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*A Light for Revelation to the Gentiles,  
and the Glory of Your People Israel*

Victoria Team

Linseed-based oil paint

on a red colored clay urn, 2017





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## *Timothy Gervais*

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### THE FRAGMENTS OF HEGESIPPUS AND *ICLEMENET*: SUCCESSION CRISIS, HERSEY, AND APOSTASY

*“Up to that period the Church had remained like a virgin pure and uncorrupted: for, if there were any persons who were disposed to tamper with the wholesome rule of the preaching of salvation, they still lurked in some dark place of concealment or other. But, when the sacred band of apostles had in various ways closed their lives, and that generation of men to whom it had been vouchsafed to listen to the Godlike Wisdom with their own ears had passed away, then did the confederacy of godless error take its rise through the treachery of false teachers, who, seeing that none of the apostles any longer survived, at length attempted with bare and uplifted head to oppose the preaching of the truth by preaching ‘knowledge falsely so called.’” -Eusebius<sup>1</sup>*

#### INTRODUCTION

Eusebius, in introducing his *Ecclesiastical History*, deemed it “an account of the successions of the holy apostles, as well as of the times

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<sup>1</sup> This quotation of Eusebius is the Roberts-Donaldson translation of a paraphrase of Hegesippus found in *Ecclesiastical History* 3.32.7-8. See Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, Volume 8, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1906), 146. All translations of Eusebius found in this work will be from the Arthur McGiffert translation unless otherwise noted. Arthur McGiffert, “Ecclesiastical History,” in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, Vol. 1, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890), 73-404.

which have elapsed from the days of our Savior to our own.”<sup>2</sup> Written circa 325 CE, *Ecclesiastical History* draws upon the works of Christian historians and apologists from the previous three centuries, and represents a veritable “storehouse” of fragments of Christian and pagan authors otherwise non-extant.<sup>3</sup> While it is fortunate that the writings of Eusebius have preserved reference to, and quotations from, otherwise lost manuscripts, the unilateral nature of the preservation makes reliable reconstruction of the content and contexts of these works difficult at best, and more often nearly impossible.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps no fragments preserved by Eusebius are more paradigmatic of this difficulty than those of the second century Christian apologist Hegesippus.

Little is known about Hegesippus or the general content and form of his original writings. His contribution to Christianity is only preserved by Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History*, a brief mention by Jerome in his work *De Viris Illustribus*,<sup>5</sup> and a fleeting reference in Photius’ *Bibliotheca*.<sup>6</sup> Eusebius believed that he was “a convert from the Hebrews,”<sup>7</sup> who lived “immediately after the apostles.”<sup>8</sup> Additionally, Eusebius relates that Hegesippus’ purportedly wrote “five books. . . in a most simple style,”<sup>9</sup> presumably a reference to his poor Greek, a fact from which Eusebius

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<sup>2</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 1.1.1.

<sup>3</sup> Johannes Quasten, *Patrology, Volume 3: The Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature*, (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1950), 331. See also: Sabrina Inowlocki, *Eusebius and the Jewish Authors: His Citation Technique in an Apologetic Context*, (Boston, MA: Brill, 2006), 1.

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of the issues surrounding Eusebius as a historian see R.M. Grant, “The Case against Eusebius, or Did the Father of Church History Write History?,” in *Studia Patristica*, Volume 12, (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1975), 413-425.

<sup>5</sup> St. Jerome, *On Illustrious Men*, tran. Thomas P. Halton, (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 42.

<sup>6</sup> Photius, *Bibliotheca*, trans. J.H. Freese, (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1920), 232.

<sup>7</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 4.22.7.

<sup>8</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 2.23.3.

<sup>9</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 4.8.2.



probably inferred his Hebrew heritage.<sup>10</sup> Eusebius' assumptions about Hegesippus' ethnic origins and temporal relationship to the apostles have been widely challenged in modern scholarship, most notably in William Tefler's classic essay.<sup>11</sup> Conservative inferences about Hegesippus now mark him instead as a "Palestinian Christian,"<sup>12</sup> and by his own admission he probably completed his work *Ἰστορικά*, or *Memoirs*, after the time that Eleutherus was elevated to the Roman bishopric, which occurred in 175 CE.<sup>13</sup> Tefler places the completion of the *Memoirs* around 180 CE based on the *Chronicon Paschale*, a seventh century Greek-Christian chronicle which dates Hegesippus' death to the reign of Commodus.<sup>14</sup> Realistically then, one would assume Hegesippus to have been born no earlier than the second decade of the second century, circa 110 CE.<sup>15</sup>

While acknowledging the complex issues regarding Eusebius' "fidelity to the text quoted,"<sup>16</sup> no in depth investigation of the verbatim accuracy of Eusebius' quotations will be attempted here. Similarly, while it may well be the case that the texts quoted by Eusebius have been "exploited," "distorted," and "appropriated" to suit Eusebius' own theological, political, or personal aims,<sup>17</sup> it will be assumed for the

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<sup>10</sup> Eusebius also viewed Hegesippus' knowledge of "the Syriac Gospel according to the Hebrews," and "the unwritten tradition of the Jews," as evidence of his Jewish descent. Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 4.22.7.

<sup>11</sup> William Tefler, "Was Hegesippus a Jew?," *Harvard Theological Review*, 53:2, (1960).

<sup>12</sup> Eric George Jay, "From presbyter-bishops to bishops and presbyters: Christian ministry in the second century; a survey," *Second Century: A Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 1.3 (Fall 1981), 150.

<sup>13</sup> Tefler, "Was Hegesippus a Jew?," 145.

<sup>14</sup> Tefler, "Was Hegesippus a Jew?," 145. Jonathan Bernier also places the date of composition in the "mid- to late 170s." Significantly, this places Hegesippus' nearly a century after many of the events he records, and suggests his work was predominantly a collection of traditions from the Christian past, not an eyewitness account. Jonathan Bernier, "From Papias to Hegesippus: On the Production of Christian Institutional Memory," *TheoForum*, 42 (2011), 40.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Tixeront, *A Handbook of Patrology* (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1920), 77.

<sup>16</sup> Inowlocki, *Eusebius*, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Inowlocki, *Eusebius*, 1-9.

purposes of this work that “Eusebius’s merits... [generally] outweigh these defects.”<sup>18</sup> Consequently, even if one reads Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* with a healthy degree of skepticism, a fair amount can still be reasonably inferred from the account about the content of Hegesippus’ five-volume work. A significant portion of the fragments preserved by Eusebius deal with the martyrdom of James, a tradition also recorded in *The Second Apocalypse of James*, Josephus’ *Antiquities*, and a non-extant work of Clement of Alexandria.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, the work appears to have detailed the election of Symeon the son of Clopas as the second bishop of the Jerusalem church.<sup>20</sup> The subsequent martyrdom of Symeon seems to have occupied an additional section.<sup>21</sup> Information regarding the church at Corinth during the period described in *I Clement* appears to have also been presented,<sup>22</sup> as well as details of Hegesippus’ interaction with various episcopal figures met while traveling to Rome.<sup>23</sup> The curious Greek phrase used by Hegesippus stating that “I made for myself a succession up through Anicetus,” (διαδοχὴν ἐποιησάμην μέχρις Ἀνικίτου) seems to suggest the work may have also contained a now non-extant episcopal

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<sup>18</sup> Paul L. Maier, *Eusebius: The Church History*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999), 17.

<sup>19</sup> “James’ martyrdom as a follower of his brother is reported by Josephus, Hegesippus, and Clement of Alexandria. The latter two are no longer extant. However, fragments from their writings pertaining to the martyrdom of James are preserved in Eusebius of Caesarea. For Clement’s account, see *Hist. eccl.* 2.9.1-3. For Hegesippus’ account, see *Hist. eccl.* 2.23.3-19.” Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2010), 455. For a treatment on the relationship between these accounts see S. Kent Brown, “Jewish and Gnostic Elements in the Second Apocalypse of James,” *Novum Testamentum*, 17:3 (1975), 225-237. See also F. Stanley Jones, “The Martyrdom of James in Hegesippus, Clement of Alexandria, and Christian Apocrypha, Including Nag Hammadi: A Study of the Textual Relations,” *Society of Biblical Literature seminar papers*, 29:1 (1990), 323.

<sup>20</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.11.1-2.

<sup>21</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.32.1-8.

<sup>22</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.16.1.

<sup>23</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 4.22.1.

succession list penned by Hegesippus' own hand.<sup>24</sup> While Jerome assumed the work was, "a coherent history of the Church from the passion of our Lord until the middle of the second century,"<sup>25</sup> and Robert M. Grant has argued that the *Memoirs* were, "a collection of legends about the apostles and their contemporaries,"<sup>26</sup> most modern reconstructions assert that it was an "apologetic," or "polemical," work intended to combat gnostic succession claims.<sup>27</sup> T. C. G. Thornton has argued that Hegesippus was, "the first Christian writer to make use of episcopal succession lists, using them in the context of arguments against heretics."<sup>28</sup> In considering the various extant fragments of Hegesippus' work it seems most likely that *Memoirs* was a collection of apologetic accounts dealing with the succession of bishops in those major Christian centers visited during his travels: Jerusalem, Corinth, and Rome.<sup>29</sup> At each stop in his journey Hegesippus likely investigated the "institutional memory," or oral history, of each congregation,<sup>30</sup> and compiled in writing either during his stay or later in Rome, not only a succession list, but also those stories most

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<sup>24</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 4:22. Bernier has rightly noted the following regarding Hegesippus' phrasing: "It is perhaps not insignificant that Hegesippus uses ἐπισημῶς to describe how he obtained the succession list in Rome. This suggests something more than simply receiving an already existing list. One suspects a more active process, wherein Hegesippus spoke with members of the community in order to *produce* a succession list, much as EH 4.22.2 intimates he did in Corinth. That is, he does not so much report to us a list which he found already in existence, but rather produced one base upon the recollections of the Corinthian Christians." Bernier, "From Papias to Hegesippus," 44.

<sup>25</sup> Tixeront, *A Handbook of Patrology*, 77.

<sup>26</sup> Robert M. Grant, *Second Century Christianity: A Collection of Fragments*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 57.

<sup>27</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 79. See also Tefler, "Was Hegesippus a Jew?," 144. Tixeront, *A Handbook of Patrology*, 77.

<sup>28</sup> T. C. G. Thornton, "High-priestly succession in Jewish apologetics and Episcopal succession in Hegesippus," *Journal of Theological Studies*, 54:1 (April 2003), 162.

<sup>29</sup> Jay, "From presbyter-bishops to bishops and presbyters," 150-151.

