work influenced the major deists in England. In addition, Locke's argument on religious toleration was based on his skeptical views regarding religious knowledge while Wesley's openness to diversity was based on his central theological theme of love—the complementarity of the love for God and the love for neighbor.

[323] Frederick Dreyer, "Faith and Experience in the Thought of John Wesley," *The American Historical Review* 88, no.1 (February,1983), 17. In fact, Dreyer argues that Wesley's concurrence with Locke should

over rational speculation, Wesley formulated his basic epistemological commitments accordingly. An oversimplification about Wesley's indebtedness to the Lockean theory of knowledge should be avoided[324] but the importance of Wesley's approval of Locke's empiricism cannot be underestimated.

The recognition of how Wesley embraced Locke's theory can provide a critical clue to figuring out the philosophical theology that underlies the distinctive Methodist message. Dreyer evaluates Wesley as "a thoroughgoing adherent of the principles of Locke's epistemology," and contends that such an endorsement of Locke led Wesley to oppose any deductive systems of theology based on the existence of innate ideas.[325] It can be said that Wesley developed his theological ideas linking experience to reason, and nature to grace in light of Locke's philosophy. Richard Brantley even refers to Wesley' work as "a theologizing Locke's empiricism,"[326] finding "the same balance between

---

be extended to other issues including free will or the mystery beyond human knowledge. Dreyer also contends that it is important to understand how Wesley looked for some Lockean support when he argued against the Calvinist doctrine of predestination.

[324] In fact, the opposite argument exists. John C. English acknowledges Wesley's indebtedness to Locke in formulating the concept of the spiritual senses but argues that other systems of thought, especially Platonism, played a more important role in Wesley's epistemology. English attempts to show how Wesley became acquainted with the writings of an early opponent of Locke, John Norris (1657-1712), one of the Cambridge Platonists and how Wesley was influenced by Norris' thoughts in shaping his own concept of the spiritual sense. English argues that Wesley was influenced by Lockean empiricism but even more so by the Platonic tradition. For more details, see John C. English, "John Wesley's Indebtedness to John Norris," *Church History* 60, no.1 (Marh, 1991):55-61. I assert that English rightly points out that to avoid oversimplification, other complex elements, such as Wesley's occasional leanings toward the intuitional thought in conceptualizing the notion of spiritual senses, need to be considered. However, as Wesley's indebtedness to empiricism is more about his moving away from the platonic tradition in terms of the understanding of experience, English's argument is not strong enough to support his position. I find Wesley's intellectual affinity to Lockean empirical methodology to be more consistent and pervasive.

[325] Dreyer, "Faith and Experience," 22-23.

[326] Richard Brantley, "The Common Ground of Wesley and Edwards," *Harvard Theological Review* 83, no.3 (July 1990), 281. In this article, Brantley explores how John Wesley and Jonathan Edwards commonly relied on Lockean empiricism for their religious methodology and how their spiritual evangelism links up with Locke's natural empiricism. Brantley's argument is helpful to understand how Locke's epistemology influenced Wesley and Edwards, but I find it problematic to pair up Wesley and Edwards without recognizing the basic theological differences between them. As I see it, Wesley's understanding of divine grace and the meaning of salvation is incompatible with Edwards's theological determinism grounded in the Calvinist theology.

sense and reason" in Locke's epistemology as in Wesley's method. Brantley argues that Wesley expanded Lockean methods of inquiry to include non-Lockean subject matters and that Wesley's concept of the spiritual senses demonstrates how Wesley applied Locke's epistemology of sensation to his own theology. According to Brantley's explanation, "while Lockean experience is primarily natural and Lockean theology is almost entirely apart from nature," Wesley's spiritual sense accentuates the participation of God in creation, and "so enlists spirit in the catalogue of experience."[327]

4.3.2. Experience and Faith in Wesley's Thought

Having developed his own epistemological commitments under the influence of Locke's empiricism, Wesley always declared that "matters of speculative theology were of little concern to him," and "what mattered was the perceptibility of faith in the experience of the believer."[328] Wesley constantly reexamined his understanding of faith and the mission of the Church in light of lived experience, and his attention to experience at both the personal and communal levels led him to recognize the work for social improvement as an inseparable part of the life of faith.

Wesley's inclusion of experience as an important criterion for understanding religious truth is very significant. Wesley did not denounce the Reformation idea *Sola Scriptura* but refused to dogmatize such an idea. He always emphasized the Scripture as the fundamental source for Christian life, but he did not believe that it was necessarily the only religious authority. Building on the typical Anglican triad of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason, Wesley added human experience as another genuine source for theological

---

[327] Brantley, "The Common Ground of Wesley and Edwards," 303.
[328] Hempton, *Methodism*, 50.

reflection. By adding experience to the Anglican trilogy, Wesley combined distinctively the four elements for the Methodist's theological and doctrinal development.[329]

On the one hand, Wesley, unlike his contemporaries who advocated for the Reformed theology, developed his thought concerning the importance of experiencing "inward feelings." On the other hand, separate from his contemporaries taken to Mysticism, he warned people to be cautious when they focused on their inward feelings, clarifying what he meant by the term and its connection to the "outward actions." In Wesley's words:

> By feeling, I mean, being inwardly conscious of; by the operations of the spirit, I do not mean the manner in which he operates, but the graces which he operated in a Christian. And again, we believe that love, joy, peace are inwardly felt, or they have no being: and that men are satisfied they have grace, first by feeling these, and afterwards by their outward actions.[330]

For Wesley, the inward and outward dimensions should be united toward a wider transformation of the reality. In Methodism, a person's capacity for transformation always involves both a personal and a communal dimension. As "an exponent of practical piety," Wesley defined Methodism "not as a church, but as a way of life," [331] being concerned with the quality of the followers' religious lives and emphasizing the importance of outward good works.

According to Wesley, religion and happiness were always united in the love of God and the love of the neighbor, and this fundamental idea was at the heart of Wesley's

---

[329] Later in the twentieth century, a Wesley theologian, Albert C. Outler, coined the term, "Wesleyan Quadrilateral" to describe Wesley's methodology for theological reflection, which distinctively includes experience. Albert C. Outler, ed., *John Wesley* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964).

[330] John Wesley, *A Letter to the Reverend Dr. Rutherforth*. Accessed 05/06/20.

[331] Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment*, p.31. Mack argues that Wesley and the early leaders were primarily concerned with the quality of religious lives and that such priorities were psychological rather than theological. I state, however, that such an evaluation can be misleading because the concerns for the well-being of the followers in early Methodism are grounded in Methodism's unique theological understanding of divine grace and humanity.

ethics of transformation at both the personal and the communal levels. In his sermon on

The Unity of the Divine Being (1789), Wesley states the following:

> It is in consequence of our knowing God loves us that we love him, and love our neighbor as ourselves. Gratitude toward our Creator cannot but produce benevolence to our fellow-creatures. The love of Christ constrains us, not only to be harmless, to do no ill to our neighbor, but to be useful, to be 'zealous of good works,' 'as we have time to do good unto all men', and be patterns to all of true genuine morality, of justice, mercy, and truth. This is religion, and this is happiness, the happiness for which we were made. [332]

In Wesley's thought, the active work of compassion for others springs from gratitude

toward God; thus, for Wesley, the wholeness of the Christian life is completed by "good

works" for others. Put differently, Wesley believed that "the active love of neighbor is

not just an important part of the Christian life; it, along with the love of God, is the

unifying core of the Christian life."[333] Therefore, what needs to be explored next is how

the sense of agency for transformation was to be shaped and cultivated in early

Methodism.

4.4. The Significance of Human Agency in Early Methodism

As Mack rightly points out, "the issue of agency" can be regarded as "*the* problem

for eighteenth century religious seekers," and Wesley's distinctive reflection on this issue

is essential to understanding how early Methodism could grow into "a modern,

independent, world-wide church" from "a renewal movement on the fringes of

Anglicanism."[334] According to Mack's evaluation, Methodism generated "a new kind of

---

[332] John Wesley, "The Unity of the Divine Being" in *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*, ed. Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 536. Hereafter, I will use the abbreviation *JWS* when referring to this source.
[333] Rebekah L. Miles, "Happiness, Holiness, and the Moral Life in John Wesley," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 208.
[334] Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment*, 12.

energy" based on "the urge toward self-transformation and world-transformation."[335] By combining the Enlightenment ideas with the Methodist interpretation of Gospel values, "an aggressive spiritual agency" was formulated and powered "by modern habits of self-analysis, emotional discipline, and the social and spiritual ambition that generated Methodism's world-wide missionary project."[336]

In Wesley's thought, God's redemptive grace works in and for everyone; human beings have the responsibility for "working out" their own salvation, not as passive respondents to the predetermined will of God, but as active agents participating in God's salvific work.[337] Mack asserts that "Wesley's Methodism must be described as a religion of activists, who combined a belief in humanity's utter dependence on Christ with an ethos of continual striving and a reliance on effective human agency."[338] The emphasis on human agency, which is given by a "prevenient grace of God," was central to Wesley's thought that repudiates both "egoistic self-assertion" and "fatalistic passivity."[339]

To explore the distinctive understanding of agency in the Wesleyan view, I discuss three points in the following section: 1) agency against passivity, both in Calvinist predestination and in solitary religious practice; 2) "Christian perfection" as the process of establishing agency; and 3) agency and the encounter with others.

4.4.1. Against Passivity

---

[335] Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment*, 14.
[336] Ibid., 15. It is particularly significant that Mack emphasizes that "through the medium of their emotions, Methodists addressed the issue of agency" (15), meaning that cultivating emotions was their primary means of establishing agency.
[337] Wesley, "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," in *JWS*, 485-492.
[338] Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment*, 37.
[339] Ibid., 55.

John Calvin (1509-1564) formulated his theology of predestination, and the subsequent Calvinists, such as John Knox or Jeremy Talyor in the Puritan tradition,[340]developed the Reformed understanding of predestination and election. Calvin declares the following:

> As Scripture, then, clearly shows, we say that God once established by his eternal and unchangeable plan those whom he long before determined once for all to receive into salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, he would devote to destruction. We assert that, with respect to the elect, this plan was founded upon his freely given mercy, without regard to human worth; but by his just and irreprehensible but incomprehensible judgment he has barred the door of life to those whom he has given over to damnation.[341]

The issue of how Calvinism differed in certain aspects from Calvin himself requires another investigation,[342]but fundamentally Wesley could not agree with his "Calvinized" contemporaries in terms of their consistent position on soteriology. Wesley absolutely rejected the Calvinist doctrine of predestination or eternal election by which God has predestined some to salvation, and others to destruction. In other words, he could not

---

[340] The Puritan theology based on Calvinism was also the force that shaped the revival mentality based on serious human depravity and strict dualistic thinking in America. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Puritans, who were English reformers inspired by the Calvinist theology of predestination, played a major role in the American religious life. The Puritans believed that they were among "the elect" who were destined for salvation and their conviction for being the elect was assured by a "righteous life" and manifested as inward conversion. There were many different Puritan groups with different ideas about God's will for the righteous, but in a general sense, Puritan heritage focusing on the experience of conversion had a major impact on the burst of revivalism in America beginning around the 1730s, known as "the Great Awakening." After the Revolution, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, "the Second Great Awakening" took place, generating a great religious enthusiasm once again. To understand such Calvinist origin of the American religious life, E. Brooks Holifield's work is helpful; see E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). For understanding the Great Awakening in relation to the problem of the contemporary evangelism in America, see Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

[341] John Calvin, "Theology: Institutes of the Christian Religion," in *Reformation Reader: Primary Texts with Introductions*, ed. Denis R. Janz (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 269.

[342] For example, Basil Hall argues that Calvin's successors distorted the balance of Calvin's theology, particularly in terms of the authority of the Scripture. Basil Hall, "Calvin Against the Calvinists," in *The Theology of John Calvin,* ed. *Charles Partee* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008).

accept the doctrine that "He [God] does not indiscriminately adopt all into the hope of salvation but gives to some what he denies to others."[343]

According to Wesley, salvation as predestined "eternal security" is contrary to scripture and destructive of the Christian ethical life because it devalues the grace and love of God toward the whole of humanity and destroys "holiness" by taking away an individual's motive to pursue it.[344] Wesley developed his own understanding of God's grace and attributed the possibility of responsible action to everyone with his attentiveness to and awareness of his own historical context. Wesley's rejection of predestination was grounded in his understanding of the character of God as compassionate for all human beings rather than in a simply optimistic understanding of human nature. The difference between Wesleyan and Calvinist theologies in the understanding of God's sovereignty lies in their fundamentally different positions on God's nature: Wesleyan theology was based on God's love, whereas Calvinist theology was based on God's judgement and the model of the ruling monarch.

Beginning to publish the *Arminian Magazine* in 1778, Wesley explicitly responded to the growing controversies over the question of predestination. The magazine was founded against the *Gospel Magazine*, which started being published in 1766 as the leading Calvinist evangelical magazine in England. In his introductory comments to the first issue of the *Arminian Magazine*, Wesley declared the purpose of the magazine as defending "universal redemption" against predestination "not only

---

[343] Calvin, "Theology" Institutes of the Christian Religion," 262.
[344] Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment*, 31.

through polemic and theological argument but also through the personal experiences of

actual Methodist men and women."[345]

His sermon on *Free Grace* (1739) also made it clear that he completely rejected

predestination "in all its Calvinist versions."[346] This sermon was published as a kind of a

convincing manifesto to denounce the doctrine of predestination after publicly debating

the issue with George Whitefield.[347] Wesley declared that "the grace or love of God,

whence cometh our salvation, is free in all, and free for all."[348] In Wesley's words,

> …the doctrine of predestination is not a doctrine of God, because it makes void the
> ordinance of God, and God is not divided against himself…. it directly tends to destroy
> that holiness which is the end of all the ordinances of God. I do not say, "None who hold
> it are holy"(for God is of tender mercy to those who are unavoidably entangled in errors
> of any kind), but the doctrine itself—that every man is either elected or not elected from
> eternity, and that the one must inevitable be saved, and the other inevitably damned—has
> a manifest tendency to destroy holiness in general….[349]

Wesley argued that the doctrine of predestination would "destroy the comfort of religion,

the happiness of Christianity," and "our zeal for good works," which was grounded in

---

[345] Andrew O. Winckles, "Excuse What Deficiencies You Will Find: Methodist Women and Public Space in John Wesley's Arminian Magazine," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 46, no. 3 (2013), 491.In this article, recognizing that the accounts of women in the *Arminian Magazine* have been ignored, despite the increasing interest in the role of gender during the eighteenth and nineteenth century evangelical revival, Winckles analyzes "the unique rhetorical space" of the women's narratives in the magazine.

[346] Albert C. Outler, "An Introductory Comment on the Sermon, Free Grace," in *JWS*, 49.

[347] Wesley was separated from George Whitefield who was a member of the holy club and worked with Wesley in harmony to found Methodism in the beginning. Slowly the theological differences between the two became pronounced, especially on the issues of predestination, free will, and other social concerns including slavery. The public controversy between Wesley and Whitefield, known as the "free grace controversy," led Whitefield to depart from the movement and organize the Calvinist Methodist Church, which later remained in Wales. Some scholars have argued that the contrast between Wesley and Whitefield has been overstated and that the resemblance between the two is much greater than the difference; see Ian J. Maddock, *Men of One Book: A Comparison of Two Methodist Preachers, John Wesley and George Whitefield* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2011). However, recognizing the fundamental differences between their theological positions, I contend that it is more important to focus on the contrasts than the similarities between the two. Wesley's rejection of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination and his advocacy for the abolition of slavery are clearly contrasted with Whitefield's views, and these two issues are decisive enough to support the reason why the similarities of the two should not be emphasized over the contrasts.

[348] Wesley, "Free Grace," in *JWS*, 50.

[349] Ibid., 52.

"our love to the greater part of mankind."[350] Offering a strong argument to criticize how

the doctrine of predestination ruins Christian holiness, happiness and motives to perform

all good works, Wesley further condemned it as "a doctrine full of blasphemy" and

asserted that "no Scripture can prove predestination."[351]As Hempton writes, Wesley

"could not conceive of a God who had determined everything in advance or of human

spirituality that was mere acquiescence."[352]

       In addition to rejecting the Calvinist soteriology, Wesley also objected to the

Mystics. For him, Christianity, when it is authentic, cannot remain solitary, but should be

socially open and active. In other words, Wesley asserted that Christianity is "a social

religion" in which inward holiness is completed by outward holiness and outward

holiness is promoted by inward holiness. In the sermon, "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on

the Mount" (1748), Wesley declared the following:

> …I shall endeavor to show, first, that Christianity is essentially *a social religion*, and that
> to turn it into a solitary one is to destroy it; secondly, that to conceal this religion is
> impossible, as well as utterly contrary to the design of its author. I shall, thirdly, answer
> some objections; and conclude the whole with a practical application. [353]

Just as Wesley repudiated the passivity in Calvinism, so he also refused the other forms

of passivity found among the Mystics. While Wesley rejected the Calvinists and the

Mystics for different reasons, he criticized both of them based on his opposition to

discrediting human agency. As Mack explains,

> Calvinism was rejected because its doctrine of predestination encouraged fatalism.
> Mysticism was rejected because it encouraged a merging of the passive self and God and

---

[350] Wesley, "Free Grace," in *JWS*, 53-54.
[351] Ibid., 55-58.
[352] Hempton, *Methodism*, 57.
[353] Wesley, "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount: Discourse IV," in *JSW*, 195. It is known that Wesley
offered thirteen "discourses" on the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7); as Outler explains in his
introductory comment, all thirteen discourses are united with "its three unfolding themes: (1) the sum of
true religion; (2) rules touching that right intention which we are to preserve in all our outward actions; and
(3) the main hindrances of this religion" (193).

privileged the ideal of seclusion over fellowship, of inward righteousness over outward righteousness…Wesley's Methodism must be described as a religion of activist, who combined a belief in humanity's utter dependence on Christ with an ethos of continual striving and a reliance on effective human agency.[354]

Wesley's criticism of the different forms of passivity in other doctrines and practices as well as his own conviction regarding human agency, especially to serve the social needs of society, were grounded in his commitment to universal redemption and entire sanctification.

4.4.2. Christian Perfection: A Process of Establishing Agency

The most consistent theme in Wesley's thought is the *holiness of heart and life* that is aimed at reaching "Christian perfection" as *a way of life*. As Hempton elaborates, if Wesley's theology needed to be reduced to "a model," then such a model should be seen as "a moving vortex, fueled by scripture and divine love, shaped by experience, reason, and tradition, and moving dramatically toward holiness or Christian perfection."[355] The essence of Wesley's theology can be captured in the "dynamic movement toward holiness and its growth within individuals and its dissemination throughout the world."[356]

In Wesley's view, Christian perfection, which was also called sanctification or holiness is not an absolute state that can be reached without failures along the way; rather, it is a never-ending process of growth into holiness of life. It is the process of reaching a Christian maturity in a true meaning and establishing a sense of agency for

---

[354] Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment*, 37.
[355] Hempton, *Methodism*, 57.
[356] Ibid.

Christian living. Becoming an *authentic* Christian[357] through *habitual* practices was the

primary concern for Wesley. In his writing, *Farther Thoughts upon Christian Perfection*

(1763) in which he employed the question and answer format as he had done in *Thoughts*

on Christian Perfection (1760), Wesley wrote the following:

> Q. Can those who are perfect grow in grace?
> A. Undoubtedly, they can. And that not only while they are in the body, but to all eternity.
> Q. Can they fall from it?
> A. I am well assured they can. Matter of fact puts this beyond dispute. Formally, we thought, one saved from sin, could not fall. Now, we know the contrary. We are surrounded with instances of those who lately experienced all that I mean by perfection.[358]

---

[357] I would like to draw an interesting connection between Wesley and Horace Bushnell (1802-1876). Bushnell's notion of "Christian Nurture" has significant resemblance with the "Christian Perfection" in Wesley's thought in its pursuit of becoming "an authentic Christian." In the face of the revival mentality in the nineteenth century based on the Calvinist theology, Bushnell sought an alternative of becoming a Christian through a gradual process through nurture and "organic" social experience and he proposed the notion of "Christian Nurture." In fact, it was the Methodist itinerant preachers' emphasis on human freedom and their rejection of predestination that attracted Bushnell's family, and resulted in their leaving the established Congregational Church for Methodism when Bushnell was young. While a detailed discussion is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is worth noting that comparing Wesley's thought to Bushnell's has a significant implication for today. I need to mention four common points between the two: 1) both were much more interested in experience than dogmas for constructing their theologies; 2) both raised objections and made bold claims against the Calvinist doctrine of predestination because it distorted the understanding of God's grace and devalued human agency, being a deterrent to "growth"; 3) both recognized the importance of the developmental and contextual nature of religious formation in its life-long process—Bushnell rejected revivalism's reduction of religious life to the individual one-time conversion experience, and Wesley refused to limit the meaning of salvation to the "justification" of the earlier Reformers; and 4) both emphasized the importance of emotion as the medium of self-transformation. For further comparison, see, among many others, the following: Horace Bushnell, *Christian Nurture* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1994); Barbara M. Cross, *Horace Bushnell: Minister to a Changing America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958); Robert Bruce Mullin, *The Puritan as Yankee: A Life of Horace Bushnell* (Grand Rapids: W.B, Eerdmans, 2002); David Smith, *Symbolism and Growth: The Religious Thought of Horace Bushnell* (Missoula, Mo: Scholars Press, 1981); Margaret Bendroth, "Horace Bushnell's Christian Nurture," in *The Child in Christin Thought*, ed. Marcia J. Bunge (Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans, 2001), 350-364; Richard Heitzenrater, "John Wesley and Children, in *The Child in Christin Thought*, ed. Marcia J. Bunge (Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans, 2001), 279-299; Margaret Bendroth, "Children of Adam, Children of God: Christian Nurture in Early Nineteenth-Century America," *Theology Today* 56, no.4 (January, 2000):495-505; and Conrad Cherry, "The Structure of Organic Thinking: Horace Bushnell's Approach to Language, Nature, and Nation," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 40, no.1 (March 1972):3-20.

[358] John Wesley, *Farther Thoughts Upon Christian Perfection*, London, Printed in the Year, MDCCLXIII. [1763]. Retrieved from Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale. Boston College,17. <http://find.gale.com.proxy.bc.edu/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=mlin_m_bostcoll&tabID=T001&docId=CW3319776638&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE>. Accessed 04/08/20.

In Wesley's view, "perfection" can be sought as an attainable ideal here in this life, but it also contains an eschatological meaning of *already here but not yet*. Wesley argued that Christian perfection is *a process* rather than a state, and is distinguished from a static and flawless perfectionism. He acknowledged the limitations of being human as having sinful inclinations; thus, perfection does not mean being free of limitations or mistakes. In Wesley's own words:

> What is Christian perfection? The loving God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. This implies that no wrong temper, none contrary to love remains in the soul; and that all the thoughts, words and action are governed by pure love. Do you affirm that this perfection excludes all infirmities, ignorance, and mistake? I continually affirm the quite contrary, and always have done so. But how can every thought, word and work governed by pure love, and the man be subject at the same time to ignorance and mistake? I see no contradiction here, "A man may be filled with love, and still be liable to mistake." Indeed, I do not expect to be freed from actual mistakes, till this mortal puts on immortality. [359]

For Wesley, perfection means "perfect love" filling the heart and the "restoration" of the divine image in the heart as a continual process. [360]

As Mack puts it, "adapting the sensationalist psychology of John Locke, Wesley viewed sanctification as both an ecstatic and a sensible experience" and "adapting Enlightenment ideals of education and progress, he urged his followers to improve their rational and physical capacities in order to achieve useful, balanced, 'happy' lives."[361] Wesley's emphasis on experience allowed him to develop a unique position on sanctification—that is, living as an active agent in faith. In particular, as Mack emphasizes, it is important to note that "Methodists addressed the issue of agency

---

[359] Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, 32.

[360] Wesley, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," in *JWS*, 374.

[361] Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment*, 13. In fact, in Wesley, "holiness" and "happiness" are interchangeable. Regarding the interchangeability of holiness and happiness in Wesley, see Rebekah L. Miles, "Happiness, Holiness, and the Moral life," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, eds. Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Paul W. Chilcote, "Sanctification as Lived by Early Methodist Women," *Methodist History* 34, no.2 (January 1996).

through the medium of their emotions" and developed the religious disciplines "to master 'bad' feelings like anger or envy while nurturing 'good' feelings like compassion or tenderness."[362] Defining Methodism as a way of life rather than a church, Wesley put a greater emphasis on cultivating the authenticity of attitude and agency, and modifying emotion and consciousness than on adhering to a set of doctrine.

Another distinctive point in Wesley's thought on sanctification as the process of establishing agency is that personal holiness and social holiness cannot be separated in the process toward perfection. The theological and pastoral forms of wisdom are integrated, and personal renewal and social transformation are complementary in Wesley's description of sanctification as seeking a life of holiness and happiness in God's grace. In Wesley's own words,

> …What good works are those, the practice of which you affirm to be necessary to sanctification? First, *all works of piety*, such as public prayer, family prayer, and praying in our closet; receiving the Supper of the Lord; searching the Scripture by hearing, reading, meditating; and using such a measure of fasting or abstinence as our bodily health allows. Secondly, *all works of mercy*, whether they relate to the bodies or souls of men; such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, entertaining the stranger, visiting those that are in prison or sick, or variously afflicted…[363]

For Wesley, striving after social improvement through "works of mercy" was an integral part of cultivating personal integrity through "works of piety." Attending to Wesley's distinctive emphasis on social renewal in his exploration of Wesley's ethics, Manfred Marquardt argues that Wesley's social ethic is definitely distinguished from utilitarianism in that it rests on the dialectic relationship between person and society and the dialectic relationship between divine grace and human cooperation. Its foundational concepts are grounded on "neighborly love resulting from love of God" which means human

---

[362] Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment*,15.
[363] Wesley, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," in *JWS*, 378. Emphasis added.

responsibility for other human being's well-being and solidarity with "fellow-sufferers."[364] The commitment to making the world better for all humanity was indeed an essential element in the Wesleyan doctrine of sanctification. For Wesley, the sanctified Christians were those who became agents for God's work in the world. Based on such foundational precepts, in its development into "an autonomous organized church," as Mack describes it, Methodism became "a movement of spiritual extroverts" focused on improving the rest of the world, beyond being "a community of believers seeking emotional authenticity and self-improvement."[365]

4.4.3. Agency and Encountering Others

In understanding Wesley's thought on sanctification as the process of establishing the sense of personal agency, another important question emerges: How is a spirit of openness held together with a sense of identity in Wesleyan view? Wesley always emphasized the distinction between "what is essential in Christianity" and a set of doctrines, what he called "opinions."[366] His emphasis on love and transformation involves a minimized concern for adherence to a set of doctrines in shaping a person's encounters with "others." Wesley emphasized the openness to the diversity of opinions acknowledging that God worked in other contexts as well as in the Methodist movement.

As Hempton points out, "Methodism was born into a culture of hostility."[367] In the time when the Methodist movement was emerging, the main concern for both church

---

[364] Manfred Marquardts, *John Wesley's Social Ethics,* trans. John E. Steely and W. Stephen Gunter (Nashville:Abingdon Press, 1992), 121-123.

[365] Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment*, 261-262.

[366] John B. Cobb, *Grace & Responsibility: A Wesleyan Theology for Today* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1995), 135.

[367] Hempton, *Methodism*, 87.

and state was to end religious turmoil, meaning that new religious movements were not

welcome. Confronting a culture of hostility and opposition, Wesley did not want to lead

the Methodist movement by securing the salvific privileges of Christianity. He did not

attempt to shape the religious identity by denigrating the others in a dualistic mindset.

Rather, as Wesley stated in his sermon, "A Caution Against Bigotry" (1750), all forms of

bigotry should be renounced when seeking the holiness of life and heart. In his own

words:

> …the term 'bigotry', I fear, as frequently as it is used, is almost as little understood as
> 'enthusiasm'. It is too strong an attachment to, or fondness for, our own party, opinion,
> Church, and religion. Therefore, he is a bigot who is so fond of any of these, so strongly
> attached to them, as to forbid any who casts out devils, because he differs from himself in
> any or all these particulars.

In another text, *The Character of a Methodist* (1742), Wesley clarified that adhering to a

particular opinion was not identified with what is essential for becoming a Methodist:

> The distinguishing marks of a Methodist are not his opinion of any sort, his attention to
> this or that scheme of religion, his embracing any particular set of notions, his espousing
> judgment of one man or of another… whosoever therefore imagines that a Methodist is a
> man of such and such an opinion is grossly ignorant of the whole affair; he mistakes the
> truth totally. [368]

Some scholars have labelled Wesley's openness to the diversity of opinions as

religious pluralism. For example, Albert Oulter claimed that Wesley's sermon against

bigotry contains a plea "for a carefully considered religious pluralism both in theology

and praxis."[369] However, the term religious pluralism should be used cautiously here.[370]

---

[368] John Wesley, *The Character of a Methodist* (1791), 5. M. A. Late Fellow of Lincoln College,
Oxford. The eleventh edition. London. Retrieved from Eighteenth Century Collections
Online. Gale. Boston College.
http://find.gale.com.proxy.bc.edu/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=mlin
_m_bostcoll&tabID=T001&docId=CW3319197521&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version
=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE. Accessed 05/02/20.
[369] An Introductory Comment to "A Caution Against Bigotry" in *JWS,* 287.
[370] In fact, defining "religious pluralism" involves complicated issues, considering its relation to the issue
of identity and otherness. John Hick postulated the notion of "the Real" as "the ultimate Reality"—
following the Kantian distinction between "phenomenon" and "noumenon—and developed his theory of

In my understanding, Wesley can be referred to as a "pluralist" in condemning bigotry when encountering others with different opinions; however, he is a "particularist" in affirming the uniqueness of a particular person—Jesus Christ—as the definitive agent of God's redemptive work for the world. Therefore, it seems to be better to describe his position as seeking non-exclusivistic particularity rather than relativistic plurality.

In his exploration of Wesleyan theology in relation to today's issues and needs from a process theologian's perspective, Cobb effectively highlights the relevance of Wesley's style of confronting otherness to the contemporary context by focusing on the centrality of love and the interaction of God and humanity in Wesley's thought. Emphasizing Wesley's openness to other religious traditions as well as other cultures, Cobb contends that its critical significance for Christians today should be stressed because "Christians from New Testament times on have disparaged and even vilified Judaism in order to show the newness and salvific importance of Christianity."[371] I suggest that this comment by Cobb requires further investigation,[372] but Cobb is right in

---

religious pluralism, criticizing the adequacy of "religious inclusivism" as well as "religious exclusivism." In fact, his defense of religious pluralism begins with his efforts to be a non-exclusivist rather a pluralist. He holds a strong position in "deabsolutizing" Christianity and turns his attention to the all-loving God. Although his argument is useful for rejecting Christian exclusivist claims, it is not sufficient in providing theological reasoning to be a pluralist. When taking plurality more seriously, Hickian pluralism can collapse into exclusivism because it makes its claim regarding the equality of religions privileging a particular tradition with a specific form of truth criteria. Basically, Hick's argument moving from "Christocentricism" to "the Real-centeredness," shows how difficult it is not to contradict oneself in discussing religious pluralism in terms of its theological adequacy while maintaining a particularity. Therefore, I urge a further discussion before evaluating Wesley's position as religious pluralism. For further details on Hick's theory of religion pluralism, see John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

[371] Cobb, *Grace and Responsibility*,147.

[372] Here, Cobb seems to mention the problem associated with the Gospel of John in terms of its hostile references to "the Jews." However, I think Cobb's statement can be misleading and such a critique of the way of shaping Christian identity in the Johannine community requires further exploration. The Gospel of John has been recognized as a problematic text when it is understood to be advocating exclusivism, dualism or absolutism. In many ways, the Gospel of John—with its dualistic language and thought—has been misused to sanction an exclusive identity formation process in Christian communities. In John, there are three main discourses between Jesus and the Jews that show overarching similarities in terms of the literary structure recorded in 6:31-59, 8:13-59, and 10:22-39, along with 8:43-47, which contains the most hostile

showing how Wesley, in his position on confronting others, strengthened his conviction

that "we are called by God to holiness of life and that grace enables us to grow into that

holiness."[373] It is important to understand how Wesley distinctively suggested the

direction for shaping a Christian identity by becoming an active agent to participate in

God's work of love and redemption; rather than by denigrating or excluding others.