<sup>30</sup> Bernier, "From Papias to Hegesippus," 38. See also Jay, "From presbyter-bishops to bishops and presbyters," 150-151.

pertinent to establishing the legitimacy of the current bishops. When the succession of bishops may have been in dispute (such as in Corinth) Hegesippus may have gathered and recounted information regarding the original debates and provided analysis of the situation to establish that the current bishop did in fact have legitimate claim to the episcopacy.<sup>31</sup> These assertions stand against those of Tefler, who tends to minimize the historical content of Hegesippus' *Memoirs*.<sup>32</sup> While the *historical reliability* of the accounts may certainly be questioned, the history-like nature of nearly all the extant fragments suggests the work was most plausibly an attempt to recount various events in the Christian past. The extant fragments of Hegesippus are too incomplete to provide sufficient evidence for Tefler's doubt.<sup>33</sup>

This likely reconstruction of the contents of Hegesippus' *Memoirs* makes possible an identification of Thebouthis, an individual whom Hegesippus identifies as the originator of heresy in the early church, as perhaps a key contributor in the "attempted coup"<sup>34</sup> which occurred in Corinth and to which *I Clement* is a response. Contrary to the general trend of modern scholarship, I contend that Hegesippus as quoted by Eusebius does not suggest that Thebouthis resided in the Jerusalem church,<sup>35</sup> and as such Hegesippus may have encountered the story of

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<sup>31</sup> "We might suspect that Hegesippus, much disconcerted by [the] possibility [that the current bishop did not have a legitimate claim], investigated the matter and concluded to his satisfaction that the Corinthian church stood in the true doctrine until the time of Primus." Bernier, "From Papias to Hegesippus," 44. See also Jay, "From presbyter-bishops to bishops and presbyters," 150-151.

<sup>32</sup> "The Memoranda must have been, for the most part, taken up with matters other than history." Tefler, "Was Hegesippus a Jew?," 144.

<sup>33</sup> "We cannot at all tell from all the stray fragments of Hegesippus' *Memoirs* that are before us what kind of a book these *Memoirs* were." Caspar Rene Gregory, "Canon and Text of the New Testament," in *The International Theological Library*, ed. Charles A. Briggs and Stewart D.F. Salmond (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), 116-117.

<sup>34</sup> Bernier, "From Papias to Hegesippus," 44. See also Jay, "From presbyter-bishops to bishops and presbyters," 150-151.

<sup>35</sup> For scholars who hold this opinion see: Reinhard Pummer, *Early Christian Authors on Samaritans and Samaritanism* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 11-13; and Robert M. Royalty, *The Origin of Heresy: A*

Thebouthis during his visit to the Corinthian congregation. Consequently, the account of Thebouthis given by Hegesippus and the content of *I Clement* may shed reciprocal light on each other, which allows for a more concrete reconstruction of the occasion of *I Clement* than previously assumed. Additionally, Hegesippus depicts the origin of heresy in the early church as intimately associated with a conflict surrounding episcopal succession, arguing that it was an intrinsic development that arose from Thebouthis' jealousy of the duly elected bishop. This portrayal is significantly different than other early Christian fathers, who often viewed heresy as a corruption of doctrine primarily derived from faulty scriptural exegesis.<sup>36</sup> The Thebouthis tradition may then represent an early Christian institutional memory, one that articulates the first schisms of the church as ones of succession crisis and individual apostasy, rather than the doctrinal corruption favored by later patristic heresiologists.<sup>37</sup>

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*History of Discourse in Second Temple Judaism and Early Christianity*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 9-11; and Birger A. Pearson, "Eusebius and Gnosticism," in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, ed. Harold W. Attridge and Gohei Hata (Detroit, MI: Wayne State Press, 1992), 301-302; and Bernier, "From Papias to Hegesippus," 43; and Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 85.

<sup>36</sup> "Irenaeus of Lyons, often considered the first systematic theologian... expos[ed] the errors in the beliefs of the Gnostics and demonstrate[d] that their heretical theology grows out of their (willful) misunderstanding of Scripture (see, e.g., *Against Heresies* IV.IIA)." Angela Russell Christman, "The Early Church," in *The Blackwell Companion to Catholicism*, ed. James J. Buckley, Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, and Trent Pomplun, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 45. Origen also considered heresy a derivative of corrupt scriptural exegesis. See Origen, *On first Principles*, tran. G.W. Butterworth, (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2013), 4.2.1.

<sup>37</sup> "For Hegesippus, it appears, 'heresy' does not represent an assault on apostolic authority or tradition. Instead, he underlines its institutional illegitimacy. His 'heretics' are characterized less by false teaching, which he does not describe, than by their resistance to the church's rightful leaders." Kendra Eshleman, *The Social World of Intellectuals in the Roman Empire: Sophists, Philosophers, and Christians*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 224-226. See also James D.G. Dunn,

## THE FRAGMENTS OF HEGESIPPUS

As mentioned above, a significant portion of the Hegesippean fragments preserved in Eusebius deal in some way with the succession of bishops in the Jerusalem church. Eusebius quotes Hegesippus at length in 2.23.3-19 detailing James' death by stoning at the hands of disgruntled Jews. After James' martyrdom circa 62 CE, and purportedly after Vespasian's siege of Jerusalem (which occurred eight years later in 70 CE), Hegesippus relates that "the apostles and disciples of the Lord that were still living came together from all directions with those that were related to the Lord according to the flesh (for the majority of them also were still alive) to take counsel as to who was worthy to succeed James."<sup>38</sup> Bauckham has rightly noted Hegesippus' somewhat flawed chronology of the election of James' successor. He states:

The fact that the election is dated after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 is the result of Hegesippus' belief that the siege of the city began immediately after the death of James (*HE* 2:23:18). He or the tradition he followed would simply have assumed that the earliest practical opportunity for an election would be after the capture of the city. Thus we cannot suppose this dating to be accurate. If Symeon was in fact elected as successor to James, we must assume the appointment took place soon after the martyrdom of James in A.D. 62.<sup>39</sup>

Other than the erroneous dating of the siege of Jerusalem, Hegesippus' depiction of the event seems otherwise plausible. Bauckham has noted that "a gathering like the Jerusalem council of Acts 15 is quite possible," given that "The status of Jerusalem as the mother church...had given James an

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*Neither Jew nor Greek: A Contested Identity* (Christianity in the Making Volume 3; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 526-527.

<sup>38</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.11.1.

<sup>39</sup> Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 87.

authoritative position not only throughout the Palestinian church but even further afield (Gal 2:12; Acts 21:35; GThom 12).”<sup>40</sup>

Eusebius relates the outcome of this apostolic council in two distinct passages: 3.11.1-2 and 4.22.4. Both references are relatively brief, with the longer of the two (3.1.1-2) being Eusebius’ own narrative of the event. The second, briefer passage, is located in the middle of a direct quotation of Hegesippus much later in the *Ecclesiastical History*, and significantly contains the only reference to Thebouthis found in the entire work. It is notable that during Eusebius’ primary narrative of both Symeon’s election and subsequent martyrdom, Thebouthis is nowhere mentioned. One would imagine that if Thebouthis was an important figure in the origin of heresy in the Jerusalem church, and was indeed Symeon’s primary opposition in the election to the Jerusalem episcopate, that Eusebius would have made reference to him in the main narrative sequences of Symeon’s election and/or martyrdom.

Instead, Thebouthis is only mentioned in a quotation of Hegesippus found in a portion of the *Ecclesiastical History* primarily devoted to early Christian churches other than Jerusalem.<sup>41</sup> The relevant fragment reads as follows:

And after James the Just had suffered martyrdom, as the Lord had also on the same account, Symeon, the son of the Lord's uncle, Clopas, was appointed the next bishop. All proposed him as second bishop because he was a cousin of the Lord. Therefore, they called the Church a virgin, for it was not yet corrupted by vain discourses. But Thebouthis, because he was not made bishop, began to corrupt it.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 86.

<sup>41</sup> The contents of Book 4 of the *Ecclesiastical History* largely deal with the churches at Alexandria, Rome, Corinth, Antioch, and Hierapolis. While there is a chapter devoted to “The Bishops of Jerusalem from the Age of Our Savior to the Period Under Consideration,” this section again depicts the succession of bishops in the Jerusalem church as a smooth process and fails to mention a controversy involving Thebouthis.

<sup>42</sup> Eusebius, *Ecc. Hist.*, 4.22

Despite the observation made by other scholars that the form and content of this passage appears “garbled,”<sup>43</sup> “mutilated,”<sup>44</sup> and also seems to contradict Hegesippus’ repeated assertion that heresy entered the church only after the death of the apostles and the kinsmen of Christ (which would include Symeon), scholars have nearly without exception taken the passage as evidence that Thebouthis participated in a dispute over the Jerusalem episcopacy.<sup>45</sup> However, several key features of the text make this assumption problematic.

While Hegesippus’ account clearly conveys the decision of the council, the relative chronology of events that transpired after the council is more difficult to ascertain. In particular, whether Hegesippus believed heresy arose immediately after the election of Symeon, as insinuated by the quotation above, or much later after his subsequent martyrdom is ambiguous.<sup>46</sup> Eusebius relates in two separate places Hegesippus’ assertion that the church was a “virgin,” because it had yet to be corrupted by “vain discourses.”<sup>47</sup> The second instance is in paraphrase of what seems to be a much longer passage than the one quoted above, and definitively places the introduction of heresy into the church after the martyrdom of Symeon:

Symeon, son of Clopas, an uncle of the Lord, was informed against by the heretics...<sup>48</sup> And after being tortured for

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<sup>43</sup> Pearson, “Eusebius and Gnosticism,” 301.

<sup>44</sup> Stanley Jerome Isser, *The Dositheans: A Samaritan Sect in Late Antiquity*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 11-15.

<sup>45</sup> Pummer, *Early Christian Authors*, 11-13; Royalty, *The Origin of Heresy*, 9-11. Bernier, “From Papias to Hegesippus,” 43. Pearson, “Eusebius and Gnosticism,” 301-302. Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 85.

<sup>46</sup> “It is unclear whether Hegesippus thought that these errors had entered the church with the death of James or with that of Simeon.” Bernier, “From Papias to Hegesippus,” 43.

<sup>47</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.32.7; 4.22.4.

<sup>48</sup> The Greek here says that Symeon was informed against “ὕπὸ τῶν αἰρέσεων” or “by the *factious*” or “*parties*.” While “heresy” and “heretics” are etymological derivatives of αἵρεσις, here the word denotes not



many days he suffered martyrdom, and all, including even the proconsul, marveled that, at the age of one hundred and twenty years, he could endure so much... In addition to these things the same man [Hegesippus], while recounting the events of that period, records that the Church up to that time had remained a pure and uncorrupted virgin, since, if there were any that attempted to corrupt the sound norm of the preaching of salvation, they lay until then concealed in obscure darkness. But when the sacred college of apostles had suffered death in various forms, and the generation of those that had been deemed worthy to hear the inspired wisdom with their own ears had passed away, then the league of godless error took its rise as a result of the folly of heretical teachers, who, because none of the apostles was still living, attempted henceforth, with a bold face, to proclaim, in opposition to the preaching of the truth, the 'knowledge which is falsely so-called.'<sup>49</sup>

A central argument of Hegesippus' work appears to be that the Church "up to that time," (the martyrdom of Symeon,) had remained uncorrupted. It was only after, "the generation of those that had [heard] inspired wisdom with their own ears" had died, that heresy was then introduced into the church. It is significant to note Hegesippus described Symeon as, "one who saw and heard the Lord,"<sup>50</sup> leaving no doubt that Hegesippus viewed the sedition of Thebouthis as an event which occurred after the martyrdom of Symeon, not immediately following his election.