Wesley rarely wrote negatively of the others to show "the greatness of

Christianity"[374] or to define the characteristics of the Methodists. He did not base his

---

reference to the Jews as *the others* for the Johannine community. Regarding the problematic case of *othering* by means of the dichotomous language in such verses, the widespread solution offered by the New Testament scholars has been to engage in historical investigation of the Johannine community and to emphasize that the Johannine community was expelled from the local synagogue. Scholars have presented different views about the relationship between John and Qumran but a common conclusion is that the parallel examples from Qumran and the Gospel of John demonstrate that the social context for the dualistic categorization of *the others*—or *the outsiders*—came from groups that were persecuted and socially marginalized. Commonly relying on historical reconstruction but with different foci—such as limiting the references to specific groups of Jews in their historical context, highlighting the expulsion from the local synagogue as a traumatic experience of the Johannine community, or finding similar patterns of polemic rhetoric patterns in other ancient text—the NT scholars have attempted to show how not to generalize the hostile term as the reference to the entirety of the Jewish people.

In addition to using historical and exegetical construction to demonstrate that the Gospel of John does not condemn the Jews as a people, the issue can also be explored from a theological perspective. In other words, one could/should look for a solution based on the *how* question, not just the *who* or the *what* question. As Judith Lieu argues, the problem of *othering* the Jews in the Gospel of John with dualistic languages cannot be solved only by a historical or a biological reading of the text answering the question of who were 'the Jews' in the text. Rather, she asserts that the question of *how it should be read theologically for today* needs to be more deeply investigated. For more details, see Judith Lieu, "Anti-Judaism, the Jews, and the World of the Fourth Gospel," in *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology,* eds. R.Bauckahm and C. Mosser (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2008).

While a more detailed argument on this issue is beyond the scope of this chapter, it needs to be pointed out that we cannot simply conclude that the Johannine community established its exclusive identity through the hostility to Judaism as implied in Cobb's comment. To understand how John differently uses the term "the Jews" in different contexts, Stephen Motyer's *Your Father the Devil* (London: Paternoster Press, 1997) is helpful; Regarding the issue of exclusivism in the Gospel of John, R. Alan Culpepper offers a helpful argument in "Inclusivism and Exclusivism in the Fourth Gospel," in *Word, Theology, and Community in John*, ed. John Painter, R. Alan Culpepper and Fernando F. Segovia (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2002); For a "resistant reading," which involves reading the text from the point of view of *the other,* that is, "those who were oppressed by the text itself" see Adele Reinhartz, "John 8:31-59 from a Jewish Perspective," in *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in the Age of Genocide, vol. 2, Ethics and Religion* (London: Palgrave, 2001); For exploring the issue from a theological perspective, Miroslav Volf's articles are helpful: "Johannine Dualism and Contemporary Pluralism," in *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology*, ed. R. Bauckham (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eermans, 2008) and "Living with the "Other," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 39, no. 1-2 (Winter-Spring, 2000):8-25.

[373] Cobb, *Grace and Responsibility*,139.

[374] Ibid.,147.

contrast between *authentic* and *inauthentic* forms of Christianity on judging one's

particular set of dogmatic opinions. Instead, Wesley always emphasized the holiness of

heart and life as what is essential for Christian life, declaring that "for opinions, or terms,

let us not destroy the work of God." [375] Wesley asserted that:

> He [a Methodist] is a Christian, not in *name* only, but in *heart* and in *life*. He is inwardly and outwardly conformed to the will of God, as revealed in the written word. He thinks, speaks, and lives according to the method laid down in the revelation of Jesus Christ. His soul is renewed after the image of God, in righteousness and in all true holiness. And having the mind that was in Christ, he so walks as Christ also walked.[376]

It is clear that Wesley did not attempt to build up the religious identity of

Christians by condemning different opinions within Methodism and in other religious

traditions. In building up the identity of Christianity, Wesley's primary emphasis was not

on negation, but on affirmation. In his view, a religious identity could not be established

as an exclusive form grounded in the *othering* of different religious groups or different

human beings. Understanding that the distinction between what is essential and the

matters of opinion in the pursuit of being an authentic Christians was primary, Wesley

stressed that continual self-examination was constantly required. According to Wesley's

words,

> Examine yourself…Do I not discourage him because he is not of my Church? By disputing with him concerning it, by raising objections, and by perplexing his mind with distant consequences? Do I show no anger, contempt, or unkindness of any sort, either in my words or actions? Do I not mention behind his back his (real or supposed) faults? His defects or infirmities? Do I not hinder sinners from hearing his word? If you do any of these things you are a bigot to this day.[377]

The implication of Wesley's position on how to confront *others* is clear. In Wesleyan

thought, "The otherness we need to confront has less to do with dogmatism (which

---

[375] Wesley, *The Character of a Methodist* (1791), 11. Author's italics.
[376] Ibid.
[377] Wesley, "Caution against Bigotry" in *JWS*, 297.

flourishes in many secular settings) than with the religious person's conception of agency."[378] Differing from the liberal model of individual freedom and autonomy, the understanding of agency in Wesleyan theology is more complex as it is grounded in its unique understanding of the paradox of God's grace and human agency.

4.5. God's Grace and Human Responsibility
4.5.1. The Paradox of God's Grace and Human Agency

In his sermon, "On Working Out Our Own Salvation" (1785), Wesley elaborated in a more complete sense the mystery of interaction between the divine and the human, delving into the issue of the paradox of a prevenient grace given by God and human agency. To the critics' question, "If it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do, what need is there of our working?", he offered the following answer: "First, God works; therefore you *can* work," and secondly, "God works; therefore you *must* work."[379] He continued to affirm that "inasmuch as God works in you, you are now able to work out your own salvation" and thus "you must be 'workers together with him[God]' and otherwise he[God] will cease working."[380]

Wesley saw no opposition between God's redemptive work and the human participation in God's work. Rather, he believed that the divine grace always empowers the individual to seek renewal, to gain a new identity and consciousness of worth and to establish a sense of agency participating in God' work of love. To understand this

---

[378] Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment*," 9.
[379] Wesley, "On Working Out Our Own Salvation" in *JWS*, 490-491. Emphasis added.
[380] Ibid., 491.

position, it is crucial to attend to Wesley's view on salvation as "a present thing." Wesley

asks:

> What is salvation? The salvation which is here spoken of is not what is frequently
> understood by the word, the going to heaven, eternal happiness. It is not the soul's going
> to paradise…It is not a blessing which lies on the other side death, or (as we usually
> speak) in the other world….It is not something at a distance: it is a present thing, a
> blessing which, through the free mercy of God, ye are now in possession of…the
> salvation which is here spoken of might be extended to the entire work of God, from the
> first dawning of grace in the soul till it is consummated in glory. [381]

Such understanding of salvation as "a present thing" enhances the importance of the

social dimension of God's salvific work and human cooperation by shifting focus from

saving individuals for heaven afterlife to transforming social as well as personal realities

in the midst of this life. Therefore, salvation has a more concrete meaning and demand a

more ethical and political practices.

In Wesley's thought, *Christianity as the religion of love* could be the remedy and

the transformative agent for a broken world. Wesley attended to the pressing social

problems of injustice in his time such as slavery, poverty, lack of education and others. In

particular, while many religious groups, including Calvinism and Moravian Quietism,

supported or tolerated slavery, Wesley was a passionate advocate for abolishing slavery.

Distinguished from the arguments that demanded the abolishment of slavery for

economic reasons, Wesley sought "to demonstrate the injury to fundamental human

rights that was bound up with slavery."[382] For his advocacy, he started delivering

sermons and public statements of his position and became more and more involved in the

---

[381] Wesley, "The Scripture Way of Salvation" in *JWS*, 372.

[382] Manfred Marquardt, *John Wesley's Social Ethics: Praxis and Principles,* translated by John E. Steely and W. Stephen Gunter (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 74.

anti-slavery movement, contributing to the righting of the "great social injustice of slavery."[383]

4.5.2. A Contemporary Retrieval: "Prophetic Grace" in Wesleyan Thought

Reflecting on the relevance of Wesleyan thought for contemporary issues and needs is the very way of living out the Wesleyan tradition, for which the historical situation has always been the context for doing theology with a hopeful stance on God's transforming work for all humanity here on earth. Various attempts have been made in the direction of critical recovery and reconstruction of the Methodist heritage for the contemporary context.[384] In this section, attending to the contemporary issue of justice, with a particular interest in the problem of human agency, I take up Mary Elizabeth Moore's way of recovering "a Wesleyan heritage of repairing the world" in terms of "prophetic grace."[385] Building upon Randy Maddox's "responsible grace," Moore reconstructs the prophetic character of Wesleyan thought by emphasizing a much-needed call for prophetical living for contemporary Christians.

Maddox, one of the foremost scholars of the Wesleyan tradition, explores the dialectic between the divine grace and human responsibility that dominated Wesley's thought, calling it as "responsible grace." Maddox discusses the significance of Wesley's theological formulation for responding to the specific issues and problems that people

---

[383] Marquardt offers a detailed account on Wesley's resistance against slavery, showing how it developed from the early phase (to about 1770) to the later phase (after 1770). Marquardt, *John Wesley's Social Ethics*, 67-75.

[384] For the contemporary reconstruction of the Wesleyan tradition, *A Living Tradition: Critical Recovery and Reconstruction of Wesleyan Heritage*, ed. Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2013) offers a collection of important essays written by prominent scholars from various backgrounds.

[385] Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore, "Prophetic Grace: A Wesleyan Heritage of Repairing the World" in *A Living Tradition: Critical Recovery and Reconstruction of Wesleyan Heritage,* 203-224.

confronted in their concrete cultural, social, and religious contexts. He contends that

Wesley's departing from the dominant model of theological reflection as speculation

does not mean that Wesley deserves to be evaluated as a "third-rank theologian." Maddox

inquiries into the systematic nature of Wesley's theology and discovers the abiding

"orienting concept" in Wesley's theology, that is, "responsible grace."[386] According to

Maddox,

> …Wesley understood the essential Christian message to be one of God-given grace, but grace which both called for and empowered human response, thereby preserving human responsibility. We believe the title "Responsible Grace" captures well this perspective. It places primary emphasis on God's indispensable gift of gracious empowerment while carefully qualifying this empowerment as one that enables rather than overrides human responsibility.[387]

In contrast to other reformation theological formulations on God's grace, such as

"unmerited or free grace" or "sovereign grace," Maddox claims, the notion of

"responsible grace" captures the distinctiveness of Wesley's theology, which aims to

deepen "our sense of God's glorious wisdom, justice, and mercy, without, at the same

time, undercutting human responsibility."[388] In Maddox's understanding, Wesley's way

of conceiving the tension between grace and responsibility is to integrate "faith

alone"(justification) with "holy living"(sanctification) "in an authentic dialectic."[389]

Maddox attempts to articulate Wesley's way of wrestling with the problem of "how God

is related to humanity redemptively" by demonstrating that Wesley's conviction about

---

[386] Randy L. Maddox, "Responsible Grace: The Systematic Nature of Wesley's Theology Reconsidered," *Quarterly Review* 6, no.1 (Spring 1986): 24-34.

[387] Maddox, "Responsible Grace," 29. In his following book, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingwood Books, 1994), Maddox offers an extensive study on Wesley's distinctive theological reflection as "a model of practical-theological activity," which was formulated with a critical awareness of experience as one of the crucial sources of theology. He shows how the notion of responsible grace as the "orienting concept" can explain Wesley's understanding of salvation and its ethical implication.

[388] Maddox, "Responsible Grace," 29.

[389] Ibid., 31.

responsible grace functions as "the orienting concept" throughout Wesley's thinking and that such conviction also was evident in his understanding of the mercy and justice of God as "criteria for determining the meaning of Scripture."[390]

Building upon this notion of "responsible grace" in Maddox's argument, Moore insightfully furthers the discussion of the paradox of God's grace and human agency in Wesleyan theology. Focusing more on the critical issues for the contemporary world and on the prophetic character of Wesleyan thought, she discusses the term "prophetic grace" as being fundamental to the reconstruction of the Wesleyan heritage. Moore argues that the prophetic nature of God's grace is explicit and implicit in Wesleyan theology, asserting that "Wesley understood the movements of God's grace as having a prophetic character insofar as they empowered special seeing, holy living, and a full-bodied response to God's call."[391]

Moore contends that Wesleyan theology embodies "the prophetic strains" meaning "stirring visions—new ways of seeing, challenging people toward spiritual lives—holy living, and calling people to action—to particular tasks and roles."[392] Her argument is intended not to prove if Wesley was a prophet or not, but to identify Wesley's understanding of God's grace as prophetic. Moore affirms:

> John Wesley and the Wesleyan movements that flowed from his ministry have focused largely on *the fullness of God's grace as the power and source for radical living in the world*; thus, one can appropriately describe a Wesleyan theology as grounded in prophetic grace.[393]

In connection with Jesus as "a prophet" who lived and practiced his ministry with the vision of radical inclusion and the transformation of people's life, Moore emphasizes the

---

[390] Maddox, "Responsible Grace," 31.
[391] Moore, "Prophetic Grace," 210.
[392] Ibid., 216.
[393] Ibid., 216. Author's emphasis.

validity of the description of Wesleyan theology as grounded in prophetic grace "as the power and source for radical living in the world."[394] She points out that there are always patterns of human resistance to such a prophetic grace of God, which can be described as "self-absorption," "determinism," "tribalism," "competition," and "despair."[395] In Moore's view, critical awareness of such various patterns of human resistance that subvert the prophetic grace of God in our contemporary context calls for the recovery of theology of prophetic grace; such theological emphasis is the key to making a significant connection between the Wesleyan heritage and its contemporary relevance.

In particular, Moore contends that when we are stirred by the prophetic grace of Gods, we can make our commitment to "trust in the transcendent immanent God of justice"[396] and work for the well-being of the whole creation as grounded in hope. It is also important to note that in Moore's discussion, the universality of God's grace and redemptive work in Wesley's theology is highlighted in relation to the prophetic character. She claims that "to take seriously Wesley's large view of God's grace and its prophetic work is to value all God's people—all those created by God—for God is working in all peoples from the beginning to the end of their lives."[397] While Cobb highlights Wesley's openness to difference without devaluing the "others" based on the common scholarly claim regarding the centrality of love in Wesley's theology, Moore underscores the importance of understanding the prophetic character of God's grace in Wesley's theology for shaping the commitment to value all God's people.[398]

---

[394] Moore, "Prophetic Grace," 216.
[395] Ibid., 210-215.
[396] Ibid., 217.
[397] Ibid., 221.
[398] Ibid.

Faced with the various forms of injustices in our contemporary context, theologies of prophetic grace "which deconstruct theories of human passivity and hopelessness"[399] and empower people to become active agents for God's prophetic work are needed more than ever. Today, the proclamation of God's prophetic grace in Wesleyan theology needs to be reconstructed in order to promote the work of justice and compassion. As in Moore's concluding words, "the most fundamental challenge is to open ourselves to the prophetic grace of God and the commitments it will stir in us."[400]

4.6. Concluding Remarks

Based on this chapter's exploration on the significance of agency in early Methodism, I highlight three further points on establishing the sense of agency for the work of justice and compassion today. First, it is important to seek the emotional authenticity and self-improvement for establishing the sense of agency in the quest for justice motivated by compassion. The emotion of compassion as a constituent part of the agency for the work of justice is to be cultivated, and an agent's integrity and authenticity should engender the ethical responsibility for others. Second, the inner and outer dimensions are to be integrated in cultivating a sense of agency in faith. The process of establishing a sense of agency involves not only transforming the consciousness, attitude, emotion, and action of the whole being but also participating in the work for improving the social reality with Christian love. Third, to become an agent is to take up the ethical responsibility to implement the prophetic vision through the works of justice out of compassion, receiving the gift of the divine grace that empowers us to be an agent—not

---

[399] Moore, "Prophetic Grace," 223.
[400] Ibid.

one that compels us to surrender. To establish a sense of agency means developing self-esteem as an active agent for God's saving work for all human beings but excludes the possibility of boasting in the encounter with the *others.*

The next chapter will search for a pedagogical approach aimed at enabling both learners and teachers to fashion their faithful way of being in the pursuit of justice out of compassion establishing a sense of agency. To reframe the vision of education as *a process of living* and *a humanist and liberating praxis* toward enhancing justice out of compassion, the chapter will explore Paulo Freire's pedagogical proposal as critical, dialogical, and praxis-oriented. Then, it will examine Thomas Groome's shared Christian praxis approach, which is significantly influenced by Freire's thought on the liberatory education, focusing on the potential of shared Christian praxis as a pedagogy of justice out of compassion in the Christian faith.