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unorthodox Christians, but instead is most likely a reference to the "seven sects" (τῶν ἑπτὰ αἱρέσεων) which Hegesippus identifies among the Jews in 2.23.8 and 4.22.5-6. See Eshleman, *The Social World of Intellectuals*, 224-226.

<sup>49</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.32.6-8.

<sup>50</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.32.4.

Important to Hegesippus' notion of an uncorrupted church is that "all proposed...with one consent," to promote Symeon to the episcopacy.<sup>51</sup> The unanimity of the appointment seems primarily related to Symeon's status as "a cousin, as they say, of the Saviour."<sup>52</sup> Both the harmony of the election as depicted by Hegesippus and Symeon's relationship to Christ are significant, as each affects the plausibility of Thebouthis' disgruntlement at not being selected bishop of the Jerusalem church. Although the concordance of the election may be an idealized aspect of the account, Hegesippus utilizes it as evidence for his assertion that schism did not occur in the church until after, "the sacred college of apostles had suffered death in various forms."<sup>53</sup> Because Hegesippus records that all the living apostles attended the succession council and participated in electing Symeon, it is unlikely that Hegesippus would undermine his assertion that the church had "remained a pure and uncorrupted virgin" until the death of the apostles by elsewhere stating that Thebouthis *immediately* began to corrupt the church prior to their demise. To solve this conundrum Bauckham reads the "unexplained πάντες [all]" of 4.22.4 as a reference to the relatives of the Lord mentioned in 3.11 instead of a reference to the general church body. This allows Bauckham to downplay Hegesippus' emphasis on the cohesion of the church at large, and instead focus on the unanimity of Church leadership. Bauckham argues this, "shows that Symeon was appointed and Thebouthis rejected by all who had any authoritative relationship to the Lord, and so deprives Thebouthis' heresies of any possibility of apostolic legitimacy."<sup>54</sup> While it appears true that Hegesippus wishes to distance the views of Thebouthis from the authority figures of the church, his repeated emphasis on the unified and uncorrupted nature of the *entire* church seems to imply that this πάντες is more inclusive than only those who possessed an "authoritative relationship to the Lord." If indeed, as asserted by Bauckham, the election of Symeon can be thought to mirror the Jerusalem council recounted in Acts 15, one might assume πάντες would more fittingly describe "the whole church" (ὅλη τῆ ἐκκλησία),<sup>55</sup> and the ambiguity of the reference may instead be a product of Hegesippus' rudimentary command of the

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<sup>51</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.11; 4.22

<sup>52</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.11.2.

<sup>53</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.32.7-8.

<sup>54</sup> Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 85.

<sup>55</sup> Acts 15:22.

Greek language. As such, because it is more consistent with Hegesippus' apparent historical and theological project, priority should be given to the timetable which places heresy as entering the church after Symeon's martyrdom.

Hegesippus seems to have, "put great stock in the idea that, with the death of those who had known Jesus personally, so too, a powerful barrier against heresy and error had fallen."<sup>56</sup> Thus, as Bernier has also noted, Hegesippus viewed, "the episcopacy as curative to the flourishing of heresy."<sup>57</sup> While this conception of the bishop as protector of the faith is certainly not unique to Hegesippus, "It is possible that no one before Hegesippus had thought that they could provide evidence for the 'orthodoxy' of the current bishop, conceived now as a contemporary successor to an 'orthodox' lineage."<sup>58</sup> Illustrative of this point is a predecessor of Hegesippus, Ignatius of Antioch, who argued for the necessity of the Bishop. Bernier has observed:

More or less contemporary to Papias, Ignatius aggressively argues for the necessity not only of a monarchical bishop but also of complete submission thereto. However, Ignatius does not argue from succession as does Hegesippus. For Ignatius, the bishop is to be obeyed simply because he is the bishop and thus has the authority of Christ not because he stands at the current head of a chain of memory going back to one or more apostles. This might suggest that, contrary to Hegesippus' theory of institutional memory, the episcopal succession did not develop out of a need to transmit earwitness [sic] testimony, but rather developed on the basis of other needs, and only subsequently came to be a substitute for apostolic authority. This, in turn, could suggest that Hegesippus'

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<sup>56</sup> Bernier, "From Papias to Hegesippus," 43.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Bernier, "From Papias to Hegesippus," 45.

contribution was precisely to provide warrant for this substitution.<sup>59</sup>

Thornton has also noted a shift in early Christianity as bishops gradually assumed the mantle of successors to the apostles.<sup>60</sup> In essence, both Bernier and Thornton have interestingly observed the phenomenon by which Bishops gradually replaced the apostles as curators of the Church. While this work is far too brief to investigate this observation at length, it does appear significant that earlier defenders of the episcopacy rarely if ever felt the need to articulate the line of succession from the apostles, presumably because there was no dispute over such. Hegesippus, as a later writer viewing at least one instance of conflicted claims to the episcopacy (Corinth,) felt the need to argue for the validity of the current Bishop. However, by the time of Eusebius, the succession conflicts which may have occurred in various churches seem to have faded to the background. Halton has argued that Eusebius was far more reliant on Hegesippus than has traditionally been assumed, and yet, Eusebius' reference to the succession crisis surrounding Thebouthis is fleeting at best.<sup>61</sup> Because of the fragmentary nature of Hegesippus, as well as the general paucity of information regarding the transition of Christianity from the first to the second centuries, there is a brief but notably undocumented time during which the succession of bishops was at least partially in dispute. If Hegesippus' writings detailed instances of disputed episcopal claims, as is insinuated by Eusebius in 3.16, it would come as no surprise that Hegesippus' work may not have achieved widespread circulation. Ramsay MacMullen has stated that it was not uncommon during the era for, "Hostile writings and discarded views [to] not [be] recopied or passed on ... matters discreditable to the faith were to be consigned to silence."<sup>62</sup> While MacMullen perhaps overstates the frequency and the intentionality of such practices, it is certainly plausible that the somewhat challenging

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<sup>59</sup> Bernier, "From Papias to Hegesippus," 45.

<sup>60</sup> Thornton, "High-priestly succession," 162-163.

<sup>61</sup> T. Halton, "Hegesippus in Eusebius," in *Studia Patristica*, 17, (Elmsford, NY: Pergamon Press, 1982), 688-693. See also J. Edgar Bruns, "Philo Christianus: The Debris of Legend," *Harvard Theological Review*, 66 (1973), 144.

<sup>62</sup> Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire: A.D 100-400*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), 6.

nature of the content of Hegesippus' succession narratives may have made their transmission less of a priority to the early Church fathers, despite their value as a source of information for the late first and early second centuries of Christian development.

An additional challenge to associating Thebouthis with the Jerusalem church comes from the status that relatives of Jesus seem to have held in the first-century Palestinian churches. Hegesippus' account is strikingly fascinated with the "family of the Lord," or δεσποσινοι (kinsmen of Christ).<sup>63</sup> As noted above, Hegesippus depicts Symeon's election to the episcopate as being primarily a result of his relationship to Jesus.<sup>64</sup> Additionally, after conveying a story about, "the grandchildren of Jude, who is said to have been the Lord's brother according to the flesh,"<sup>65</sup> he states that they, "ruled the churches because they were witnesses and were also relatives of the Lord."<sup>66</sup> Bauckham has noted that "Both in Jerusalem and in Galilee, until the Bar Kokhba war, the family of Jesus – the *desposynoi* – were the most influential and respected leaders of Jewish Christianity, at first along with members of the twelve, later more exclusively."<sup>67</sup> While not conclusive, the preferential authoritative status relatives of the Lord seem to have received in the Palestinian churches make it unlikely that Thebouthis would have had any claim to the Jerusalem bishopric while a cousin of Jesus was still living. Indeed, Tefler has noted that the account of the election of Symeon's successor from among "the thousands" rather than from the δεσποσινοι emphasizes that such an outcome was *only* because the kinsmen of Christ had unfortunately died out.<sup>68</sup> It is thus improbable, although not impossible,

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<sup>63</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.20.1.

<sup>64</sup> Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 87. Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.11.2.

<sup>65</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.20.1-8.

<sup>66</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.20.8.

<sup>67</sup> Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 374.

<sup>68</sup> "H. E. iii. 35, which seems to continue this history, describes the successor to the martyred Symeon as being a Jew named Justus, chosen 'from among the thousands' of Judaeo-Christians. This expression suggests some disparagement, and regret for the ending of the succession of *desposynoi*. This rings of a time when the continuance of that succession was a serious issue for Judaeo-Christians, a time that can

that Hegesippus' depiction of Thebouthis' envy of the episcopate and subsequent corruption of the church took place in the Jerusalem Church.

## THEBOUTHIS AND THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH

The second reference in the *Ecclesiastical History* to the martyrdom of James and the election of Symeon beginning at 4.22.4 appears to be a condensed summary of events Hegesippus conveyed elsewhere in his original narrative. Eusebius directly quotes a lengthy passage that more fully details the martyrdom of James in 2.23.3-19, and his paraphrase of Symeon's election in 3.11.1-2 also seems to point to a larger narrative.<sup>69</sup> Additionally, up until this point, Eusebius appears to be following a chronological structure within Hegesippus' own account as he quotes in order the martyrdom of James,<sup>70</sup> the election of Symeon,<sup>71</sup> Symeon's martyrdom,<sup>72</sup> and Hegesippus' arrival in Rome.<sup>73</sup> This is consistent with a picture of Eusebius systematically working his way through Hegesippus' account and conveying information as he encountered it.<sup>74</sup> Bauckham has noted that "Even where he paraphrases or summarizes Hegesippus, he follows Hegesippus quite closely, as can be

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hardly exceed the last years of Trajan and the first of Hadrian." Tefler, "Was Hegesippus a Jew?," 149.

<sup>69</sup> Most significantly, Eusebius notes "[Symeon] was a cousin...of the Saviour. For Hegesippus records that Clopas was a brother of Joseph." As this information is not contained in the shorter quotation preceding the introduction of Thebouthis, it is unlikely that such represents the main narrative sequence of the account in Hegesippus' original work.

Additionally, if the direct quotation of Hegesippus at 4.22.4 did in fact represent the main narrative of the event, Eusebius' paraphrases in 3.11.1-2 and 3.32.7-8 would contain several instances of information that Eusebius would have manufactured wholesale. While it is possible Eusebius expanded on the information presented by Hegesippus, in this context it does not seem likely.

<sup>70</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 2.23.3-19.

<sup>71</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.11.1-2.

<sup>72</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 3.32.1-8.

<sup>73</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 4.11.7.

<sup>74</sup> This seems implied by Eusebius' own narrative. Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 4.22.7.

seen in cases where the same passage is both quoted and paraphrastically reported (*HE* 3:20:1 || 3:19; 3:32:6a || 3:20:6; 3:32:6b || 3:32:2).<sup>75</sup> It would thus seem counterintuitive for Eusebius, who up to this point seems to have followed Hegesippus' account closely in something resembling chronological order, to then conclude his citation of Hegesippus with a return to previously covered material. While many scholars have noted this oddity, their identification of Thebouthis with the Jerusalem church has prevented the proposal of a satisfactory answer. Most agree with Bauckham that in Hegesippus' work, "the history of the Palestinian church after the death of James was not presented in a single chronological sequence,"<sup>76</sup> and thus Eusebius' quotation of out of sequence material here is indicative of Hegesippus' own "helter-skelter" account. This, however, is to assume too much about the original contents of the *Memoirs*. An alternative readily presents itself when considering the passage in light of the surrounding quotations. Most significantly, Eusebius has just completed a citation of Hegesippus regarding Clement's epistle to the Corinthians. The pertinent sections read as follows:

In [the *Memoirs*, Hegesippus] states that on a journey to Rome he met a great many bishops, and that he received the same doctrine from all. It is fitting to hear what he says after making some remarks about the epistle of Clement to the Corinthians. His words are as follows: "And the church of Corinth continued in the true faith until Primus was bishop in Corinth. I conversed with them on my way to Rome, and abode with the Corinthians many days, during which we were mutually refreshed in the true doctrine."<sup>77</sup>

Eusebius continues by stating that the same author, "also describes the beginnings of the heresies which arose in his time,"<sup>78</sup> at which point he quotes Hegesippus detailing a short account of James' martyrdom, a short account of Symeon's election, and then the singular mention of Thebouthis. As has been established previously, one of Hegesippus' primary historical projects is to establish that heresy only entered the

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<sup>75</sup> Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 80.

<sup>76</sup> Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 81.

<sup>77</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 4.22.1-2.

<sup>78</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 4.22.4.

church after the death of the apostles and others who had interacted with the living Jesus. As such, if Hegesippus' account had moved to the locale of Corinth, it would be logical for him to reference the death of James and election of Symeon to establish for the reader a relative chronology to those accounts previously mentioned. These references can then be viewed as a stylized literary device designed to signal to the reader the relative temporal relationship of the following events to those previously recorded. This construal is consistent with the observation made by Bernier that Hegesippus seems intent on, "synchronizing the histories of the local Christian communities, or, to put this in a way perhaps more faithful to his basic ecclesiological vision, synchronizing the history of the Great Church as it existed in Rome with the history of the Great Church as it existed in Corinth."<sup>79</sup> While I agree with Bernier's assessment that Hegesippus' wishes to synchronize the local histories with that of the "Great Church," it seems more appropriate to say the synchronization was relative to the "Great Church of Jerusalem," as its succession history is utilized most often by Hegesippus to establish the relative chronologies of other churches. Bauckham too has argued that this condensed version of James' death functions as a relative date marker, although he views it as an insertion by Eusebius, rather than a part of Hegesippus' original quotation.<sup>80</sup> However, there is no obvious reason to doubt the authenticity of Eusebius' claim that the text represents a direct quotation, thus rendering Bauckham's assertion merely conjectural.

There are additional allusions in Eusebius' work that strengthen the correlation between Thebouthis and the Corinthian church. Eusebius notes that Hegesippus' *Memoirs* shared overlapping content with a now

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<sup>79</sup> Bernier, "From Papias to Hegesippus," 41. See also John Chapman, "Hegesippus," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia: Volume 7* (New York, NY: Robert Appleton Company, 1910), 195.

<sup>80</sup> "Although the second of these passages purports to be a direct quotation from Hegesippus, it must in fact be regarded as a highly condensed quotation of material which Eusebius paraphrases in 3:II. In 4:22:4 Eusebius is not interested in giving an account of the appointment of Symeon for its own sake (having already recorded it in its chronological place in book 3), but needs to refer to it in order to date the account which follows, in direct quotation from Hegesippus, of Thebouthis and the origin of heresy (4:22:4b-6)." Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 83.



non-extant work of Clement of Rome, the traditional author of *I Clement*.<sup>81</sup> Additionally, at 3.16.1 Eusebius makes the significant statement that:

There is extant an epistle of this Clement which is acknowledged to be genuine and is of considerable length and of remarkable merit. He wrote it in the name of the church of Rome to the church of Corinth, when a sedition had arisen in the latter church... And of the fact that a sedition did take place in the church of Corinth at the time referred to Hegesippus is a trustworthy witness.

Not only does Eusebius seem to view Hegesippus as a credible source for details on the Corinthian sedition, but he also states that Hegesippus even provided some amount of commentary on *I Clement* just prior to his introduction of the story of Thebouthis.<sup>82</sup> Bernier too has noted the significance of these comments, although he does not identify Thebouthis with the sedition in Corinth.<sup>83</sup> He does however, see it as likely that Hegesippus compiled information regarding the Corinthian sedition, and that this material made up a significant portion of Hegesippus' text.<sup>84</sup> When taken in context, and while viewing the reference to James and Symeon as relative chronological markers, the identification of Thebouthis with the instigators mentioned in *I Clement* becomes an obvious possibility, if not a probability.

One potential argument against this proposed thesis must be discussed before turning more fully towards the text of *I Clement*. That is, that Hegesippus presents Thebouthis as being "from the seven sects," (ἀπὸ τῶν ἑπτὰ αἰρέσεων).<sup>85</sup> Presumably these are the same Jewish sects presented previously by Hegesippus.<sup>86</sup> If one were to take Hegesippus'

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<sup>81</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 2.23.3, 19.

<sup>82</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 4.22.1. See also Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 250, nt 219.

<sup>83</sup> Bernier, "From Papias to Hegesippus," 40-44.

<sup>84</sup> Bernier, "From Papias to Hegesippus," 44.

<sup>85</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 4.22.5.

<sup>86</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 2.23.8; 3.32.2.

assertion at face value, one might assume that Thebouthis would have resided in the Jerusalem church, where these Jewish sects are depicted as being most active. This however, would be a flawed assumption. Bernier has noted that Jews and Jewish Christians existed in communities throughout the Roman Empire,<sup>87</sup> and thus contact with any number of these sects would have been possible in most major cities. More importantly however, is the fact that Hegesippus' presentation of Thebouthis' relationship to the sects is "highly schematized,"<sup>88</sup> and the, "artificiality of the scheme is shown by the fact that Thebouthis is associated with all seven Jewish sects at the same time, and by the unclear nature of the connection between the Jewish sects and their Gnostic successors and Thebouthis."<sup>89</sup> Bauckham has argued that because of the obvious polemical nature of the account, its capacity to provide concrete historical data is severely limited.<sup>90</sup> Thebouthis' relationship to these Jewish sects was further called into question by a thesis proposed by Stanley Isser in 1976. Isser persuasively argued that Eusebius has misquoted Hegesippus, replacing the more ambiguous κακῶν (evil,) with the more specific αἰρέσεων (sect).<sup>91</sup> Hegesippus' identification of Thebouthis with the seven Jewish sects then seems to be at best a conjectural reconstruction of heresy as a derivative of extrinsic and hostile Jewish factions, and certainly cannot be used to establish the geographical location of Thebouthis.<sup>92</sup>

Because of the evidence presented, the identification of Thebouthis with the instigators in the Corinthian congregation seems plausible. As one of the oldest non-canonical Christian documents,<sup>93</sup> the succession crisis depicted in *I Clement* may have been one of the first to occur. As such, to suggest that Hegesippus believed heresy had its origins in a succession crisis instigated by Thebouthis in Corinth is highly consistent with the early dating of the succession crisis of *I Clement*. Perhaps more

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<sup>87</sup> Bernier, "From Papias to Hegesippus," 40-41.

<sup>88</sup> Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 89.

<sup>89</sup> James Carlton Paget, *Jews, Christians and Jewish Christians in Antiquity*, (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 364.

<sup>90</sup> Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 90.

<sup>91</sup> Isser, *The Dositheans*, 11-15.

<sup>92</sup> Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, 90.

<sup>93</sup> Andrew Gregory, "1 Clement: An Introduction," *Expository Times*, 117:6, (2006), 223.

striking however are the internal evidences of *1 Clement* that coincide well with the story of Thebouthis as it is presented by Hegesippus. Andrew Gregory has noted the following about the occasion of *1 Clement*:

The purpose of the letter and the occasion that gave rise to it are clearly stated, even if precise details are lacking. The church in Rome is aware of conflict in the church at Corinth, and writes to them in order that peace may be restored (1:1; 63:4; 65:1). Some younger men have deposed their elders (or presbyters) even though their conduct was honourable and blameless (3:3; 44:6) with the result that there is now factionalism and internal dissent (*stasis*) in the church, albeit at the instigation of only a few (47:6; 1:1).<sup>94</sup>

Bernier too identifies the issues surrounding *1 Clement* as being related to a usurpation or “coup,” which has taken place in the Corinthian congregation.<sup>95</sup> While Bauer’s reading of *1 Clement* as “an anti-heretical missive” has been heavily criticized in light of his controversial “Bauer Thesis,”<sup>96</sup> his assertion that the letter is a response to a heretical outbreak corresponds well to the Hegesippean construal of heresy as a derivation of succession crisis.<sup>97</sup> The author of the epistle states that it is in response to, “a few headstrong and self-willed persons,” who have attempted

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<sup>94</sup> Gregory, “1 Clement,” 223.

<sup>95</sup> “*1 Clement* speaks of conflict within the Corinthian Christian community. In particular *1 Clement* speaks of an attempted ‘coup’ at Corinth, wherein a group of upstarts sought to seize control from the rightful rulers (from Clement’s perspective) of the church.” Bernier, “From Papias to Hegesippus,” 44.

<sup>96</sup> Paul A. Hartog, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Early Christian Contexts: Reconsidering the Bauer Thesis*, (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015), 47-51.

<sup>97</sup> Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, (Trans. Paul J. Achtemeier; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1971), 95-129.