Chapter 5

Toward a Pedagogy of Justice out of Compassion

5.1. Introduction

In the previous chapters, it has been my contention that the main concern of Christian living in our social, political, and cultural reality should be to address the problems of inequality and injustice and, therefore, the pursuit of justice out of compassion should be the central criterion of Christian living. In Chapter 1, I investigated the socio-cultural hindrances to education for justice in the Christian faith to promote critical consciousness out of compassion. Then, in the following three chapters, I explored the issues that are contrasted with three tendencies in both the utilitarian and the deontological approaches to justice, which can be referred to as impartiality, undue rationality, and impersonal principles. In Chapter 2, I discussed *justice and partiality*, exploring the liberating theological exploration of God and its ethical implication for Christian living in the pursuit of justice out of compassion. In Chapter 3, I presented an exploration of *justice and emotion,* aiming at finding the potential of compassionate anger as a constructive power in the Christian ethical response to social injustice. In Chapter 4, I explored *justice and agency*, retrieving the distinctive understanding of agency in early Methodism, especially in the work of John Wesley, for the contemporary context.

These discussions have led me to the conviction that the role of education is crucial for establishing a more just world, and that there is a pressing need for a pedagogical approach that advances justice out of compassion as it is prompted by the Christian faith. Facing the various forms of injustice that urgently demand our attention,

we should recover the meaning of "education as leading out into a more just social reality, a better world."[401] To address this very need, in this chapter I search for an educational approach as a humanistic and liberating praxis to enhance justice. In this search, I am guided by Paulo Freire's educational philosophy and Thomas Groome's approach of shared Christian praxis.

The section on Freire's approach comprises three parts:1) the ways in which Freire's thought is echoed in John Dewey, 2) Freire's proposal for problem-posing education, and 3) the significant implications of Freire's approach for Christian religious education. In the section that then follows, I examine Groome's approach of shared Christian praxis, focusing on its potential for education for justice in the Christian faith. Finally, I adopt Groome's approach to propose an example of my pedagogical plan.

5.2. Paulo Freire' Pedagogical Approach: Education as a Humanist and Liberating Praxis

Paulo Freire (1921-1997), a Brazilian educator, was "one of the first internationally recognized educational thinkers who fully appreciated the relationship among education, politics, imperialism, and liberation."[402] After nearly two decades of teaching adult illiterates in the rural area of Brazil to help the poor learn *the word and the world* and obtain *literacy and dignity*, Freire published his paradigm-shifting book, *Pedagogia do Oprimido* in1968.[403]After that, he continued to develop his thought by

---

[401] Elizabeth Mary Moore, *Teaching from the Heart: Theology and Educational Method* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 164. Moore explains that this meaning is suggested by the Latin root of the word education, *ducere.*

[402] Peter McLaren, "A Pedagogy of Possibility: Reflecting Upon Paulo Freire's Politics of Education," *Educational Researcher* 28, no.2 (March, 1999), 49.

[403] This book was first published in Portuguese in 1968, and it was translated into English by Myra Bergman Ramos and published as *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1970. This book has been considered one of the foundational texts for critical pedagogy, offering an enduring alternative to education as conformity.

writing and co-authoring over twenty books about the themes related to education and pedagogy. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* Freire proposed a revolutionary pedagogy by which learners come to perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and take action to change the oppressive elements of reality.

Freire's theories and practices of education were revolutionary, and a half-century later his ideas remain "viable, valuable, even vital" for our world in which there is a pressing need to "adopt a critical lens yielding loving action and liberatory awareness."[404] In particular, Freire's ideas on conscientization, as seeking to advance a new liberatory approach to teaching and learning, have contributed significantly not only to the contemporary development of critical pedagogy,[405] but also to the promotion of liberative teaching in Christian religious education.[406]

Freire's work cannot be evaluated merely in terms of the applicability of his method into a specific educational practice. It must be recognized as *a paradigm-shifting and prophetic call* to rethink what authentic education is and how education should be a vehicle to change social reality in a fundamental sense. His thought challenges us to think

---

[404] Douglas Simpson, "Is It Time to Shelve Paulo Freire?" *Journal of Thought* 43, no.1-2 (Spring-Summer, 2008), 5.

[405] The notion of critical pedagogy has been evolved in response to the historical contexts and there is no single definition of critical pedagogy. James D. Kirylo finds nine examples of definitions in contemporary educational literature, including his own description: "Critical pedagogy is an endeavor to call attention to a preferential option for the poor while simultaneously understanding that the process of schooling is an inclusionary, non-neutral enterprise, a political undertaking, and one that is developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive, celebrating differences while at the same time nurturing commonalities"(215). James D. Kirylo, "An Overview of Critical Pedagogy: A Case in Point of Freirean Inspired Teaching," *Counterpoint*, 385, *Paulo Freire: The Man from Recife* (2011): 215-216. As Kirylo points out, many different communities and various collective struggles around the world have developed and re-invented critical pedagogy, but the central characteristics inspired by Freire's thought have persisted in terms of linking education and social-political-cultural transformation to achieve liberation and justice.

[406] Elizabeth Mary Moore refers to three scholars of religious education—Thomas Groome, Maria Harris and Daniel Schipani—as those who particularly rely on Freire's philosophy of liberatory teaching. She highlights the common themes in the works of these three scholars and Freire as the liberative orientation, the emphasis on the relationship between teachers and leaners, and the unity of the methods and the goals of the education. Moore, *Teaching from the Heart,*172-174.

about how education can be an instrument for consciousness-raising which leads to the transformation of persons and society. As Peter McLaren affirms, "in essence, Freire's work is about a hope," which does not mean a "naïve faith in Utopia" but "a promising hope in the possibilities of the present."[407] The core of Freire revolutionary educational philosophy is "fearless 'prophetic' demythologizing of realties and annunciation of the possibility of new realities."[408] Motivated by his experience and critical awareness of the social contradictions in the lives of the oppressed in a particular historical reality, Freire developed his ideas by conversing with various thinkers. In the following section, I examine how particularly John Dewey's ideas are echoed in Freire's thought.[409] I suggest that such an exploration of the connection between Dewey and Freire enriches our understanding of education as an integrated process of personal and social renewal.

5.2.1. Dewey's Educational Thought Echoed in Freire

While Denis E. Collins contends that Dewey's influence on Freire was strong enough to refer to Freire as "a very focused pragmatist" and Dewey as Freire's "mentor,"[410] Joseph Betz emphasizes that Dewey and pragmatism are not explicitly listed when the major influences on Freire are mentioned. However, Betz acknowledges that many points reminiscent of Dewey appear in Freire's thought, and both Dewey and Freire

---

[407] McLaren, "A Pedagogy of Possibility," 50.

[408] Denis E. Collins, "From Oppression to Hope: Freire's Journey Toward Utopia," *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (March, 1998), 119.

[409] In Chapter 1, I drew on Dewey's educational philosophy to address a problem with the current educational orientation as not engaging the present experience and not thinking of education in terms of life-experience but just being reduced to a mere preparation to achieve future economic and social prestige. I argued that Dewey's philosophical thought of education as reconstruction of experience could be revisited as the critical resource for responding to the current problem that education is not integrated with lived experience.

[410] Collins, "From Oppression to Hope," 116-120.

were serious about the role of education in their own social context. Both Dewey and Freire, Betz recognizes, were concerned with similar problems and both of them emphasized the central role of education for social change. Betz argues, "Though Freire has been the more dramatically successful educator in increasing the feelings of self-worth of those their society deems worthless, Dewey is the better philosopher of education, and is better precisely for taking Freire's thought farther and rooting it deeper than Freire does."[411]

However, I do not find Betz's comparison of Dewey and Freire entirely valid because it can lead to misunderstanding each thinker's distinctiveness by separating their thoughts from their particular sociocultural contexts. I also do not fully support Collins' over-simplistic reference to Freire as "a very focused pragmatist," although I agree with his point about "the relevance and affinity of Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed to U.S. pragmatic and existential thinking about schools."[412] My contention is that Dewey's thought did not directly influence Freire; rather, it is echoed in Freire's work, especially on the social responsibilities of education. In other words, the Deweyan echoes are found in Freire when examining Freire's work focusing on the aim of education as derived from a new relationship between education and social change in a broader sense, not relegating Freire's pedagogy to the category of only adult literacy education. I suggest that there are three important ways that Dewey's philosophy of education is echoed in the foundation of Freire's thought: 1) on the fundamental goal of education, 2) on education and social change, and 3) on the role of teacher.

---

[411] Joseph Betz, "John Dewey and Paulo Freire," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 28, no.1 (Winter, 1992), 109.
[412] Collins, "From Oppression to Hope," 116.

First, Dewey believed that "education must be conceived as a continuing reconstruction of experience; that the process and the goal of education are one and the same thing."[413] For Dewey, "education is life," and education should consist of the constant reorganization or reconstruction of lived experience. Rejecting the notion that the content of education is external and indifferent to lived experience, Dewey called for a fundamental shift in the way we think about the subject-matter of education. He asserted that "the educational process has no end beyond itself; it is its own end" and that "the educational process is one of continual reorganizing, reconstructing, transforming."[414]

Dewey, who placed his hope in the human capacity to learn from life, was convinced that human experience became educative if it was reorganized and reconstructed effectively. Thus, Dewey considered the good habit of reflective thinking the essential element to humanizing education. Such reflective thinking, Dewey explained, proceeds as follows: 1) start with a genuine situation of experience, 2) develop a problem within such an situation as a stimulus to thought, 3) garner the information and make the observations to deal with the problem, 4) suggest solutions, and 5) test the ideas by application.[415] Dewey's claim that "education is life" and his conviction about human beings as "reflective beings" are echoed in the foundation of Freire's thought.

Second, Dewey believed that "education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform."[416] Dewey's goal of education as the reconstruction of experience

---

[413] John Dewey, *My Pedagogic Creed* (London: Forgotten Books, 2015, c1897), 13.
[414] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction of Philosophy of Education* (New York: The Free Press,1997, c1916), 50.
[415] Ibid.,163.
[416] Dewey, *My Pedagogic Creed*, 16.

entails both personal growth and social change. For Dewey, a mature democratic society

and the growth of persons are mutually supportive. In other words, since every learner is

an individual in society, the authentic growth of the individual and the progress of society

toward the democratic ideal should always be integrated in the process of education.

Dewey was convinced that "a democracy is more than a form of government; it is

primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience."[417]

Dewey's conviction about education as a process of living did not endorse the

individualistic or socialistic ideals. Instead, Dewey did contend that education should be

aligned with democratic values. Dewey writes,

> …the individual who is to be educated is a social individual and that society is an organic union of individuals. If we eliminate the social factor from the child we are left only with an abstraction; if we eliminate the individual factor from society, we are left only with an inert and lifeless mass. Education, therefore, must begin with a psychological insight into the child's capacities, interests, and habits….these powers, interest, and habits must be continually interpreted—we must know what they mean. They must be translated into terms of their social equivalents—into terms of what they are capable of in the way of social service.[418]

Recognizing no division between the individual and the social, Dewey developed

his thought on education as the foundation for a better society shaped by democratic

ideals. In other words, for Dewey, education is the determinative of whether a society

succeeds or fails to implement the ideals of democracy. The relationship between

education and social change is also the fundamental element in Freire's thought, though

Freire developed the idea with different vocabulary responding to a different historical

reality and his thought was shaped by different influences than Dewey's pragmatism.[419]

---

[417] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 87.
[418] Dewey, *My Pedagogic Creed*, 6.
[419] Indeed, Freire was more influenced by the personalism of Thomas Aquinas than by Dewey's pragmatism. I do not argue that Dewey's pragmatism should be listed as one of the philosophies by which Freire was directly influenced. My point is that Freire's thought echoes Dewey's emphasis on education for both personal and social renewal, and that when we consider Dewey and Freire together in term of the role

Freire's approach was grounded in his belief in the possibility of a new construction of reality through education; in this we can find an echo of the Deweyan pragmatic belief in experience and reflection for growth and renewal at personal and social levels.

Third, in his pedagogic creed, Dewey declares that "the teacher is engaged, not simply in the training of individuals, but in the formation of the proper social life" and "the teacher always is the prophet of the true God and the usherer in the true kingdom of God."[420] Dewey asserts that education cannot be "an affair of 'telling' and 'being told'" but, rather, it has to be "an active and constructive process." [421] He condemned "teaching by pouring in" and "learning by passive absorption."[422] Denying the dualistic divisions "between knowing and doing, theory and practice, between mind as the end and spirit of action and the body as its organ and means,"[423] Dewey calls for a transformation of the theory of knowledge toward a pragmatic knowing, which is not possible outside of experience and one's social realm. In his words, "knowledge as an act is bringing some

---

and the goal of education, we can find strong grounds to approach education as humanizing and liberating praxis. In fact, bell hooks, one of the eminent scholars of critical pedagogy in the US, developed her notion of "engaged pedagogy" that heavily relied on both Dewey and Freire. She translated Freire's term conscientization into critical awareness and engagement aligning democratic value with education inspired by Dewey. She emphasized the relationship between critical thinking and social progress (democracy) and the crucial role of educators as conveyers of democratic ideal. In hooks' thought, Freire's and Dewey's thoughts converged. For more details on hooks' pedagogy, see bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994) and *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

[420] Dewey, *My Pedagogic Creed*, 18. Dewey grew up in a religious family and his philosophical thought on religion is elaborated especially in *What I believe* (1930) and *Common Faith* (1934). Dewey's thought on religion and God is beyond the scope of this chapter, but to understand the reference of "teacher as the prophet of God" in Dewey's pedagogical creed, it needs to be noted that Dewey sought a new kind of faith with "a tendency toward action." Therefore, he proposed his notion of "common faith," which emphasized a strong ethical thrust for the social responsibility. Understanding faith as a "practical willingness to act," Dewey attempted to reconstruct the philosophy of religion, which could be harmonized with empiricism and naturalism, with his concept of common faith in parallel with his focus on democratic ideals. David Hildebrand, "John Dewey," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2018 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/dewey/. Accessed 07/29/20.

[421] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 38.
[422] Ibid.
[423] Ibid., 336.

of our dispositions to consciousness with a view to straightening out to perplexity, by conceiving the connection between ourselves and the world in which we live."[424] Thus, in Dewey's perspective, the role of teachers is completely changed from the traditional model as an authoritarian answer-giver. While we can hear some Deweyan echoes in Freire, the idea of the teacher as a question-raiser rather than an answer-giver is more radically developed in Freire's thought.

5.2.2. Freire's Proposal for Problem-Posing Education: A Critical, Dialogical, and Praxis-Oriented Approach

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire juxtaposed the dominant approach to education, which he called the "banking model," with his new proposal for "problem-posing education." His analysis always contrasts two educational concepts and practices. At the center of Freire's pedagogical approach is a philosophical vision of liberated humanity and an ethical pursuit of justice for all humanity. As Clarence W. Joldersma elaborates:

> Pedagogy as an ethical enterprise is central in Freire. For him, pedagogy ought always to bring on structural change in an oppressive society. As such at its core, pedagogy ought to be ethical in character; good pedagogy ought to be aimed at political transformation for the purpose of justice, righting the evils of oppression. And although Freire doesn't rule out political armed revolution to achieve these aims, his writings overwhelmingly suggest his desire to develop political change towards social justice by means of pedagogy…. Throughout his varied discussions on pedagogy and teaching his ultimate concern is the ethical one of ending political and social oppression.[425]

---

[424] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 344.

[425] Clarence W. Joldersma, "The Tension Between Justice and Freedom in Paulo Freire's Epistemology," *Journal of Educational Thought* 35, no.2 (2001), 131. Joldersma argues that there is a clear tension between Freire's epistemological language of freedom and his pedagogy oriented toward justice. He argues that it is problematic that Freire emphasizes "epistemological constructivism" when he wants justice to be established. Joldersma's interpretation of Freire's thought through the framework of Emmanuel Levinas, especially Levinas' notion of "alterity," seems insightful, but his basic argument for the tension between freedom and justice in Freire's thought does not seem valid. In my view, Freire's focus on liberation and freedom is a societal concern and his espousal of existentialism is not contradicted by his preference for the communal nature of freedom. It can be said that freedom of a person, for Freire, is something to be achieved in accord with a vision of social justice.

For Freire, there is no "neutral" education; instead, pedagogy should be an ethical enterprise that combines critical reflection, collective struggle, and the hope to empower people to act to change their social reality.