“detestable and unholy sedition.”<sup>98</sup> The author accuses this individual of possessing “abominable jealousy...concerning the priesthood,”<sup>99</sup> and that they “desir[ed] that they themselves should be exalted.”<sup>100</sup> It is noteworthy that Hegesippus suggests that Thebouthis corrupted the church because he was jealous that he himself had not been made bishop of the congregation.<sup>101</sup> The author of *Clement* also suggests that this conflict had challenged the faith of those in the community in a way consistent with heresy: “Your division hath perverted many; it hath brought many to despair, many to doubting, and all of us to sorrow.”<sup>102</sup> The author of *I Clement* argues that the mode of electing a bishop had been set previously by the apostles, and thus dispute over the office was inconsistent with the gospel.<sup>103</sup> The solution proposed by the author is that the perpetrator “retire” or “depart” from the congregation so as not to allow the strife to continue.<sup>104</sup> This solution is uniquely suited to solve a debate of succession, as without a competing authority the argument would effectively become obsolete. While a more thorough investigation of the text of *I Clement* is certainly warranted, it is unfortunately outside the purview of this article. However, initial observations suggest a reconstruction of the occasion of *I Clement* is highly consistent with an identification of Thebouthis with the usurpers of Corinth.

## CONCLUSION

I have argued that the fragments of Hegesippus found in Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* may preserve a partial account of the succession crisis at Corinth to which *I Clement* is a response. Hegesippus’ depiction of the introduction of heresy into the “virgin” church is thus intimately tied to issues of succession and individual apostasy, rather than more traditional views surrounding scriptural exegesis and corrupt theology.

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<sup>98</sup> *I Clement* 1:1. This and all following translations will be from the J.B. Lightfoot translation. See J.B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 2, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1890), 5-188.

<sup>99</sup> *I Clement* 14:1; 43:2.

<sup>100</sup> *I Clement* 39:1.

<sup>101</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, 4.22.5.

<sup>102</sup> *I Clement* 46:9.

<sup>103</sup> *I Clement* 42:2-5; 44:1-4.

<sup>104</sup> *I Clement* 54:2.

Considering that Hegesippus' work is apologetic, reconstructions of his *Memoirs* ought to take seriously the suggestion that they may have contained additional narratives relating to succession crisis in the early Church.

## VEHSTEDT: CONTINUITY IN THE FACE OF CHANGE



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*Scott Vehstedt*

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CONTINUITY IN THE FACE OF SOCIAL CHANGE:  
DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS AND THE UNITED  
METHODIST CHURCH'S INSTITUTIONAL  
CONSERVATISM ON SEXUALITY

INTRODUCTION

In the wake of the Gay Liberation movement that flourished during the 1960s and 1970s, Protestant churches were forced to grapple with crafting policies toward homosexuality. As gay men and women demanded acceptance in the public sphere, so too did they demand it in matters of theology. Although sexual preference was historically a matter that the United Methodist Church (UMC) left to parishioners and their local clergy, the rise of LGBTQ activism brought non-heteronormative sexuality into the mainstream of politics, culture, and religion.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the 1970s Protestant denominations, including the UMC, were forced to address this cultural shift through policy.

In 1972, after long and anguishing debate, the UMC introduced language into the *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* stating homosexuality to be incompatible with Christian teachings despite also calling homosexuals “persons of sacred worth” in need of “ministry and guidance.”<sup>2</sup> This language, seemingly ambivalent, was born of

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<sup>1</sup> Dorothy Lowe Williams and United Methodist Church (U.S.) Committee to Study Homosexuality, *The Church Studies Homosexuality: A Study for the United Methodist Groups Using the Report of the Committee to Study Homosexuality* (Nashville: Cokesbury, 1994), 5.

<sup>2</sup> John L. Schreiber, ed., *Journal of the 1972 General Conference of The United Methodist Church: Volume I* (The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, 1972), 1057, accessed March 17, 2013, <http://archive.org/stream/journalatlantal01unit#page/n5/mode/2up>. The

compromise between pro- and anti-LGBTQ inclusion factions. It was then adopted by the General Conference, the central legislative body of the church that meets every four years to make policy and law for Methodists worldwide. Originally conceived in 1790, the General Conference is less an authoritative body than a populist one; it has historically allowed individual localities to craft their own policies. This has afforded Methodists tremendous leeway in their theology.<sup>3</sup> The UMC's position on homosexuality does not afford such leeway and has thus become the most divisive issue in the church since slavery.

This study seeks to address the query of why Methodism, a socially liberal denomination, has not adopted a more progressive stance toward the LGBTQ community, even as public opinion in the United States has shifted toward full acceptance. Since the more conservative 1970s, why have Methodists maintained their policy that homosexuality is incompatible with Christianity, even as they continue to endorse a litany of progressive positions on other issues?

At present, the most common interpretation of the UMC's view of LGBTQ sexuality is rooted in demographics. This is discussed at greater length in the next section, but since the 1960s, traditional mainline

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*Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* will be referenced as the *Book of Discipline* or just *Discipline* for the remainder. Methodism was adapted from the larger doctrine of the Church of England, maintaining many of the social principles, but removing some of the more dogmatic elements. All twenty-five of the denomination's founding principles can be found at: The United Methodist Church, *The Articles of Religion of the United Methodist Church*, accessed April 3, 2016, <http://archives.umc.org/interior.asp?mid=1648>.

<sup>3</sup> James Dixon, *Methodism in America* (London: Sold by John Mason, 1849), 217-221. British Methodist historian James Dixon, who chronicled his journey through America, offered an intriguing analysis of this establishment. Noting that English Methodists are legally obligated to maintain the tenants of John Wesley, Dixon reflected that American Methodists were reluctant to use their church as a political tool. The delegation seemed less interested in "governing" and more interested in acquiescing to policies that would keep the constituents happy. Dixon attributed this modesty in the use of authority to the spirit of America in the late eighteenth century. As a foreign observer, his insightful evaluation is frequently cited by American Methodist historians.



religious institutions have experienced declining numbers of parishioners as both the secular left and the religious right have grown.<sup>4</sup> More socially liberal congregations in the North and West (USA) have been hurt the most by this trend, leading to a relative increase in power for conservative congregations from the South and Midwest (USA) as well as overseas. This demographic shift in church membership suggests that the reason for the UMC's conservative position toward LGBTQ people is that the church has become more conservative as liberals have abandoned religion. Analysis of both the archival record and the votes of the General Conference for the past several decades portrays a different picture.

Focusing on the 1970s and early 1980s, this article demonstrates that demographic shifts cannot be enough to explain why the church has not adopted a more liberal position toward the LGBTQ community. Since 1972, the percentage of delegates to the General Conference representing more conservative southern and African delegations has risen starkly. Yet over this same period, the General Conference has edged closer to revoking the "incapability" language than it ever did when the denomination was evenly divided between liberals and conservatives. During the 1970s, when the proscriptions against homosexuality were initially passed and strengthened, the North and South maintained near parity in their balance of power.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ross Douthat, *Bad Religion: How We Became a Nation of Heretics* (New York: Free Press, 2012), 3–5; E. J. Dionne Jr., *Souled Out: Reclaiming Faith and Politics After the Religious Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 32–33.

<sup>5</sup> See Figure 1. Sources: See John L. Schreiber, ed., *Journal of the 1972 General Conference of The United Methodist Church: Volume I* (The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, 1972), accessed March 17, 2013, <http://archive.org/stream/journalatlantal01unit#page/n5/mode/2up>; John L. Schreiber, ed., *Journal of the 1976 General Conference of the United Methodist Church: Volume I* (The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, 1976), accessed April 12, 2013, <http://archive.org/stream/journalportland01unit#page/n5/mode/2up>; John L. Schreiber, ed., *Journal of the 1984 General Conference of the United Methodist Church: Volume I* (The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, 1984), accessed April 12, 2013, <http://www.archive.org/details/journalbaltimore01unit>; *Daily Christian*

While the General Conference did not track its floor votes until 1980, and kept somewhat sporadic records thereafter, analysis of the existing records between 1980 and 1996 demonstrates that even as northern membership declined and the South became more ascendant in the General Conference, the votes toward LGBTQ issues became closer. In 1980 three-quarters of General Conference delegates voted to retain the UMC's incompatibility language, but by 1996 support fell to only 60 percent.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the conservative foreign delegation did not gain more than 10 percent of the vote share until 1992, two decades after homosexuality was first codified as incompatible with Christianity, making its influence minimal.

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*Advocate* (Nashville, Tennessee: The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, 1988.), accessed March 26, 2012, <http://www.archive.org/details/journalstlouis01unit>; *Daily Christian Advocate* (Nashville, Tennessee: The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, 1992.), accessed March 26, 2012, <http://www.archive.org/details/journallouisville01unit>; *Daily Christian Advocate* (Nashville, Tennessee: The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, 1996), accessed March 26, 2012, <http://www.archive.org/details/journaldenver01unit>; *Daily Christian Advocate* (Nashville, Tennessee: The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, accessed March 26, 2012, 2000), <http://www.archive.org/details/journalcleveland01unit>; The United Methodist Church, *General Conference Delegates By Jurisdiction*, accessed March 12, 2013, <http://www.gc2004.org/interior.asp?ptid=17&mid=3660>; The United Methodist Church, *The United Methodist Church 2008 General Conference Delegate Distribution*, accessed March 12, 2013, [http://www.umc.org/atf/cf/%7BDB6A45E4-C446-4248-82C8-E131B6424741%7D/2008\\_DELEGATE\\_COUNT-2007-05-30.PDF](http://www.umc.org/atf/cf/%7BDB6A45E4-C446-4248-82C8-E131B6424741%7D/2008_DELEGATE_COUNT-2007-05-30.PDF), and The United Methodist Church, *2012 General Conference of the United Methodist Church*, accessed March 12, 2013, [http://www.umc.org/atf/cf/%7Bdb6a45e4-c446-4248-82c8-e131b6424741%7D/2012GC\\_DELEGATE\\_DISTRIBUTION\\_11-30-2010.PDF](http://www.umc.org/atf/cf/%7Bdb6a45e4-c446-4248-82c8-e131b6424741%7D/2012GC_DELEGATE_DISTRIBUTION_11-30-2010.PDF). I was unable to acquire the delegate totals for 1980.

<sup>6</sup> Amanda Udis-Kessler, *Queer Inclusion in the United Methodist Church: New Approaches in Sociology* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 194.



Likewise, if demographic shifts were enough to explain the church's conservative stance on homosexuality, then one would expect the UMC to have reversed its liberal stance on a slew of other issues such as its pro-choice stance on abortion, its pro-gun control position, its call for civil rights for minorities, its consistent admonition against war, or its support for universal healthcare as a fundamental right. True enough that it is more difficult to change an existing policy than to craft a new one, but the blanket adoption of liberal positions and relative lack of challenge to them suggests that the exclusion of full rights for the LGBTQ community is a divisive outlier in an otherwise progressive social creed.

In place of the demographic shift thesis, this article argues that the desire for unity and continuity led more liberal congregations to accept the church's conservative position on homosexuality in exchange for certain concessions, such as welcoming LGBTQ parishioners into the church and recognizing LGBTQ civil rights. Indeed, it was liberals who brought homosexuality up for debate in 1972, hoping to have a civil rights plank for LGBTQ peoples adopted by the General Conference. While they succeeded in promoting gay rights in society they inadvertently opened the door to the incapability language in the church.