Freire harshly criticizes the dominant banking model of education, which begins with "a false understanding of man and woman as objects"[426] and turns students into passive "receptacles to be filled by the teacher."[427] In the banking system of education, Freire argues, education becomes "an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor."[428] Thus, the banking concept of education serves as an instrument of oppression; it controls the thinking and actions of both students and teachers. Students loses their creative power and they cannot take part in the educational process as subjects. Freire states the following about the banking model of education:

> Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the 'banking' concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. They do, it is true, have the opportunity to become collectors or cataloguers of the things they store. But in the last analysis, it is the people themselves who are filed away through the lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system. For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human.[429]

Rejecting this banking concept of education in its entirety, Freire urged educators to abandon the educational goal of "deposit-making" and to replace it with "problem-posing education" as a humanistic and liberating praxis. For Freire, there is a clear disparity between the two approaches: the banking concept of education is an instrument of

---

[426] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 2000, 30th Anniversary edition), 77.
[427] Ibid., 72.
[428] Ibid.
[429] Ibid.

oppression, and the problem-posing concept of education is an instrument for liberation. In the following, I explore the characteristics of problem-posing education[430] in five interconnected aspects: 1) its emphasis on reality, 2) its understanding of knowledge, 3) its function as raising consciousness, 4) its method as dialogical, and 5) its vision of a transformed future.

First, problem-posing education involves the constant unmasking of reality and presents the reality, which is the learner's social-cultural situation, as a problem. By contrast, banking education "directly or indirectly reinforces men's fatalistic perception of their situation."[431] Freire derived his pedagogical approach from his view on the nature of reality as dialectical. In other words, Freire understood the relationship between human beings and the world in terms of their dialectical relationship and developed his pedagogical approach accordingly. He explains:

> Education as the practice of freedom—as opposed to education as the practice of domination—denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world; it also denies that the world exists as a reality apart from people. Authentic reflection considers neither abstract man nor the world without people, but people in their relations with the world. In these relations consciousness and world are simultaneous: consciousness neither precedes the world nor follows it.[432]

---

[430] It should be noted that "problem-posing education" is distinct from "problem-solving education." Denis Goulet explains this distinction clearly in his introduction to Freire's *Education for Critical Consciousness* by referring to "problematizing" as "the antithesis of the technocrat's 'problem-solving' stance." The introduction by Denis Goulet to Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: Continuum, 2013, original print in 1974), ix.

[431] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 85. For the use of non-inclusive language, Freire was strongly criticized by women in the US when this book was first published in English. Freire stated that such criticism led him to be aware of the problem of exclusive language even when it was used without any intention to be exclusive. He realized it was "a question of ideology, ideology through language," and he emerged with a critical consciousness that led him to change his action. For a more detailed description of Freire on this episode, see William B. Kennedy, ed., "Conversation with Paulo Freire," *Religious Education* 79, no. 4 (Fall, 1984), 514-516. I am well aware of the problem with non-inclusive languages when I quote Freire.

[432] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 81.

Asserting that education should begin with the human-world relationship—because human beings do not exist apart from the world, that is, social reality—, Freire argued for demythologizing reality as the task of problem-posing education. This contrasts with banking education, which attempts to conceal "certain facts which explain the way human beings exist in the world" by mythicizing reality.[433]

Peter Roberts asserts that Freire rejects both "mechanistic objectivism," which reduces "consciousness to a mere copy of objective reality" and "solipsistic idealism," which sees "consciousness as the creator of (all) reality." [434] As Roberts points out, in Freire's view, both positions negate human agency in their own ways, and both deny "the possibility of reality being transformed through conscious human activity."[435] Freire emphasized the necessity of recognizing "a complex process of constant, multi-layered interactions between human beings and the world,"[436] and, more particularly, on seeking out contradictions in social reality. In this way, Freire attended to the fundamental contradiction between the oppressors and the oppressed.

Understanding the relationship between human beings and the world as dialectical, Freire believed that education should question reality and address problems, rather than aim at issuing answers while ignoring social reality. In Freire's thought, problem-posing education enables people to "develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves." [437] In that approach, people are awakened to "see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in

---

[433] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 83.
[434] Peter Roberts, "Knowledge, Dialogue, and Humanization: The Moral Philosophy of Paulo Freire," *Journal of Educational Thought* 32, no.2 (August, 1998), 97.
[435] Ibid.
[436] Ibid., 98.
[437] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* 83. Author's emphasis.

process, in transformation."[438] It was Freire's conviction that the ontological vocation of human beings was "not only to *be* in the world, but to *engage* in relations with the world;" thus, through educational practices of a constant unveiling the reality, human beings could/should commit to their historical vocation—humanization—to become transforming agents of their social reality.[439]

Second, the problem-posing education model is derived from Freire's distinctive epistemology that can be understood as an extension of his ideas on the relationship between human beings and reality. At the center of Freire's critique on banking education is its model of knowledge that creates "oppressive epistemological passivity in students."[440] Freire asserts, "Banking theory and practice, as immobilizing and fixating forces, fail to acknowledge men and women as historical beings; problem-posing theory and practice take the people's historicity as their starting point."[441] When education does not begin with the people's historicity, Freire contends, knowledge becomes something to be given as objective and complete, portraying the world as static and unchangeable.

In Freire's view, "Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other."[442] Authentic knowledge for Freire arises only from human praxis, not from abstract theorizing; thus, it is necessarily incomplete and is a constant process of inquiry. Therefore, the relationship between teachers and

---

[438] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 83.
[439] Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, 41. Emphasis added.
[440] Joldersma, "The Tension between Justice and Freedom in Paulo Freire's Epistemology," 132.
[441] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppresse*d, 84.
[442] Ibid., 72.

students is not one of absolutely ignorant recipients and absolutely knowledgeable givers. Rather, according to Freire,

> Teachers and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge. As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators. In this way, the presence of the oppressed in the struggle for their liberation will be what it should be: not pseudo-participation but committed involvement.[443]

Both teachers and students are the active subjects for the task of creating and recreating knowledge through the process of critically reflecting on social reality and taking actions to transform the changing and changeable reality. For Freire, the notion of active agency of knowers was crucial for the path to knowledge.

In Freire's thought, knowing is possible only through a process of praxis which means reflection and action directed at the social structures to be changed; such knowing as praxis necessarily involves transformation. Freire is neither "an epistemological absolutist" who believes that "there are no static, unchanging, truths which transcend time and place" nor is he "an epistemological relativist" who thinks that "all ideas are of equal merit."[444] For Freire, ideas are always "contextually, historically and culturally" constructed. Therefore, a reflection on "situationality" by critically analyzing the "coded situation" is crucial to constructing knowledge as a critical reading of the world to change it. In Freire's thought, knowing and doing, epistemology and ethics are united.[445]

---

[443] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 69.

[444] Peter Roberts, "Knowledge, Dialogue, and Humanization," 101.

[445] In fact, epistemology united with ethical living has a long tradition in the Eastern thought. Generally speaking, based on its epistemology, the traditional Confucianism had greatly emphasized moral cultivation of individuals. However, it lacked the social dimension in the pursuit of the "moral self." Neo-Confucianism criticized the traditional Confucian epistemology, especially its exclusive focus on the principle of inwardness and emphasized practical and social dimensions in moral formation as seeking the unity of knowledge and moral goodness. For instance, one of the most eminent Neo-Confucianism scholars in Korea, Yi Yul Gok (1536-1584), sought a paradigm shift in the epistemological system of Confucianism with a great emphasis on the practicality of knowledge, on the goodness of human nature, and on education as a process of growing into a morally mature person in everyday life. He developed his ideas attending to

Third, the problem-posing education championed by Freire strives for "the *emergence* of consciousness and critical intervention in reality," whereas the banking education "attempts to maintain the *submersion* of consciousness."[446] Emphasizing the liberating effects of critical consciousness, Freire developed his idea of "conscientization," which means "consciousness raising" or "critical consciousness," to describe the substance of his pedagogical approach as "a critical approach to reality." [447] In Freire's vision, through the process of conscientization, the oppressed becomes the subject of their own liberation, and they become able to problematize their existential situation and to apprehend such a situation as "historical reality susceptible of transformation."[448] As a "historical commitment," Freire asserts, conscientization is "the dialectization in the act of denouncing and announcing—denouncing the dehumanizing structure and announcing the structure that will humanize."[449]

---

the concrete context of Koreans, and he proposed a way of moral formation that was distinct from Chinese or Japanese Neo-Confucianism. More importantly, Yi Yul Gok distinctively formulated his educational idea with a great emphasis on uniting knowing and doing (living), which could be implemented in the social-political dimension. Yi suggested practical ways to promote the common good through educational practices. In my future endeavors, I plan to compare the views of Eastern and Western philosophical traditions on epistemology as an ethical project. My aim would be to find a way in which these traditions can enrich each other in dialogue. That work will be a continuation of my previous work: *A Religious Dimension in Moral Formation: A Comparative Study on Educational Philosophies of Yi Yul Gok and Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi*, M.Th Thesis (2000), The Graduate School of the Methodist Seminary.
For an introduction to Neo-Confucianism as "the broad renaissance of Confucian thinking," (2) see Stephen C, Angle and Justin Tiwald, *Neo-Confucianism: A Philosophical Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity, 2017). For an English source on Yi Yul Gok's thought, see Edward Y.J Chung, *The Korean Neo-Confucianism of Yi Toegye and Yi Yulgok: A Reappraisal of the Four Seven Thesis and its Practical Implications for Self-Cultivation* (New York: SUNY Press, 1995).

[446] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 81. Author's italic.

[447] The term "conscientization" is a translation from the Portuguese word, *conscientizadora*. It has been recognized as the hallmark of Freire's educational approach since it was popularized in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire did not coin the term, but he defined it in a new way by giving a special meaning to it. The term has been used to allege that Freire's pedagogical proposal was revolutionary. However, he stopped using the term after he published *Education for Critical Consciousness* in 1974. In an interview, Freire explained that he abandoned the use of this term because it caused confusion, misunderstanding, and distortion, and that it even provided grounds for wrongly accusing him of being an idealist. He, however, clarified that his discontinuing to use the term did not mean that he rejected the process of conscientization. "Conversation with Paulo Freire," ed. William B. Kenney, 513-514.

[448] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 85.

[449] Paulo Freire, "*Conscientisation" Cross Currents* 24. no.1 (Spring, 1974), 26.

In Freire's view, conscientization is "the most critical approach to reality, stripping it down so as to get to know the myths that deceive and perpetuate the dominating structure."[450] Freire contrasted this with "naïve consciousness" or "magic consciousness." According to Freire's explanation, "critical consciousness is integrated with reality; naïve consciousness superimposes itself on reality; and fanatical [magic] consciousness, whose pathological naïveté leads to the irrational, adapts to reality."[451] While naïve consciousness or magic consciousness leads learners—and teachers—to resign themselves to the impossibility of recognizing the possibilities of transformative response, critical consciousness as a process of demythologizing leads them to become "knowing subjects" who are capable of praxis to integrate with reality, overcoming "a posture of adjustment."[452] Thus, for Freire, conscientization is a liberating education and "the true act of knowing" in which critical thinking and critical action are united. Through the process of conscientization, human beings become able to "take on a role as subjects making the world, remaking the world," and to "fashion their existence out of the material that life offers them." Freire claimed, "[T]he more they are conscientised, the more they exist."[453]

For Freire, as McLaren put it, "a pedagogy of critical literacy becomes the primary vehicle for the development of critical consciousness among the poor, leading to a process of exploration and creative effort that conjoins deep personal meaning and

---

[450]Paulo Freire, "*Conscientisation*," 27.
[451] Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, 42.
[452] Ibid.
[453] Freire, "Conscientisation," 25. Freire differentiates "existing" from "living." For him, "existing" means more than mere "living," or "being in the world" because it also involves "being with the world." Freire contends that "transcending, discerning, entering into dialogue (communicating and participating) are exclusively attributes of existence." Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* 17, n.1.

common purpose."[454] In actual practice, the process of conscientization starts with investigating "generative themes" as an effort to perceive and comprehend the individual's contextual reality. Freire contended that investigating generative themes could awaken critical consciousness in learners. Revealing generative themes involves investigating what people are thinking, which can be done by their reflection on their own "situationality." Freire states, "reflection upon situationality is reflection about the very condition of existence" and it is "critical thinking by means of which people discover each other to be in a situation."[455]

Asserting that the "problem-posing education, as a humanist and liberating praxis, posits as fundamental that the people subjected to domination must fight for their emancipation,"[456] Freire again contrasts education as an instrument for liberation to the banking concept of education as an instrument of oppression in terms of creativity as constitutive of critical consciousness.

> Banking education inhibits creativity and domesticates (although it cannot completely destroy) the *intentionality* of consciousness by isolating consciousness from the world, thereby denying people their ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human. Problem-posing education bases itself on creativity and stimulates true reflection and action upon reality, thereby responding to the vocation of persons as beings who are authentic only when engaged in inquiry and creative transformation.[457]

For Freire, authentic liberation means the process of humanization—becoming more fully human—and it cannot be "another deposit to be made in men."[458] Rejecting the dichotomization between reflection and action, Freire believed that liberation could be attained when an authentic form of thought and action as praxis was established.

---

[454] McLaren, "A Pedagogy of Possibility," 50.
[455] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 109.
[456] Ibid., 86.
[457] Ibid., 83-84. Author's emphasis.
[458] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 79

Fourth, Freire's problem-posing education regards dialogue as indispensable to the process of conscientization, whereas banking education resists dialogue. Freire asserts, "Only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking."[459] In Freire's view, the pursuit of liberation and humanization is not an individualistic or isolated activity. Rather, it is to be achieved through dialogue, creating a transformed social reality as well as recreating the persons. As Roberts points out, in Freire's thought, "Praxis and dialogue are closely related: genuine dialogue represents a form of humanizing praxis."[460] Dialogue is, according to Freire, "the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world" and it is "an existential necessity" for education.[461] The dialogical element is crucial for the "decoding" process which means the critical analysis of a concrete existential "coded" situation. Thus, in Freire's thought, "Dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person's 'depositing' ideas in another, nor can it become a simple exchange of ideas to be 'consumed' by the discussants."[462] Rather, "it is an act of creation, it must not serve as a crafty instrument for the domination of one person by another."[463]

Freire's emphasis on dialogue as the only way of communication in humanizing education relies heavily on Karl Jasper's thought that "dialogue creates critical attitude" that can be nourished by "love, humility, hope, faith, and trust."[464] Freire distinctively

---

[459] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 92.
[460] Roberts, "Knowledge, Dialogue, and Humanizaton," 106.
[461] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 88.
[462] Ibid. 89.
[463] Ibid.
[464] Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, 42. Karl Jaspers' philosophy is one of the major influences on Freire. In particular, Freire seems to rely heavily on Jaspers' later thought when he developed his idea on dialogue, making a clear distinction between "communicate" and "communiqués" (42-43). Jaspers sought to overcome "the antinomies (reason/experience; theory/praxis; transcendence/immanence; pure reason/practical reason)" and to incorporate "all aspects (cognitive, practical and sensory) of human life in an encompassing account of rational and experiential existence." Jaspers was convinced that "the content of

162

emphasizes the necessity of love for dialogue—love for the world, love for life, and love for people.

> Dialogue cannot exist, however, in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people. The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused with love. Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself…love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is commitment to others. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause—the cause of liberation. And this commitment, because it is loving, is dialogical. As an act of bravery, love cannot be sentimental; as an act of freedom, it must not serve as a pretext for manipulation. It must generate other acts of freedom; otherwise, it is not love. Only by abolishing the situation of oppression is it possible to restore the love which that situation made impossible. If I do not love the world—if I do not love life—if I do not love people—I cannot enter into dialogue.[465]

For Freire, a true dialogue as humanizing praxis is motivated by love and such a dialogue cannot exist without engaging in critical thinking. McLaren states that for Freire, love is "the most crucial characteristic of dialogue and the constitutive force animating all pedagogies of liberation."[466]

Fifth, problem-posing education is "revolutionary futurity," accepting "neither a 'well-behaved' present nor a predetermined future," and hence, it is prophetic and hopeful, whereas banking education becomes reactionary with its method of emphasizing permanence.[467] Freire was convinced that the historical and cultural world should be recognized as a transformable reality and people's historicity should be the starting point

---

thought must reside in experience and decision" and "experience and committed actions are formative of authentic knowledge." In his earlier work, Jaspers put a great emphasis on the "construction of interiority" of individuals as engaging in "open existential communication," but in his later writings, he attached greater importance to "the social collective conditions of human integrity," shifting to the term "shared humanity" from "*existenz*." Heightening the ethical and political dimension of human life, Jaspers'later work was devoted to "an inquiry into the politics of humanism," which was more than "a turn toward humanist reflection" of individuals. Freire seems to be more influenced by Jaspers' later thought with its focus on "shared participation in dialogue" as "the condition of human authenticity." For more details regarding how Jaspers' thought evolved, see Thornhill, Chris and Miron, Ronny, "Karl Jaspers," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2020 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/jaspers/. Accessed 07/26/20.
[465] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 89.
[466] Peter McLaren, "A Pedagogy of Possibility," 53.
[467] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 84.

for their liberating education. Thus, in his view, a neutral education is impossible; instead, education must be a revolutionary, dialogical, and humanizing act.

As Denis Goulet observes, Freire's utopianism is "no idealistic dream spun out of a mind ideologically enamored of dialogue or of critical consciousness," because his utopian vision grew out of "his practical involvement with oppressed groups in a process of struggle."[468] Freire did not advocate for a naïve faith in the utopian to transcend the reality. Freire asserts:

> For me, utopian does not mean something unrealizable, nor is it idealism. Utopia is the dialectisation in the acts of denouncing and announcing—denouncing the dehumanizing structure and announcing the structure that will humanize. Hence it is also a historical commitment. A utopia supposes that we know critically. It is an act of knowledge. [469]

For Freire, critical consciousness is not something to attain as an objective or fixed state of mind, but it is a way of being in the world and with the world—intervening in a passive acceptance of reality with a very *real* utopian vision. As McLaren describes, the ethical imperatives in Freire's educational thought do not mark "a naïve utopian faith in the future; rather they presage a form of active, irreverent and uncompromising hope in the possibilities of the present."[470]

Freire roots his idea of problem-posing education in the awareness of the incompleteness of both human beings and reality and the possibility of transformation. It affirms that men and women are "beings in the process of becoming[471]—as unfinished,

---

[468] Denis Goulet's introduction to *Education for Critical Consciousness*, xiii.
[469] Freire, "Conscientisation, 26.
[470] McLaren, *Pedagogy of Possibility*, 52.
[471] The notion of "becoming" offers a key to Moore's discussion on the relationship between process theology and "conscientizing method as liberative teaching." Finding many inherent commonalities between process theology and the various developments of liberation theology, Moore attempts to make a significant connection between process theology and conscientization. She explores the emphases in both on the process of becoming, on human freedom, on the vitality of human participation in transforming the world, on the concern for the future, and more. She also shows how the conscientizing method and process theology can be extended or reformed in dialogue with each other. Moore argues that being reformed by

incomplete beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality."[472] It also ensures that "the

unfinished character of human beings and the transformational character of reality

necessitate that education as humanist and liberating praxis be an ongoing activity" to

bring about a more just and humane social structure.[473]

5.2.3. Freire's Thought and Christian Religious Education

Although Freire's work focused primarily on general education, his concern for a

commitment to the prophetic church and its educational role in society, along with his

educational philosophy, has significantly challenged the Christin religious educators.

Freire's thought was greatly influenced by liberation theology as well as by his own

deeply Christian faith, and his praxis-oriented approach to education has extensively

influenced the Christian religious education, especially in terms of promoting critical

consciousness through education in faith. Basically, Freirean insight affirms that the task

of Christian education is to be understood in its historical context and to be oriented

toward liberation and humanization. According to Freire:

> We cannot discuss churches, education or the role of the churches in education other than
> historically. Churches are not abstract entities; they are institutions involved in history.
> Therefore, to understand their educational role we must take into consideration the
> concrete situation in which they exist. The moment these statements are taken seriously,
> we can no longer speak of the neutrality of the churches or the neutrality of education."[474]

In contrast to both "the traditionalist churches," which encourage the oppressed social

classes to view the world as evil, and "the modernizing churches" which focus on

---

the process theology, conscientizing education can extend its attention to the nonhuman natural world and
the educational method of conscientization can challenge the process theology "to engage in structural
analysis in order to critique and re-form society" (179). For more details, see Mary Elizabeth Moore,
Teaching from the Heart: Theology and Educational Method (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 163-195.
[472] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 84.
[473] Ibid.
[474] Paulo Freire, "Education, Liberation and the Church," *Religious Education* 79, no. 4 (Fall, 1984), 524.

peripheral changes pleading "the case of neo-capitalistic measures," [475] Freire declared

that churches should be prophetic to make a real change of social-political reality. In

Freire's view, such prophetic churches reject "all static forms of thought,"[476] analyze

social structures, announce the radical transformation into a new reality, and ensure their

educational role for social transformation. Freire calls for a fundamental shift in the way

of educating in the Christian faith to make it emancipatory for people and for their

society. He challenges educators to think of education in Christian faith as "an instrument

of transforming action" and "as a political praxis at the service of permanent human

liberation."[477]

In a more specific sense, Freire's insight is vitally important for contemporary

religious educators to revisit and build on in "the contextual specificity of today's

sociopolitical context with its traumatizing inequalities."[478] Freire's educational thought

has stimulated Christian religious education with its insistence on affirming the necessity

of problematizing education to enable learners to critically reflect on the forms of

injustice and to act for establishing justice. It has challenged Christian religious education

to involve "demythologizing praxis," aiming at establishing the agency for the work of

justice out of compassion. Freire criticized the passive understanding of the causality of

reality and its negative effects:

> How could we make God responsible for this calamity? As if Absolute Love could
> abandon man to constant victimization and total destitution. That would be a God as
> described by Marx. Whenever men make God responsible for intolerable situations, or
> for oppression, then the dominating structures help to popularize that myth. If God is not
> the cause, they whisper, then destiny must be. Human reason at this level easily becomes
> fatalistic; it sits back and sighs: 'Nothing can be done about it.' Sometimes another
> scapegoat is found, and it too is a myth spread by the dominating structure: the

---

[475] Freire, "Education, Liberation and the Church," 532-544.
[476] Ibid., 542.
[477] Ibid., 545.
[478] McLaren, "Pedagogy of Possibility," 51.

helplessness of the oppressed. The dominated mind looks inward and decides that it is totally unable to cope with its misery: it concludes that it is impotent.[479]

Overcoming passivity and naïveness as boosters of "other-worldly values" in explaining the causality of the world of suffering and oppression, Christian religious education should employ a critical, dialogical, and praxis-oriented pedagogy to enable learners to "read" the world with a critical consciousness and engage in the process of recreating the world as transforming agents.

Recognizing the vital significance of Freire's thought about education for our historical context, in the next section, I explore Thomas Groome's approach of shared Christian praxis, which is significantly indebted to Freire's work. According to Moore, "Thomas Groome has taken the work of Paulo Freire very seriously, as well as the work of critical theorists in general, and he has offered a clear liberation method to religious education."[480] Groome's approach has been foundational in Christian religious educational practices in various contexts—being embraced by many different cultures and around the world—, and it has great potential for education for justice. Its powerful impact on the field of Christian religious education is not limited to applying his

---

[479] Freire, "Conscientization," 29.

[480] Mary Elizabeth Moore, *Teaching from the Heart,* 172. Different from Moore's evaluation, Don S. Browning emphasized more on the interpretative character of Groome's approach and categorizes Groome's Shared Christian Praxis approach as the exemplar of "the interpretation approach" rather than "the liberation approach." Browning compares Groome's approach to his own model of theological reflection, which he calls "a fundamental practical theology." He finds the following similarities between his model and Groome's approach: both methods are hermeneutical in the Gadamerian sense of the term; both views of education assume "a revised correlational model of theology" by putting a strong emphasis on praxis; and both approaches champion "a critical moment" in their educational theory with a great emphasis on critical reflection. Through such a comparison, Browning attempts to show how both contribute to developing a "practical theological approach" to Christian education following a "practice-theory-practice model." Don S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press,1996), 217-220. Browning's emphasis on the interpretative character of Groome's approach is valid. In my view, however, the liberatory character of Groome's approach influenced by the Freirean ideas needs greater recognition. I give more support to Moore's categorization of Groome's approach as "liberatory."

approach as a method for a specific educational situation. It has promoted a paradigm

shift in religious educational practices and other ministerial areas orienting their

fundamental direction toward a new vision—the reign of God.

5.3. Thomas Groome's Shared Christian Praxis Approach[481]

Drawing on a wide range of philosophical thought, social and educational

theories, and theologies, Groome proposed a pedagogical approach of "the way of shared

praxis," which means "a reflection on life and on the 'wisdom of ages' in dialogue with

others."[482] Groome called his pedagogical methodology "shared Christian praxis" which

is guided by the emancipatory interest of "the Reign of God."[483] For Groome, the Reign

of God as "the metapurpose" for his approach is the symbol that provides "the ultimate

hermeneutical principle for what to teach from the tradition, the primary guideline for

how to teach it, and the direction of its politics."[484] In Groome's thought, it is the very

vision of Jesus for justice and compassion that demands a pedagogy to inform, form, and

transform the whole person and their society for shaping their identity and agency as

"historical agents of God's reign."[485] Grounded in the understanding of the nature of

---

[481] Hereafter I use the abbreviation SCPA for "shared Christian praxis approach."
[482] Thomas Groome, *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998), 149.
[483] In Chapter 2, I discussed the Reign of God as the central theme in Jesus' teaching and ministry to entail the vision of a transformed social as well as personal reality in the midst of life. I explored it as the vision for justice out of compassion to be actualized for all humanity through human cooperation for the work of liberating God as compassionate with passion for justice. I find my understanding of the vision agreeing with Groome's naming the Reign of God as "God's will as fullness of life for all." Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 16.
[484] Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 14.
[485] Ibid.,17.

Christian faith in terms of its liberating possibilities and social responsibilities, Groome developed an approach to educating in "a faith that does justice."[486]

5.3.1. An Overview of Shared Christian Praxis

SCPA is, as Groome clarifies, not simply "a teaching method in the typical sense of the term;" rather, it is "a meta-approach to education in Christian faith and pastoral ministry."[487] It is "a life to Faith to life approach" that aims at Christian "conation"[488] for Christian living as "agent-subjects in right relationship with God, self, other people, and all creation."[489] Groome offers a dense description of his approach:

> "[S]hared Christian praxis" is a participative and dialogical pedagogy in which people reflect critically on their own historical agency in time and place and on their sociocultural reality, have access together to Christian Story/Vision, and personally appropriate it in community with the creative intent of renewed praxis in Christian faith toward God's reign for all creation.[490]

This approach seeks a real resonance between faith and people's own lives in a concrete historical context. Contrary to separating faith from life, SCPA integrates faith and life into living faith, and renews Christian praxis in a very practical way.

SCPA as a "life to Faith to life" approach is grounded in Groome's re-visioned epistemology, which he calls an "epistemic ontology." Being convinced that epistemology and ontology, that is, knowing and being, should be united in the

---

[486] Groome, *Will There Be Faith*, 145.
[487] Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 2.
[488] This term "conation" can be understood as an alternative to "knowledge" in Groome's work. Groome considers that the word knowledge cannot capture the full meaning of the intended learning outcome in his approach, which is far more than cognitivist. Accordingly, Groome presents conation as an alternative notion to knowledge which reflects "the holistic intent of a knowing/desiring/doing that engages and shapes the whole 'being' of people as "agent-subjects in the world." Groome considers conation, which implies the multi-dimensional aspects of knowing as being (or becoming), including "consciousness, desire, will, and action," as "an approximate synonym with the word wisdom which is more resonant with Christian tradition." Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 29-31.
[489] Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 13.
[490] Ibid., 135.

philosophical foundations of Christian religious education, Groome developed his notion of epistemic ontology to reflect "the educator's interest in enabling people to attend to the consciousness that arises from their whole 'being' as agent-subjects-in-relationship." [491] For Groome, "knowing" cannot be restricted to a narrow rationalistic definition; rather, it refers to "total engagement of the whole being" and favors the "principle of 'care' in relationship rather than individual right based on rational certainty."[492]

To better understand Groome's approach based on an epistemic ontology—a way of knowing that shapes people's being— it is important to recognize that Groome prefers the term "praxis" to "experience." He does so because "praxis" highlights "the personal agency and activity of the knower."[493] Groome reconstructs the meaning of praxis in a comprehensive way. He expands the notion of praxis from Aristotle's distinction of three lives: the contemplative/speculative life(*theoria*), the practical life(*praxis*), and the productive life of creativity(*poiesis*). In Groome's words:

> In gist, I am proposing the term *praxis*, albeit redefined, as the most capable of subsuming the activities and carrying the combined meanings that Aristotle assigned to the three separate "lives" Thus, praxis can be viewed and pedagogically engaged from three perspectives: it has active, reflective, and creative aspects. They overlap and unite as one in the existential life of agent-subjects in the world.[494]

When he refers to people's praxis instead of experience, Groome intends to include all three of Aristotle's dimensions of life—the reflective, active, and creative. In other words, Groome subsumes *theoria* and *poiesis* into his understanding of *praxis*. Thus,

---

[491] Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 8.

[492] Groome indicates that he is significantly indebted to feminist epistemology in term of criticizing the traditional epistemology, which is narrowly dependent on rationality and proposing an alternative with recognition of experience as an epistemological source with the ethical basis for responsibility and care. Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 82-84.

[493] Thomas Groome, *Will There Be Faith*: *A New Vision for Educating and Growing Disciples* (New York: HarperOne, 2011), 279.

[494] Groome, *Will There Be Faith*,136.

Groome's pedagogy is crafted by combining all three activities of *theoria, praxis,* and

poiesis in "a symbiotic unity."[495] With his reconstructed notion of praxis, Groome

elaborates that a conative pedagogy of Christian faith encouraged by such epistemology

ensues as follows:

> When the three are reformulated and combined in a conative pedagogy of Christian faith, the 'theoretical' dimension is reflected in at least three ways: by contemplative activity to discern God's self-disclosure in present reality; by critical reasoning on people's own 'being' in time and place and on the meaning of the Christian faith for the present; and by a narrative activity that goes beyond Aristotle's dehistoricized notion of theoria and makes accessible the practical wisdom from God's revelation to this community over time—Christian 'Story.' The pedagogy is 'practical' in that it arises from, engages, and intends to shape people's 'being' in time and place, and thus has a dynamic suited to conation in Christian faith. The 'creative' dimension is honored by attending to people's historical visions and to the Vision of God's reign by enlivening their imaginations and empowering their wills to be co-creators of it now.[496]

Another important point for understanding Groome's approach is that he uses the

term "shared" instead of "correlated." His use of the "shared" arose from his attempt to

find a stronger word than "correlated" for better describing his approach as integrating

life and faith into "lived, living, life-giving faith." According to Groome, the word

"shared" has a twofold meaning:

> The "shared" component of this approach points to two constitutive aspects of the process: (1) the communal dynamics that are to take place within a teaching/learning event; (2) the kind of dialogue and dialectic it encourages between participant's present praxis (stories/visions) and Christian Story/Vision. The former is a dynamic of partnership, participation, and dialogue. The latter is a two-way "dialectical hermeneutics" in which participants' praxis and community Story/Vision are placed in dialogue and dialectic to encourage appropriation and decision for lived Christian faith.[497]

By using the word "shared," Groome emphasizes that the aim of his approach is to

integrate people's life and faith into a lived faith in a dialectical way, beyond simply

"correlating" existential questions and theological answers. According to Groome, SCPA

---

[495] Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 48.
[496] Ibid.
[497] Ibid.,143.

has four characteristics: "(1) it is a 'natural' approach for which people have a ready disposition; (2) it is likely to educate for a 'public church';(3) it is an instance of a broad-based pastoral movement to honor people as agent-subjects of their faith; (4) it is an 'inculturation' approach that can place 'the gospel' and 'the culture' in dialogue for their mutual enrichment."[498]

5.3.2. Movements to Enact SCPA

Groome suggested "a focusing activity" and five pedagogical "movements" to enact SCPA: 1) Naming/Expressing "Present Praxis," 2) Critical Reflection on Present Praxis, 3) Making Accessible Christian Story and Vision, 4) Dialectical Hermeneutic to Appropriate Christian Story/Vision to participants' stories and visions, and 5) Decision/Response for lived Christian Faith.[499] By using the term "movements" Groome emphasizes that there is room for the flexibility of the process and that variation is welcome in the sequence of the movements.[500] He explains, "The movements of shared praxis are dynamic activities and intentions to be consistently honored over time rather than 'steps' in a lockstep procedure."[501] The following is an overview of each movement.

The Focusing Activity is to establish "a focus for the curriculum"[502] by helping participants attend to their own "being" in their own contexts and to their present praxis. Engaging the participants "with shared focus in a generative theme for the

---

[498] Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 148.
[499] These follow Groome's expression in *Sharing Faith*, 146-148. Groome offers more "user-friendly" descriptions of each movement in *Will There Be Faith,* 304-337.
[500] Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 279.
[501] Ibid., 279.
[502] Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 146. Groome indicates that his "focusing activity" is close to Freire's "generative themes" and Sophia Cavalletti's notion of "linking point" in her Montessori approach (156). For understanding Cavalletti's thought, see Sophia Cavalletti, *The Religious Potential of the Child* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983).

teaching/learning event," this activity should present participants "a shared sense of the curriculum" by having them recognize the theme in their life or faith.[503] It intends to establish the theme of the occasion as something of real interest and relevance to people's lives in the world—their own praxis.