The history of the UMC is one of schisms and mergers and neither liberals nor conservatives wish to see the church suffer a schism over questions of sexuality. This has led to a series of compromises in which the church has presented mixed messages to members of the LGBTQ. The record of the General Conference demonstrates that when the "incapability" and "sacred worth" language was adopted in 1972 by the UMC, no one was particularly happy. However, the compromise allowed

both liberals and conservatives to save face, and more importantly, stay united. This was extremely important to a denomination that had only unified in 1968 with the union of the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church (EUBC), two Wesleyan bodies that shared similar doctrine.<sup>7</sup> The statements of the delegates to the General Conference show conclusively that unity was on everyone's mind.

Beginning with a brief review of some of the literature on this topic, I will explore the otherwise liberal positions of the UMC, before examining how and why Methodists amended the *Discipline* in 1972. I will also demonstrate through analysis of the church's records that Methodists are not becoming more conservative per se, so much as they are attempting to appease both liberal and conservative membership through crafting specific policies and statements. The article will explore how and why Methodists have preferred imperfect and ambiguous policies that maintain unity to possible schism and theological purity. In so doing, this article attempts to make an important intervention that helps us understand how the history of the UMC has informed Methodist attitudes toward dealing with complex theological grievances and disagreements without offering an argument that is too broadly rooted in Protestant traditions in general.

## **INTERPRETING THE UMC'S TREATMENT OF UMC POLICIES TOWARD LGBTQ PEOPLE**

The UMC's 1972 decision rests at the intersection of several strands of history, including the history of Protestantism, American culture, and of the church itself. It is on this last count, that scholarship has thus fallen short. Existing literature tends to rely too heavily on trends relating to Protestantism in general, as produced by broad cultural and demographic shifts in the United States. On the other side of the spectrum, scholars and theologians argue narrowly about the theological debate; what is the true interpretation of the Bible's stance on homosexuality? This article will not weigh in on this question but, as I will later point out,

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<sup>7</sup> Dean M. Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing* (Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1972), 6. At the completion of this merger, the UMC became the largest mainline Protestant denomination in the United States with a membership of almost twelve million parishioners. Nearly nine out of ten members of the UMC came from the Methodist Church.

examine how Methodists have concluded that the evidence is largely inconclusive.

Since the end of the Civil War, American Protestantism has been divided into a, “Two-Party System,” separated between Evangelical or “orthodox” factions and mainline or “modernist” factions. By the early twentieth century, this division was acute as Evangelicals adopted an ever-more literalist view of religion, while the mainline denominations attempted to bridge theology with science, history, and culture.<sup>8</sup> The UMC held a rather unique place in this fight as it straddled the line between Evangelical and mainline, with its southern congregations adopting more of the former and its northern congregations the latter. Still, there was not much infighting between the two sections in part because of the pluralistic nature of Methodism. Mainline denominations, including most Methodists, adopted a social gospel catered to making sense of the world around them in naturalistic and tolerant terms.<sup>9</sup> This feature of Methodism became essential to understanding how Methodists would deal with the debate over homosexuality.

In the late twentieth century, Protestantism was forced to grapple with crafting policies regarding homosexuality. The United Presbyterian Church, Presbyterian Church US, Disciples of Christ, Episcopal Church, American Lutheran Church, as well as others, all launched studies of homosexuality at some point during the 1970s. The denominations mostly supported LGBTQ rights in society, while denying full acceptance within the respective churches. Protestants tended to also ban openly gay clergy. One notable exception was the United Church of Christ, which not only supported LGBTQ rights, but also became the first denomination to ordain an openly gay candidate.<sup>10</sup> The Protestant reaction to the homosexuality debate was so widespread that, as Wendy Cadge points out, “By the end of the 1970s, all of the mainline churches except the American Baptists had

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<sup>8</sup> James L. Guth, John C. Green, Corwin E. Smidt, Lyman A. Kellstedt, and Margaret M. Poloma, *The Bully Pulpit: The Politics of Protestant Clergy* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997), 9.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>10</sup> Jeannine Gramick and Robert Nugent, “Homosexuality: Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish Issues; A Fishbone Tale” in Richard Hasbany, ed., *Homosexuality and Religion* (New York: Haworth Press, 1989), 21-23.

made a formal denominational statement about homosexuality.”<sup>11</sup> Indeed, mainline churches may not have been able to offer the LGBTQ people the ecclesiastical comfort they desired, but they were integral in opening up avenues of debate and discussion that provided some measure of safe space.<sup>12</sup>

Since the 1970s, the number of parishioners in liberal congregations has declined. Sociologists and conservative theologians have argued that the UMC’s policy on homosexuality can be explained by this fact.<sup>13</sup> These authors note that membership rates in the southern jurisdictions have remained relatively stable, while the more liberal northern and western congregations decline in membership each year. The conservatives argue that liberal congregations lost membership because they retreated from the core doctrine of traditional Biblical interpretation. Precisely because of the ecumenical, doctrine-diluted nature of liberal churches, members asked themselves why they needed religion at all. The result was that beginning in the late 1950s, some liberals abandoned religion altogether, while others sought structure through the more rigid doctrine offered by conservatives. The large African ministry further bolsters support for conservatives as the socially conservative Africans comprise most of the foreign delegation.<sup>14</sup> While there is a certain *prima facie* truth to this narrative, the emphasis on the decline of liberal religion represents a retroactive narrative with little explanatory power. It does not, for instance, explain why mainline denominations continue to endorse liberal positions on a host of other issues.

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<sup>11</sup> Wendy Cadge, “Vital Conflicts: The Mainline Denominations Debate Homosexuality,” in *The Quiet Hand of God: Faith-Based Activism and the Public Role of Mainline Protestantism*, ed. Robert Wuthnow and John H. Evans (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 269.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 271.

<sup>13</sup> See Dave Shiflett, *Exodus: Why Americans Are Fleeing Liberal Churches for Conservative Christianity* (New York: Sentinel, 2005); Dean M. Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing* (Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1972); and Douglas E. Cowan, *The Remnant Spirit: Conservative Reform in Mainline Protestantism* (Connecticut: Praeger, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> See Bruce W. Robbins, *A World Parish?* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004).

Of course, not everyone accepts that liberal religion is truly in decline.<sup>15</sup> Those more optimistic about liberal religion, such as theologian and historian Thomas E. Frank, believed that it was the pessimism surrounding mainline denominations that contributed to a perpetual “rhetoric of crisis.”<sup>16</sup> Frank argued that much of the statistical evidence demonstrating the decline of Protestantism could be attributed to the decline in birthrates after the baby boomer generation, a point echoed by Robert Wuthnow and John Evans.<sup>17</sup> Frank also argued that mainline denominations, in being so closely akin to American culture, truly represent the core values of American society. By this, Frank is referring to the fact that mainline denominations have tended to espouse policy positions more in keeping with popular politics in the United States. Indeed, as the authors of *Bully Pulpit* relate in an anecdote about just how mainstream mainline denomination are, when President Theodore Roosevelt wanted to meet with a, “typical American audience” he would go “to a Methodist Church.”<sup>18</sup> They go on to refer to Methodists as the “solid center” of American religious life.<sup>19</sup>

Likewise, most political and social leaders in the United States were members of mainline denominations, not evangelicals. It was only because Evangelical churches were on the outside of the social norm that they could electrify their base, who opposed the prevailing civic laws and

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<sup>15</sup> For more on this, see Robert Wuthnow and John H. Evans, *The Quiet Hand of God*, 5–7, and Dionne Jr., *Souled Out*, 32–34. While Dionne Jr. is more inclined to take the decline rhetoric seriously, both sets of authors argue that liberal religion is less in decline than conservative pundits and theologians would have us believe.

<sup>16</sup> See Thomas E. Frank, *Polity, Practice, and the Mission of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press; Revised edition, 2006). The “rhetoric of crisis” refers to the pessimism that surrounds mainline Protestantism in terms of declining membership, divisiveness over homosexuality, and uninformed, disenchanting laity. Frank argued that mainline Protestants were as influential as they ever were in terms of ministering to the poor, holding positions of leadership, and representing society’s values.

<sup>17</sup> Wuthnow and Evans, *The Quiet Hand of God*, 6–7.

<sup>18</sup> Guth, et al., *The Bully Pulpit*, 36.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

increasingly secular society.<sup>20</sup> As Ross Douthat has pointed out, conservative congregations have grown steadily since the 1960s at least in part because they were so small to begin with that there was little option but for them to grow.<sup>21</sup> This has created the perception that conservative religion is on the rise while liberal religion is in retreat, at least among Protestants.

Other authors have examined the UMC's position on homosexuality by reflecting specifically on the theological debate.<sup>22</sup> Both the pro-inclusion liberals and the conservatives attempt to use scripture to justify support or prohibition of homosexuality. The most prominent authors on the side of full inclusion for gays and lesbians are sociologist Amanda Udis-Kessler and former minister Jimmy Creech.<sup>23</sup> Pro-LGBTQ authors have argued that scripture is static while an individual's relationship with God is living and evolving. They consider the practical effects of translation on the meaning of the text, and argue that scripture is a tool, not a literal truth. Likewise, the authors in favor of full inclusion point out that the terms "homosexual" and "marriage" have carried different meanings to different cultures at different times.<sup>24</sup> Pro-inclusion ministers have tended to focus on the power and benefits of a mutually respectful monogamous relationship, regardless of whether the love in that

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<sup>20</sup> Frank, *Polity, Practice, and the Mission of the United Methodist Church*, 26-30.

<sup>21</sup> Douthat, *Bad Religion*, 60–61.

<sup>22</sup> See Jeffery S. Siker, ed., *Homosexuality in the Church: Both Sides of the Debate* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/J. Knox Press, 1994); Jeffrey S. Siker, *Homosexuality and Religion: An Encyclopedia* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2007); Stephen Hunt, ed., *Contemporary Christianity and LGBT Sexualities* (Farham, Surrey, England: Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub, 2009); John S. Munday, *Hate is Sin: Putting Faces on the Debate Over Human Sexuality* (New York: Routledge, 2008); and C.K. Robertson, ed., *Religion & Sexuality: Passionate Debates* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006).

<sup>23</sup> See Udis-Kessler, *Queer Inclusion in the United Methodist Church*; and Keith Hartman, *Congregations in Conflict* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1996).

<sup>24</sup> See Charles E. Bennison, "Rethinking Marriage—Again," *Anglican Theological Review* 79, no. 4 (Fall 1997).



relationship is between a man and a woman, or two members of the same sex.

Conservatives on the other hand, have tended to take a position based on tradition, and the transcendent nature of values. Some of the most notable conservative authors of the UMC are Maxie Dunnam, Newton Maloney, and Riley Case who continue to be well respected in conservative circles.<sup>25</sup> Believing the Bible to be the literal truth, these authors see any deviation from scripture as dangerous and tend to reject the idea that sexual mores are fluid. Indeed, the conservative interpretation contends that homosexuality is a choice that represents a personal failing. Thus, religious conservatives see LGBTQ inclusion as a perversion of the faith.