Movement 1: Naming/Expressing "Present Praxis" invites participants to express themselves in response to the generative theme as they encounter it in their own present lives or in their sociocultural context.[504] The movement of naming/expressing the participants' or society's "present praxis" aims at helping participants to "bring their conscious and historical engagement with a generative theme to expression—an aspect of their present praxis."[505]

Movement 2: Critical Reflection on Present Praxis invites the participants to critically reflect on the present praxis which they named and expressed in Movement 1. It focuses on enabling participants "to deepen the reflective moment and bring participants to a critical consciousness of present praxis: its reasons, interests, assumptions, prejudices, and ideologies (reason); its sociohistorical and biographical sources (memory); its intended, likely, and preferred consequences (imagination)."[506] This movement includes three central elements of critical reflection in this movement: 1) critical and social reasoning constituted by "an emancipatory interest," 2) critical/creative hermeneutics of present praxis, and 3) participants' sharing their own "stories and visions" in dialogue.[507]

---

[503] Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 146.
[504] Groome, *Will There Be Faith*, 309.
[505] Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 175.
[506] Ibid., 147.
[507] Ibid.,188-193.

Movement 3: Making Accessible the Christian Story and Vision [508] is aimed at

making accessible expressions of Christian Story and Vision "as appropriate to the

generative theme or symbol of the learning event."[509] The access should be presented in

persuasive and meaningful ways around themes that are relevant to people's lives. It is

important for educators to employ three hermeneutics in discerning what to access from

the Christin Story/Vision—hermeneutics of retrieval, hermeneutics of suspicion, and

hermeneutics of creative commitment to the text—to give the learners to access the

Christian Story/Vision of the blooming of God's reign in the world as appropriate to the

generative theme.

*Movement 4: Dialectical Hermeneutic to Appropriate Story/Vision to

Participants' Stories and Visions* invites participants to place "their critical understanding

of present praxis around a generative theme or symbol (Movement 1and 2) in dialectical

hermeneutics with the Christian Story/Vision (Movement 3).[510] This allows people to

discern what to embrace for their lives and to take to heart. This dialectical activity is to

have participants become agents-subjects who critically and actively appropriate the

meanings of the teaching and the wisdom of the Christian Faith for their own lives and

contexts.

Movement 5: Decision and Response for Renewed Christian Praxis provides

participants with opportunities for making decisions about how to live out the wisdom of

Christian faith in their everyday life. The decisions that are made for renewed praxis

---

[508] Groom capitalizes the terms "Story and Vision" when he mentions them as in Christian Story/Vision to emphasize "their primordial and normative status apropos of our own story and vision." Groome, *Will There Be Faith,* 291.

[509] Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 147.

[510] Ibid., 249. Groome explains movement four of shared praxis as "analogous to Lonergan's notion of judgement, to Piaget's equilibration between assimilation and accommodation, and to Gadamer's 'fusion of horizons' with the intent of practical wisdom" (251).

could be cognitive, affective, or behavioral, but they are most likely a combination of all those dimensions at the personal and sociopolitical levels. This activity is to enable participants "to make historical choices about the praxis of Christian faith in the world," and those decisions, either about "what to do" or about "who to become" can be considered appropriate when they are creative of the vision of the Reign of God.[511]

Proceeding through the focusing activity and the five movements is an educational process of *learning from* or *becoming* that reaches beyond *learning about.* Various pedagogical approaches can be used to facilitate each movement, and the way to fulfill the task of each movement can be designed according to the unique characters of the learning group and each historical situation. However, such creative use of methodologies and flexible design should always serve the fundamental goal of this approach. In SCPA, life and faith—people's present praxis and the Christian Story/Vision—are to be integrated; thus, educating in faith means an integrated process to *inform, form, and transform* in faith by attending to the participants' whole being in a particular time and place.

5.3.3 The Potential of Groome's Approach for Education for Justice

The aim of SCPA is to enable people "to decide on the praxis of a faith that does justice."[512] It invites people to attend to their own historical reality and to be guided by the vision for justice and compassion of the Reign of God. Both in its content and in its process, SCPA seeks to facilitate an integrating interaction between people's present praxis and the Christin Story/Vision to engender a work of justice out of compassion for

---

[511] Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 148.
[512] Groome, *Will There Be Faith,* 145.

the flourishing of all humanity. In a further sense, I understand that SCPA is not to provide *right answers* based on dogmatic teachings that one cannot question. Rather it is to teach how to ask *right questions* that one cannot answer apart from their own existential contexts. I believe, by implementing SCPA into actual settings of education for justice, educators can enable learners to approach justice as *care* for others and as *openness* to others, guided by the vision of the Reign of God through "the way of shared praxis."

In a more specific sense, the potential of SCPA for education for justice is that SCPA places a significant emphasis on critical reflection because, in my view, without critical reflection on life, educating in faith cannot contribute to educating for justice. I believe that a pedagogical approach to the issue of justice must be shaped by focusing on how to reduce injustice and enhance justice in a practical sense rather than questioning what justice is in a transcendental sense. Thus, critical reflection on the present reality should be central to a pedagogical approach to justice. Only when the reality of injustice is critically reflected on can justice and compassion be integral to each other and can compassion-driven justice be pursued. I understand that the critical reflection promoted by SCPA involves attentiveness to the reality of suffering, awareness of unjust realities, and willingness to advance justice. It is not just an activity of objective rationality, but it is deeply intertwined with the emotional dimension and determined by the person's socio-cultural context.

Another potential I find in SCPA for education for justice is related to establishing the agency for the work of justice out of compassion. SCPA does not separate theoretical knowing from historical responsibility, but it does integrate personal

renewal and social transformation. It also encourages educators to engage learners' whole being as "agent-subjects-in relationship" to seek the common good[513] grounded in the vision of the Reign of God. It is clear that SCPA is a pedagogical approach that leads learners to recognize and address social conditions that engender unjust suffering, to have a capacity for discernment through the way of shared praxis between life and faith, and to take critical action to enhance a compassion-based—rather than right answer-based—pursuit of justice in the Christian faith.

5.4. An Example: Adopting Shared Christian Praxis Approach

In this section, I outline an educational lesson plan for adults implementing SPCA. The theme for the lesson is anger in a Christian way of living. In Chapter 3, I explored the issue of anger in the Christian faith searching for a possibility of compassionate anger. Examining the complexity of the issue, I discussed that anger can be an assertion of compassion and concern for human dignity in the face of the reality of social injustice; it can be constructive power when one moves toward transformative actions, not dwelling in anger that is negative and destructive. Based on such an

---

[513] Here, it is worth considering Mary Elizabeth Moore's proposal for "teaching as sacramental act." Mary Elizabeth Moore, *Teaching as a Sacramental Act* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2004). Moore points out that in our contemporary world, despair comes from "people's willingness to settle for lesser goods, especially the goods sought by comparing and acquiring rather than communing and sharing." Therefore, she proposes "teaching as sacramental act" which means "teaching by way of the sacraments," to encourage people to seek "the Good" (13). Moore describes six types of teaching as sacramental acts: 1) teaching act of expecting the unexpected, 2) teaching act of remembering the disremembered, 3) teaching act of seeking reversals, 4) teaching act of giving thanks, 5) teaching act of nourishing new life, and 6) teaching act of reconstructing community and repairing the world. Each teaching act can be practiced separately in a particular context. However, Moore argues that these six acts should be integrated in the sacramental teaching as whole; they should be oriented toward reconstruction and repairing the world to actualize God's prophetic call in the world as well as church. Teaching as the sacramental acts that Moore proposed has a clear potential to education for justice. In particular, the sacramental teaching act of "seeking reversals" (91-120) is significant as it is the act of critical reflection. It poses questions that stir people's thought and life in their own context of struggle toward hope of transformation. For more, see Mary Elizabeth Moore, *Teaching as a Sacramental Act* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2004).

exploration, I propose a pedagogical plan adopting SCPA. This is an experimental

approach which attempts to verify the practicability of my academic exploration and the

applicability of SCPA to an actual educational setting.

The educational intent is to enable learners to reflect on their lives and on the

Christian Story/Vision in dialogue with others around this theme through "the way of

shared praxis" as developed in Groome's approach. It is important for the educator, as "a

question poser" rather than an "answer person,"[514] to facilitate each movement by

presenting well-constructed questions that are devised to convey the specific intent of

each movement.

❖ **Theme**: On Anger in the Christian Way of Life
   Reflecting on the complexity of the issue of anger—as the destructive power that
   ruins relationships and as the resisting power of injustice— and searching for the
   possibility of *compassionate anger,* which reflects critical consciousness of social
   injustice, so as to actualize the Christian vision of the Reign of God.

   ➢ **Focusing Activity**
      A possible activity: Presenting and examining various scenes from different
      genres of movies on anger to draw the learners' attention to the complexities
      of the emotion of anger.
      Ex)
      • *Anger Management* (2003)[515]— anger as an issue in ordinary life
      • *The Departed* (2006)[516]— anger at betrayals that leads to revenge
      • *Hotel Rwanda* (2004)[517]— anger toward different ethnic group that leads
        to the tragic genocide and lack of compassionate anger toward the
        injustice

---

[514] Groome, *Sharing Faith*, 182.
[515] *Anger Management*, directed by Peter Segal. Columbia Pictures, 2003.
[516] *The Departed*, directed by Martin Scorsese. Warner Brothers. 2006.
[517] *Hotel Rwanda*, directed by Terry George. MGM Distribution Co., 2004.

❖ **Movement One: Invite learners to name/express their present praxis around the theme**
  ➢ Start by talking about the movie clips
    ▪ Possible questions:
      • How do you characterize the expressions of anger in each clip?
      • How and to what extent are the experiences of the characters in the film resonant with your own experience?
  ➢ Help learners discover/express their own life experiences regarding the topic of how anger affects their Christian ethical life, how the emotion of anger destructs the relationships with others, and how they experience compassionate anger in the face of various tragic events of social injustice.
    ▪ Possible questions:
      • How do you describe the emotional dimension in shaping your way of the Christian life?
      • How do you experience anger as a "bad" emotion, especially in your relationship with others?
      • How do you characterize your emotional response in the face of unjust social events?

❖ **Movement Two: Encourage critical reflection and sharing**
  ➢ Invite learners to reflect on what their own praxis means and share the consequences of their present praxis.
    ▪ Ask well-organized questions—composed of reason questions, memory questions, imagination questions—to enable learners to reflect critically on their experiences in dialogue.
    ▪ Possible questions:
      • What are the factors that shape your understanding of the emotion of anger in your life?
      • How do you react to other people's understandings of anger?
      • Can you imagine the significance of your emotion of anger in a different way?

❖ **Movement Three: Give access to the Christian Story and Vision**
  ➢ Prepare handouts or Power Points slides to help learners to understand the biblical teachings.
    ▪ Help learners to understand the explicit teaching on anger in Matthew 5:21-26. Ask a question: If we have the insertion of "without a cause" in verse 22, how might the teaching be softened?

- Help learners to employ "the dialectical tripod" of hermeneutics—the hermeneutics of retrieval, the hermeneutics of suspicion, and the hermeneutics of creative commitment in a balanced way to understand the teachings.
  - ⇨ Possible questions:
  - ◆ How do our learning and discussion of this biblical teaching on anger affirm your experience?
  - ◆ How do you question this biblical teaching based on your experience?
  - ◆ How do you create a new understanding of this biblical teaching?
- Introduce contemporary theological work to explore the theme of anger from different angles.
  - Use two contrasting quotes to help learners engage in contemporary theological reflections on the Christian teaching in a deeper level: one regarding the possibility of compassionate anger and the other regarding anger as corrosive to one's character.
    - ◆ Quotes for possible use

❖ "…we Christians have come very close to killing love precisely because we have understood anger to be a deadly sin. Anger is not the opposite of love. It is better understood as a feeling-signal that all is not well in our relation to other persons or groups or to the world around us. Anger is a mode of connectedness to others and it is always a vivid form of caring" (From Beverly W. Harrison's "The Power of anger in the work of love").[518]	❖ "…there is something intrinsically wrong and destructive in this passion[anger]. It is not just dangerous, as a sharp kitchen knife is dangerous if misused; it is sinful. It is evidence of lack of trust and hope; it stands in the way of forgiveness; it subverts our humanity; its tumult wedges us away from the love of God." (From D. M. Yeager, "Anger, Justice, and Detachment).[519]

❖ **Movement Four: Encourage Appropriation—Making One's Own**
  - ➢ Help learners think of the theme again and integrate the faith story with their own life.
  - ➢ Help learners understand the reciprocal relationship between biblical teaching and their own experiences. Ask a question as follows: How does the Christian

---

[518] Beverly Wildung Harrison, "The Power of Anger in the Work of Love," in ed. Carol S. Robb, *Making the Connections* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 14.

[519] D.M.Yeager, "Anger, Justice, and Detachment," *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* no.17 (1997), 186.

Story/Vision learned in Movement Three affirm, question, and call us beyond the present praxis at personal and social levels?

➢ Help learners find ways to shape "Christian identity and agency" in their lives with well-formed emotional dispositions.

➢ Example of activity

▪ Invite participants to form small groups (2-3) and share their understanding of how to integrate their learning about biblical/theological interpretation and their own life experience, and then, have each group share insight and wisdom with the entire group.

❖ **Movement Five: Invite to Decision—to "faith alive"**

➢ Help learners develop specific plans, in particular for practicing *compassionate anger*.

➢ What can *I* do? —Individual decision
Invite learners to make their decisions to cultivate compassion for the work of justice in the process of forming their character in the Christian faith.

➢ What can *we* do? —Group decision
Find a group project to support each participant's decision and to renew the Christian way of life as a whole group.

➢ Close with a Communal Prayer

▪ Decide a theme of prayer depending on the focus drawn from the group.

• For example, if the sharing praxis in the group focused on compassionate anger, invite each participant to say one sentence about it with their own wisdom.

Conclusion

Promises and Challenges of Implementing SCPA

In my praxis of Christian religious education, I will continue to implement and develop SCPA, maximizing its potential for education for justice. In particular, I will focus on the effective promotion of critical reflection, which is an essential component of SCPA. This will be a decisive factor in my justice-enhancing praxis. I assert that when critical reflection on life is guided by the Reign of God as envisioned in Jesus' life and teaching, such reflection necessarily tends toward justice out of compassion. Regarding critical reflection on the present reality as crucial for a pedagogical approach to justice out of compassion, I further develop my thoughts on facilitating this process in actual educational settings. I find both promises and challenges of implementing critical reflection, which SCPA promotes, for my continuing praxis.

The compassion-motivated justice for which I have advocated in this dissertation requires attending to reality, especially the reality of unjust suffering. It is an essential component of my praxis of Christian religious education to reflect critically on social reality in terms of three questions— "Who decides?", "Who benefits?", and "Who suffers?"[520] This reflection will help learners unfold the dominant values, the privileged narratives and the oppressing forms in society. I assert that engaging such reflection makes a distinction between the work of charity and the work of compassion-driven justice. The work of charity has been a significant portion of the Christian response to those who are in need; however, it is typically not grounded in critical reflection on unjust suffering and social injustice that causes such suffering. SCPA provides an

---

[520] I learned these categories from Prof. Groome's elucidating words in his class Sharing Faith (2009).

effective way to invite learners to practice critical reflection that links personal awareness with social analysis to encourage the work of compassion-motivated justice.

It is my hope that by implementing SCPA, my Christian religious education praxis can help people understand what critical reflection is and why it is a crucial step in making their commitment to justice, recognizing that it involves not only a cognitive dimension but also an affective dimension. Critical reflection in SCPA does not end as an aimless negative criticism of the present reality. Rather, it is a discerning process motivated by compassion with intentional attention to the reality of social injustice, which calls for creative activity to find possibilities in the present praxis for continuing the transformative work into the future. Critical reflection steered by SCPA will serve the goal of my praxis of education for justice in a significantly productive way.

However, I anticipate some challenges in developing and implementing critical reflection encouraged by SCPA in actual settings. As investigated in Chapter 1, a certain form of utilitarian calculus is pervasively instilled in every area of our lives, and value-neutral or amoral claims orient and dominate educational practices in our society. Since this socio-cultural context encourages a way of life that I call "anti-reflective living," it will be a major challenge for educators to get learners to engage in critical reflection at personal and social levels, especially in problematizing the social structure that perpetuates unjust suffering. Lowering expectation for learners' capacity to be reflective will be inevitable and promoting critical social consciousness, as intended in SCPA, will be a more difficult goal to achieve.