Eschewing the theological debate in favor of historical interpretation, it is the contention of this article that not enough attention has been paid to the archival record and history of the UMC in understanding how and why it adopted the language that it did in the *Discipline*. The church's own history of schisms, mergers, and theological diversity is instrumental in the policy debates of the twentieth century, and complicates the notion that the homosexuality debate can be understood by the decline of the northern congregations or liberal religion more generally.

## A LIBERAL SOCIAL CREED

To place the homosexuality debate in context, it is necessary to briefly consider some of the liberal social creed of the UMC. With the exception of gay and lesbian inclusion, which several Protestant denominations continue to reject, Methodists have traditionally been a very progressive denomination. The UMC has supported women's rights and minority rights, while also being highly critical of capitalism, gun ownership, and aggressive foreign policy.<sup>26</sup> The UMC admonishes against war, having made public statements opposing fighting in Indochina and

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<sup>25</sup> See Maxie Dunnam and Newton Maloney, ed., *Staying the Course: Supporting the Church's Position on Homosexuality* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003); and Riley Case, *Evangelical and Methodist: A Popular History* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004).

<sup>26</sup> Schreiber, *Journal of the 1972 General Conference of The United Methodist Church: Volume II*, 1053–1054, 1062–1063.

later against President George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq. The UMC referred to American involvement in Vietnam as a "crime against humanity," and supported non-violent disobedience against the draft as a civic right.<sup>27</sup> As the UMC has reaffirmed its liberal positions in each General Conference, the idea that the UMC is becoming more conservative is suspect.

The Methodist Church was one of the first denominations to ordain women, officially recognizing all women's right to preach in 1956. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, had licensed Sarah Crosby to preach in 1761, making her one of the earliest female ministers.<sup>28</sup> The church made many statements in favor of gender equality for females beginning early in the twentieth century, and remains pro-choice on abortion, believing the issue to be fundamentally a question of a woman's right to control her body. The UMC favored access to contraceptives and denounced any practice that denied women equality in employment or medical care.<sup>29</sup> In 1976 the UMC became the first denomination to advocate divorce ceremonies meant to help the healing process for couples who wished to revoke their vows. On issues, such as divorce and abortion, the UMC was able to make policy with respect to the reality of people's needs, while maintaining that they were not advocating support for the practice itself.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 1046.

<sup>28</sup> The United Methodist Church, *Why Does the United Methodist Church Ordain Women?*, accessed March 27, 2013, <http://www.umc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=IwL4KnN1LtH&b=4746355&ct=3169209>.

<sup>29</sup> Schreiber, *Journal of the 1972 General Conference of The United Methodist Church: Volume II*, 1057–1058. In 1980 the North Central Jurisdiction elected the first female to the rank of Bishop, again representing one of the more progressive decisions in mainline Protestantism. See *The Associated Press*, "Delegates Elect First Woman Bishop," July 18, 1980, PM cycle, accessed April 2, 2013, <http://www.lexisnexis.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/hottopics/lnacademic/>.

<sup>30</sup> John Dart, "Methodist Rites Aim at Easing Pain of Divorce," *Los Angeles Times*, October 2, 1976, accessed March 28, 2013, <http://proxyau.wrlc.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/docview/158062249?accountid=8285>.

The UMC has also been one of the more liberal denominations with respect to race. Its first *Discipline* included an anti-slavery plank that stated slavery to be, “contrary to the golden law of God,” although this was not enforced in the South.<sup>31</sup> The UMC called for racial and gender equality in civil rights, in the workplace, and in all matters of church administration. Going a step further than simply denouncing racism, the UMC supported reparations for the crime of slavery, Jim Crow, and discriminatory hiring.<sup>32</sup> The church also issued strong statements condemning apartheid in South Africa, and colonization in Angola, Mozambique, and other African countries. The Methodists routinely criticized the U.S. government for supporting, “the continued persecution of persons in South Africa,” while also advising parishioners not to support U.S. corporations doing business in South Africa. Methodists called for all U.S. corporations to adopt affirmative action, and for all corporations to make their investment history public. The goal was to inform parishioners how corporations were investing in South Africa, so that only businesses that were non-discriminatory would be supported.<sup>33</sup>

Methodists favored better conditions for prisoners in a failed correctional system that was better at punishing than rehabilitating. The UMC supported collective bargaining rights for workers in both private and public occupations, and were long-time champions of, “fair wages for a fair day’s work.” The *Social Principles* denounced economic stratification resulting from capitalist greed. Methodists likewise supported the rights of undocumented workers to organize and fight for the economic and social benefits enjoyed by all citizens, citing education and healthcare as human rights, not merely privileges of citizens.<sup>34</sup>

While one might reasonably expect a conservative church to denounce unpopular wars or declare support for equality, would it be expected to support divorce and abortion rights, or the rights of undocumented workers? The UMC had conservative influences operating within it in the 1970s just as it always had; yet, its social creed clearly reflects a variety of liberal planks many of which are to the left of the

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<sup>31</sup> W. H. Daniels, *History of Methodism* (New York: Philips & Hunt, 1879), 499.

<sup>32</sup> Schreiber, *Journal of the 1972 General Conference of The United Methodist Church: Volume II*, 1058.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 1053–1054.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 1062– 1063.

current Democratic Party. This demonstrates that at the very least, liberal forces had the capacity to enact legislation reflecting progressive values. So why are LGBTQ rights outliers to the otherwise liberal social creed?

## **INCORPORATING ANTI-HOMOSEXUAL LANGUAGE INTO THE *BOOK OF DISCIPLINE***

Methodism, like Protestantism in general, saw declining membership rates through the 1960s and beyond; while LGBTQ civil rights movements simultaneously became more ascendant. Before 1972, no Wesleyan body had mentioned homosexuality in its official position, as the subject was usually only discussed in private between a congregation member and his or her minister.<sup>35</sup> At the 1972 General Conference however, socially liberal UMC ministers would make the fateful decision to attempt to introduce language that would offer support for LGBTQ civil rights. This attempt at full inclusion was not entirely unexpected by conservative ministers, as it represented the dramatic changes in American culture.<sup>36</sup>

1950s America maintained a resolutely heterosexual culture that restricted homosexuality in the media, in business, in healthcare, in government protection, and elsewhere. There were in fact more homosexuals purged during the height of McCarthyism than there were communists.<sup>37</sup> As historian Elaine Tyler May has demonstrated, government officials believed homosexuality to be as dangerous as communism.<sup>38</sup> Historian Robert O. Self has likewise noted that, “As late as 1968, homosexual acts remained a felony in every state except Illinois,

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<sup>35</sup> Williams and United Methodist Church (U.S.) Committee to Study Homosexuality, *The Church Studies Homosexuality*, 5.

<sup>36</sup> See Edward B. Fiske, “Color Some Of the Churches Lavender: Homosexuals,” *The New York Times*, March 28, 1971, sec. The Week in Review, accessed April 22, 2013, <http://proxyau.wrlc.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/docview/119357574?accountid=8285>.

<sup>37</sup> George Chauncey, *Why Marriage?: The History Shaping Today’s Debate Over Gay Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 5-11, 20.

<sup>38</sup> See Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

New York, and New Jersey.”<sup>39</sup> The church first thought of homosexuality as a personal failing, a spiritual problem in which a person was giving in to lust. In the late nineteenth century, many Protestant organizations were more concerned with immigrants’ tendency for immorality and drinking, than they were with homosexuality.<sup>40</sup> Over time homosexuality began to be thought of as a medical problem or sickness, not necessarily the fault of the individual, but a disorder nonetheless that could potentially be cured once it was better understood.<sup>41</sup> Americans associated homosexuality with a disordering of gender roles, unnatural and dangerous to society.

The 1960s and 1970s were periods of tremendous change for gays and lesbians, with the rise of LGBTQ civil rights movements. Particularly in the 1970s, many gays were willing to forego their previous caution and enter the public sphere representing their own identity as full citizens.<sup>42</sup> In March 1971, members of the LGBTQ community seeking more from their churches, met in New York for the National Conference on Religion and the Homosexual. Not content with mere toleration, many of the gays and lesbians sought to influence theology by taking control of their own congregations. In several major cities homosexuals became the dominant group within the congregation.<sup>43</sup>

The UMC, like other Protestant denominations, was clearly not immune to the rise of LGBTQ activism. Conservatives feared that the radical climate of the 1970s, which had provided a flurry of new ideologies and influences, would negatively impact the purity of Methodism. One member of the 1972 General Conference wrote to his bishop expressing the widespread concern that, “some may take offense at

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<sup>39</sup> Robert O. Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012), 81.

<sup>40</sup> Chauncey, *Why Marriage?*, 15.

<sup>41</sup> Gramick and Nugent, “Homosexuality: Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish issues; a fishbone tale,” 11-12.

<sup>42</sup> John Gallagher and Chris Bull, *Perfect Enemies: The Religious Right, the Gay Movement, and the Politics of the 1990s* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1996), 4.

<sup>43</sup> Edward B. Fiske, “Color Some Of the Churches Lavender: Homosexuals,” *The New York Times*, March 28, 1971, sec. The Week in Review, accessed April 22, 2013, <http://proxyau.wrlc.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/docview/119357574?accountid=8285>.

what perhaps may be considered the liberal, radical, or inflammatory speeches by some of the delegates.” In response to this fear, the bishop responded with words of encouragement, reminding the parishioner that the General Conference was being held in Atlanta, so at least the conservatives would have a form of home-field advantage.<sup>44</sup>

Other delegates were less fearful of liberal influence, believing conformity of ideology to be unnecessary and ahistorical to Methodism. Dr. Outler, for instance, a member of a committee assigned to recommend doctrinal changes, poignantly remarked on the first day of the conference that “United Methodist ways with doctrine has always been more emotive and practical than dogmatic...” He went on to say, “This, in an age of confusion like ours, has made for a bewildering spectrum of doctrinal diversity... Somewhere in the United Methodist Church there is somebody urging every kind of theology...”<sup>45</sup> While Dr. Outler was correct in his historical understanding of Methodist diversity, he would nevertheless become entangled in the homosexuality debate, just as his fellow colleagues would. Furthermore, the theological diversity that had been so integral to Methodism’s rapid dissemination in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was not going to be possible in a church of the 1970s that sought more structure and universality.