Another anticipated challenge in implementing critical reflection—and shared Christian praxis in general—is related to the point that the effective implementation of

SPCA substantially depends on the role of teachers. For instance, to promote critical reflection on the present social praxis, teachers should be able to expand the scope of a given theme to "problematize" the situation beyond the personal level, preventing learners from overlooking or avoiding any form of injustice. If teachers are incapable of critically reflecting on reality, the educational sessions cannot serve the purpose of this approach and cannot produce the intended learning outcome. Since teachers' readiness is a pivotal element to ensure the effective implementation of SCPA, educating teachers will be a priority. However, it will be challenging to educate teachers who only recognize themselves as instructors, not as learners. It will also be difficult to evaluate the readiness of teachers to implement SCPA, since the practice of teaching with SCPA cannot be reduced to conveying the content of a given text. Equipping teachers to be effective facilitators of SPCA can be more difficult if teachers resist understanding the symbol of the Reign of God, which is the guiding principle for SCPA, as the vision for the work of compassionate justice. When teachers cannot adequately practice critical reflection on their own praxis, they cannot effectively implement SCPA. Thus, developing a practical way of *educating educators* will be the key task for my continuing implementation of SCPA.

Moving Forward

Throughout this dissertation, I have explored justice in a way that corresponds with my pedagogical approach that aims to enable Christians to find "their reflective way of being in the world"[521] and shape their identity and agency for the work of establishing

---

[521] Groome, *Will There Be Faith,* 279.

a more just world as prompted by their faith. It has been my contention that justice and compassion are integral to each other in the Christian faith; justice must always be realized through compassion and compassion ever needs to reach on into works of justice. I have affirmed that the primary quality of the Christian life is determined by the unity of compassion and justice achieved by living in accordance with Jesus' vision for the Reign of God in which God's character as compassionate and God's passion for justice are united. Grounded in such affirmation, I have proposed justice driven by compassion in the Christian faith as an orientation of attentiveness of the social reality of injustice, as a practical recognition of unjust suffering, and as an engagement in the work to alleviate such suffering.

My further praxis will continue to be guided by the vision of the Reign of God, which is understood as the vision of flourishing of all humanity with special attention to the reality of unjust suffering. It will be constantly renewed with my conviction that the Reign of God—envisioned and actualized in Jesus' life and teaching—should be the very basis for Christians' vision of the good life and ethical responsibility for the flourishing of all of humanity. My theological and pedagogical inquiry will carry on with the assertion that "Christian justice work is a testimony to the authenticity and power of the gospel."[522] It will proceed on the understanding of faith as a way of life that pursues compassion-motivated justice, and as a *becoming* process that cultivates emotional authenticity and promotes critical social consciousness. In my continuing praxis of Christian religious education, I hope the vision of justice out of compassion can (re)align Christians toward the authentic version of their faith and their understanding of a good

---

[522] Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Global Justice, Christology and Christian Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 3.

life. I hope my praxis can help people recognize injustice and inequality as the main concerns of Christian living in our social, political, and cultural reality, and renew their commitment to justice motivated by compassion, thinking critically, and acting responsibly. I hope, therefore, that my praxis will encourage people to integrate personal and social transformations to enhance justice out of compassion into their vision of a *life worth living.*

Bibliography

Allen, Robert C. *The Industrial Revolution: A Very Short Introduction.* Oxford : Oxford University, 2017.

Allison, Dale. *Studies in Matthew: Interpretaton Past and Present.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005.

Barry, Brian. *Justice as Impartiality.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Berger, Peter. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion.* New York: Doubleday&Company, Inc, 1976.

Betz, Joseph. "John Dewey and Paulo Freire." *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 28. no. 1 (Winter, 1992): 107-126.

Bingaman, Kirk A. *Freud and Faith: Living in the Tension.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003.

Black, David Alan. "Jesus on Anger: The Text of Matthew 5:22a Revisited." *Novum Testamentum* XXX, no. 1 (1988): 1-8.

Borg, Marcus J. *Jesus: The Life, Teaching, and a Relevance of Religious Revolutionary .* New York: HarperOne, 2015.

Brantley, Richard. "The Common Ground of Wesley and Edwards." *Harvard Theological Review* 83, no. 3 (July 1990): 271-303.

Bristow, William. "Enlightenment." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.* Fall 2017 Edition. Accessed May 4, 2020. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/enlightenment/.

Calvin, John. "Theology: Institues of the Christian Religion ." In *Reformation Reader: Primary Texts with Introduction* , edited by Janz Denis, 226-284. Minneapolis : Fortress Press , 1999.

Chilcote, Paul W. "Sanctification as Lived by Early Methodist Women ." *Methodist History* 34, no. 2 (January 1996): 90-103.

Chopp, Rebecca S. *The Praxis of Suffering: An Interpretation of Liberation and Political Theologies.* Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1986.

Cobb, John B. *Grace and Responsibility: A Wesleyan Theology for Today.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995.

Collins, Denis E. "From Oppression to Hope: Freire's Journey toward Utopia." *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 29, no.1 (March, 1998): 115-124.

Cox, Harvey. *Market as God.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016.

Crossan, John Dominic. *The Greatest Prayer: Rediscovering the Revolutionary Message of the Lord's Prayer.* New York: HarperOne, 2015.

Dewey, John. *Democracy and Education: An Introduction of Philosophy of Education.* New York: The Free Press, Later Printing Edition, 1997.

—. *Experience and Education.* New York : Simon&Schuster, 1997, c1938.

—. *My Pedagogic Creed .* New York : Forgotten Books, 2015.

Doepke, Mattias and Zilibotti, Fabrizio. *Love, Money and Parenting: How Economics Explains the Way We Raise Our Kids.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019.

Dreyer, Frederick. "Faith and Experience in the Thought of John Wesley ." *The American Historical Review* 88, no.1 (February, 1983): 12-30.

Edited by Page T.E and Translated by John W. Basore. *Seneca, Moral Essays*, Vol 1 . London: William Hinemann LTD, 1928.

Enriquez, Karen B. "Expanding the Cultivation and Practice of Love and Compassion in Our Suffering World: Continuing the Dialogue between Liberation Theologians and Engaged Buddhists ." *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 36, (2016): 69-86.

Fiorenza, Elizabeth Schüssler. *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet.* New York: Continuum, 1994.

—. *Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation.* Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2001.

Freire, Paulo. *Education for Critical Consciousness .* New York : Continuum, 1973.

Freire, Paulo. "Education, Liberation, and the Church ." *Religious Education* 79, no. 4 (Fall, 1984): 524-545.

—. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* New York : Continuum, 2000.

Freud, Sigmund. *Totem and Taboo: Resemblance bewteen the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics.* New York: Vintage, 1946.

Gonzalez, Justin L. *The Story of Christianity, Vol.2: The Reformation to the Present Day.* New York: HarperSanFraincisco, 1985.

Groome, Thomas. *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry.* Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998.

—. *Will There Be Faith: A New Vision for Educating and Growing Disciples.* New York: HarperOne, 2011.

Gutierrez, Gustavo. *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation.* Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1973.

Hagner, Donald A. "Matthew: Apostate, Reformer, Revolutionary?" *New Testament Studies* 49, (2003): 193-209.

Harris, William V. *Retraining Rage: The Ideology of Anger Control in Classical Antiquity* . Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Harrison, Beverly Wildung. *Making the Connecctions: Essays in Feminist Social Ethics.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1985.

Heitzenrater, Richard. *Wesley and the People Called Methodist.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013.

Hempton, David. *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* . New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.

Herzog, William R. *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed* . Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994.

---. *Jesus, Justice, and Reign of God: A Ministry of Liberation.* Westminster: John Knox Press, 1999.

Hildebrand, David. "John Dewey." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2018 Edition). Accessed December 10, 2019. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/dewey/.

Hildreth, R.W. "What Good is Growth?: Reconsidering Dewey on the Ends of Education." *Educaiton & Culture* 27, (2011): 28-47.

Hinkle, Mary. "The Lord's Praryer: Empowerment for Living the Sermon on the Mount." *Word&World* (Winter, 2002): 9-17.

Homans, Peter. *Theology After Freud: An Interpretive Inquiry.* Indianapolis: BobbsMerrill, 1970.

hooks, bell. *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom.* New York : Routledge, 2009.

—. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as Practice of Freedom.* New York: Routledge, 1994.

Jaycox, Michael P. "The Civic Virtue of Social Anger: A Critically Reconstructed Normative Ethic for Public Life." *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 36, no. 1 (2016): 123-143.

Johnson, Elizabeth. *Quest for the Living God.* New York: Continuum, 2007.

—. *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse.* New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992.

Joldersma, Clarence W. "The Tension between Justice and Freedom in Paulo Freire's Epistemology." *Journal of Educational Thought* 35, no,2 (2001): 129-148.

Jones, James William. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis and Religion: Transference and Transcendence.* New Haven: Yale University Press , 1991.

Keiser, Melvin R. "Postcritical Religion and the Latent Freud." *Zygon* 25, no.4 (Dec. 1990): 433-447.

Kennedy, William, ed. "Conversation with Paulo Freire." *Religious Education* 79, no. 4 (Fall, 1984): 511-522.

Kent, John. *Wesley and Wesleyan: Religion in Eighteen Century Britain.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Lebacqz, Karen. *Six Theories of Justice.* Minneapolis: Publishing House, 1986.

Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding: Collated and Annotated, with prolegomena, biographical, critical and hisotrical, by Alexander Campbell Fraser. Vol. 1 (1894)* http://galenet.galegroup.com.proxy.bc.edu/servlet/MOML?af=RN&ae=F1010031 86&srchtp=a&ste=14.

Luz, Ulrich. *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary.* Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989.

Mack, Phyllis. *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment: Gender and Emotion in Early Methodism.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Maddox, Randy L. "Responsible Grace: The Systematic Nature of Wesley's Theology Reconsidered ." *Quarterly Review* 6, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 24-34.

MaFague, Sallie. *Speaking in Parables: A Study in Metaphor and Theology.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007.

Marquardts, Manfred. *John Wesley's Social Ethics: Praxis and Principles.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992.

Martin, Michael Wade. "The Poetry of the Lord's Prayer: A Study in Poetic Device." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 134, no.2 (2015): 334-372.

Mattison, William. "Virtuous Anger: From Questions of Vindicatio to the Habituation of Emotion." *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 24, no.1 (2004): 159-179.

Maureen, O'Connell. *Compassion: Loving our Neighbor in the Age of Globalization.* New York: Orbis Books, 2009.

McLaren, Peter. "A Pedagogy of Possibility: Reflecting upon Paulo Freire's Politics of Education." *Educational Researcher* (March 1999): 49-56.

Meeks, Wayne. *The Moral World of the First Christians.* Philadelphia: The Westminster, 1986.

—. *The Origin of Christian Morality.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.

Miles, Rebekah. "Happiness, Holiness, and the Moral Life in John Wesley." In *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, edited by Randy Maddox and Jason Vickors, 207-224. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Mohrlang, Roger. *Matthew and Paul: A Comparison of Ethical Perspectives.* London: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Moltmann, Jürgen. *A Passion for God's Reign: Theology, Christian Learning, Christian Self.* Cambridge: Wm.B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998.

—. *Experience in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology.* Translated by Margaret Kohl. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000.

Moo, D.J. *The Letter of James: An Introduction and Commentary.* Grand Rapid: Eerdmans, 2000.

Moore, Mary Elizabeth. *Teaching as a Sacramental Act.* Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2004.

—. *Teaching from the Heart: Theology and Educational Method.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991.

Moore, Mary Elizabeth, ed. *A Living Tradition: Critical Recovery and Reconstruction of Wesleyan Heritage.* Nashville: Kingwood Books, 2013.

Murray, Michael J. and Rea, Michael. "Philosophy and Christian Theology." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition) Accessed January 20, 2020. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/christiantheology-philosophy/.

Nussbaum, Martha. *Political Emotion: Why Love Matters for Justice.* Cambridge: Harvard University, 2015.

—. *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

O'Neill, J.C. "The Lord's Prayer." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 16, no.51 (July 1993): 3-25.

Outler, Albert and Heitzenrater, Richard, ed. *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991.

Pagola, Jose. *Jesus: An Historical Approximation.* Miami: Convivium, 2009.

Perry, John M. *Tillich's Response to Freud: A Christian Answer to the Freudian Critique of Religion.* Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988.

Pope, Stenphen. "Proper and Improper Partiality and Preferential Option for the Poor." *Theological Studies* 54 (1993): 242-271.

Przybylski, Benno. *Righteousness in Matthew and His World of Thought .* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

Reuben, Julie A. *The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and Marginalization of Morality.* Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1996.

Roberts, Peter. "Knowledge, Dialogue, and Humanization: The Moral Philosophy of Paulo Freire." *Journal of Educational Thought* 32, no.2 (August, 1998): 95-117.

Sandel, Michael J, ed. *Justice: A Reader.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Sandel, Michael J. *Justice: What is the Right Thing to Do.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009.

Sandel, Michael. "Market Reasoning as Moral Reasoning: Why Economists Should Reengage with Political Philosophy." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 27, no. 4 (Fall 2003): 121-140.

—. *What Money Can't Buy: Moral Limits of Markets.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012.

Scarantino, Andrea and de Sousa, Ronald. "Emotion." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.* (Winter 2018 Edition) Accessed February 20, 2020. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/emotion/.

Schipani, Daniel. *Religious Education Encounters Liberation Theology.* Burmingham: Religious Education Press, 1988.

Schlosser, Markus. "Agency." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2019 Edition) Accessed May 20, 2020. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/agency/.

Sigmund, Freud. *The Future of an Illusion.* Translated and Edited by James Strachey. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989.

Simpson, Douglas. "Is it Time to Shelve Paulo Freire?" *Journal of Thought* 43, no.1-2 (Spring-Summer, 2008): 3-6.

Smith, Huston. *Why Religion Matters: the Fate of the Human Spirit in an Age of Disbelief.* SanFrancisco: HarperOne, 2001.

Starchey, James, ed. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud.* London: Hogarth Press, 1966.

Talbert, Charles H. *Reading the Sermon on the Mount: Character Formation and Decision Making in Matthew 5-7.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.

Thornhill, Chris and Miron, Ronny. "Kal Jaspers." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2020 Edition). Accessed July 26, 2020. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/jaspers/.

Uzgalis, William. "John Locke." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2020 Edition). Accessed April 28, 2020. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/locke/.

Vernezze, Peter J. "Moderation or the Middle Way: Two Approaches to Anger." *Philosophy East& West*, 58, no. 1 (January 2008): 2-16.

Volf, Miroslav. *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good.* Grand Rapids: Branzos Press, 2011.

Volf, Miroslav and Croasmun, Matthew. *For the Life of the World: Theology That Makes a Difference.* Grand Rapids: BrazosPress, 2019.

Volf, Miroslav. *Flourishing: Why We Need Religion in a Globalized World.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015.

Werpehowski, William. "Do You Do Well to Be Angry?" *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* 16 (1997): 59-77.

Wesley, John. "A letter to the Reverend Dr. Rutherforth." *Eighteeth Century Collections.* M. A.Late Fellow of Lincoln-College, Oxford, And Chaplain to the Right Honourable the Countess Dowager of Buchan. Bristol, M.DCC.LXVII. [1767][1768]. Retrieved from Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale. Boston College. http://find.gale.com.proxy.bc.edu/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=mlin_m_bostcoll&tabID=T001&docId=CW3319788531&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE1.

—. "Farther Thoughts Upon Christian Perfection." *Eighteenth Century Collections.* London, Printed in the Year, MDCCLXIII. [1763]. Retrieved from Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale. Boston College.

—. "The Character of a Methodist ." *Eighteenth Century Collections.* M. A. Late Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford. The eleventh edition. London. Retrieved from Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale. Boston College.

Westhelle, Victor. "On Displacing Words: The Lord's Prayer and the New Definition of Justice." *Word&World* 22, no.1 (Winter 2002): 27-35.

Williams, Bernard. *Utilitarianism: For and Against.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973.

Williams, Delores S. *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk.* New York: Orbis Books, 1993.

Winckles, Andrew O. "Excuse What Deficiencies You Will Find: Methodist Women and Public Space in John Wesley's Arminian Magazine." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 46, no. 3 (2013): 415-429.

Wright, Dale. *The Six Perfections: Buddhism and the Cultivation of Character.* New York : Oxford University Press, 2009.

Yeager, D.M. "Anger, Justice, and Detachment ." *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* 17 (1997): 167-188.

Young, Iris Marion. *Justice and Politics of Difference.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.

—. *Responsibility for Justice.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.