Conservative apprehensions about liberal intentions came to fruition when a predominantly liberal committee’s recommendation to support LGBTQ civil rights was debated on the floor. The conversation started when Mr. Russell Kibler of the South Indiana Annual Conference asked Dr. Robert Moon, the chairman of the committee, to explain what supporting LGBTQ civil rights entailed. Dr. Moon, representing the California-Nevada Annual Conference, responded that homosexuals were being persecuted in society and that it was unjust for homosexuals to lose their jobs upon employers discovering that they were gay or lesbian. In keeping with the church’s position of supporting the oppressed wherever they might be found, Dr. Moon maintained that the UMC ought to support LGBTQ protection by defending civil rights for gays and lesbians. After this clarification, Kibler responded that the UMC should take no part in

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<sup>44</sup> John L. Schreiber, ed., *Journal of the 1972 General Conference of The United Methodist Church: Volume I* (The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, 1972), 243, accessed March 17, 2013, <http://archive.org/stream/journalatlantal01unit#page/n5/mode/2up>.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 281.

supporting homosexuality as it was against Christian teachings. One of Kibler's colleagues suggested keeping the support for civil rights but weakening the statement by replacing the word "homosexual" with "all persons."<sup>46</sup> Despite objections, most delegates spoke in favor of supporting civil rights with the inclusion of the "all persons" phrase.

When Mr. Hancock of South Georgia took the floor, he shifted the debate to the question of whether or not support of LGBTQ civil rights was supporting homosexuality as "normal."<sup>47</sup> This question was a rather obvious ploy designed to catch the liberals in a trap whereby they would have to either say that homosexuality was not normal, in which case they alienated the community they sought to defend, or they would have to say homosexual acts were normal, in which case they would likely lose the support of moderates. Referencing the Kinsey Reports on American sexuality, Dr. Moon cleverly retorted that there were many sexual acts pervasive in society that were considered normal, yet would not be supported openly in the church. His committee was not trying to address what was "normal," rather he argued that the language was meant to protect the persecuted. Nevertheless, the debate on sexual norms was brought to the floor, where all manner of assertions was put forward, including the notion that homosexuals were prone to kidnapping and raping children.<sup>48</sup>

The debate should have adjourned for lunch, but by popular support, it continued into extended time. Eventually, Mr. Don J. Hand of Southwest Texas proposed keeping the committee's pro-civil rights language, while adding a final clause that stated the church to be against homosexuality in principle. This proposal was supported by Mr. Hammell Shipp of Southern New Jersey, who emphatically stated homosexuality to be incompatible with Christianity. Mr. Shipp preferred to go even further than Mr. Hand, and proposed that finding the "cause and cure of homosexuality" should be a job of all church agencies.<sup>49</sup> This recommendation was not ultimately accepted, although support for Mr. Hand's inclusion of the anti-homosexual language was strong enough to carry a majority of the delegation. The final version of the amendment

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 458.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 459.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 463.

adopted into the *Social Principles*, and reaffirmed in each quadrennial thereafter, reads:

Homosexuals no less than heterosexuals are persons of sacred worth, who need the ministry and guidance of the church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship which enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self. Further we insist that all persons are entitled to have their human and civil rights ensured, although we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.<sup>50</sup>

Although homosexuality was nearly recognized by the church in an affirmative light, the inclusion of the final clause ultimately represented a failure to affirm the validity of gay and lesbian sexuality. While the language negatively portrayed homosexuals, it was not used to purge members of the congregation; there were no efforts by church officials to actively seek out the identities of gays or lesbians.

The passage of the anti-homosexual language in the *Social Principles* hurt the LGBTQ community's prospect for full inclusion in the church, but it was not really a victory for conservatives either. By simultaneously supporting LGBTQ civil rights but condemning homosexual acts, the church was attempting to take a moderate position that ended up being attacked from the left, the right, and the center. Professor Paul Ramsey of Princeton University was quoted in the *Chicago Tribune* as suggesting that the adopted language was, "clearly inadequate," and amounted to "pious platitude."<sup>51</sup> Several other news accounts took note of what Dr. Moon referred to as the "confused" position of the church, and most found other positions taken by the denomination, such as support for abortion, to be equally important news.

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<sup>50</sup> Schreiber, *Journal of the 1972 General Conference of The United Methodist Church: Volume II*, 1057.

<sup>51</sup> Richard Philbrick, "Methodists Get New Guidelines," *Chicago Tribune*, April 19, 1972, sec. b9, accessed April 17, 2013, <http://proxyau.wrlc.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/docview/170334499?accountid=8285>.



Commentators did not express any major surprise at the condemnation of homosexuality.<sup>52</sup>

Despite the arguments of those like sociologist Dean Kelley or journalist Dave Shiflett, who have attributed the decline of mainline liberal churches in the North to lack of strict Christian doctrine, in 1972 the northern and western jurisdictions controlled just under half of the votes at the General Conference. The southern and foreign delegation sent 512 of 998 voters, so while delegates that might be reasonably expected to vote conservatively were in the majority, it was a very narrow majority.<sup>53</sup> Unfortunately, the voting record of the General Conference was not recorded until 1980, so while the result of the vote is not available, it is highly unlikely that delegates voted along regional lines. Traditionally liberal delegates almost certainly voted with the conservatives, separating the issue of homosexuality from other liberal positions to which they maintained loyalty. This assertion is supported by the fact that the committee, which had accepted the incompatibility language, sent it to the floor for general debate by a vote of fifty-four to one, with two members abstaining.<sup>54</sup> While much of the committee was not present for this vote, the overwhelming support for the measure suggests that liberals were content to gain support for LGBTQ civil rights, even if that meant explicitly stating homosexuality to be incompatible with Christianity.

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<sup>52</sup> For typical examples of the response, see William R. Mackaye, "United Methodist Church Petitions Run Gamut From Baptism to Sex," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, April 22, 1972, sec. D29, accessed April 17, 2013,

<http://proxyau.wrlc.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/docview/148323169?accountid=8285>; and *Los Angeles Times*, "The Nation: Methodist Parley Condemns Homosexuality," April 27, 1972, sec. c2, accessed April 18, 2013,

<http://proxyau.wrlc.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/docview/156877803?accountid=8285>.

<sup>53</sup> In 1972, the two southern jurisdictions sent only six more delegates to the General Conference than the two northern jurisdictions. For a full list of all of the delegates, see John L. Schreiber, ed., *Journal of the 1972 General Conference of The United Methodist Church: Volume I*, 28–108.

<sup>54</sup> Schreiber, *Journal of the 1972 General Conference of The United Methodist Church: Volume II*, 1055.

Conservatives found support for civil rights acceptable, so long as the UMC would not consider homosexual acts to be Christian.

At the next General Conference in 1976, homosexuality was again a contentious topic of debate. The fundamental questions were largely the same as in 1972, but the tactics and rhetoric changed noticeably. In 1972, the Methodists were introducing language on the subject for the first time and had the opportunity to craft any statement they wanted without the burden of a precedent to fight. In 1976, there was an existing statement supported by a majority of the denomination. The only question was whether the condemnation would soften or go further.

The liberals appealed to the imperfectness of all people, and would suggest that even if homosexuality was in fact wrong, that was more reason to welcome the LGBTQ community to congregations where they might find salvation. Some of the conservatives wanted to rollback the language supporting gay and lesbian civil rights, though the majority was content to maintain the existing language while strengthening the condemnation of homosexuality via fiscal measures designed to repress pro-LGBTQ positions. Once again, the northern and southern delegations were in near parity as the South had a mere twelve delegate advantage. Furthermore, the North and West combined for 48 percent of the General Conference delegation, down only 1 percent from 1972.<sup>55</sup>

Mr. Keith Spare, representing LGBTQ groups, led the charge in favor of revoking the incompatibility language. He began with an impassioned statement on the nature of gay and lesbian suffering. He reminded his colleagues that, “We come before this body breaking a history of silence and invisibility which has surrounded this issue. This silence has been a perpetuation of untold suffering not only for our gay brothers and sisters and their families, but the entire Christian community.”<sup>56</sup> Shortly thereafter, Mr. Leonard Slutz of West Ohio sought to amend the *Social Principles* by adding a sentence that stated that the

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<sup>55</sup> The foreign delegates represented only 8 percent of the delegation, unchanged from 1972. For a full list of delegates see John L. Schreiber, ed., *Journal of the 1976 General Conference of the United Methodist Church: Volume I*, 27– 89, accessed on April 12, 2013, <http://archive.org/stream/journalportland01unit#page/n5/mode/2up>.

<sup>56</sup> Schreiber, *Journal of the 1976 General Conference of the United Methodist Church: Volume I*, 436.

UMC welcomed, “all persons regardless of sexual orientation.”<sup>57</sup> While some liberals did wish to overturn the incompatibility statement, the thrust of their effort sought not to repeal it, but rather to assuage its impact. K. June Goldman, a moderate from Iowa, responded to the more liberal members by suggesting that recognition of gays and lesbians as peoples of “sacred worth” was enough of an endorsement of the LGBTQ community.<sup>58</sup> Ultimately, the delegation rejected the proposal to welcome all parishioners regardless of sexual orientation.<sup>59</sup> In 1988 the UMC adopted this language, but only after several more prohibitions of homosexual behavior were passed.

Once again, the General Conference did not record the vote, making it unclear exactly how popular the decision was. However, given the fact that the delegates went on to pass a measure preventing openly homosexual church members from becoming counselors or social workers, which was endorsed by a unanimous committee vote of sixty-two to zero, it may be reasonably surmised that a majority of both liberal and conservative delegates favored withholding support for the LGBTQ community.<sup>60</sup> Proscriptions against spending funds in support of the LGBTQ community were also passed in 1976, making the 1972 language fiscally binding.<sup>61</sup>

In 1976, the UMC also debated launching a denomination-wide study of human sexuality, meant to inform the General Conference of opinions throughout the denomination and bring the newest scholarship to

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Goldman went on to reference some five thousand petitions sent to the General Conference, the majority of which, supported maintaining the incompatibility language. Schreiber, *Journal of the 1976 General Conference of the United Methodist Church: Volume I*, 437.

<sup>59</sup> *Facts on File World News Digest*, “Methodists Oppose Homosexuality,” December 18, 1976, accessed March 12, 2013, <http://www.lexisnexis.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/hottopics/lnacademic/>.

<sup>60</sup> John L. Schreiber, ed., *Journal of the 1976 General Conference of the United Methodist Church: Volume II* (The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, 1976), 1413, accessed April 12, 2013, <http://www.archive.org/details/journalportland02unit>.

<sup>61</sup> Williams and the Committee to Study Homosexuality, *The Church Studies Homosexuality*, 11; and Schreiber, *Journal of the 1976 General Conference of the United Methodist Church: Volume II*, 1752.

bear on the subject. Over 1,400 petitions against a study of sexuality flooded into the General Conference from around the United States in response. Mr. Freeman, who presented a report in favor of the study, suggested that most of the sentiment against the study was based on false assumptions, and urged his colleagues to act by stating that, “We have a responsibility of leadership ... We cannot simply refuse to act because the question is explosive.”<sup>62</sup> Opposition to the study was great however, and it came from both liberals and conservatives. A conservative minister offered the legitimate criticism that there was no clear rubric with which to measure the final results because it was unclear what standards the study would employ. This minister worried that the study would concentrate more on normative behavior and opinions in places like San Francisco while under-sampling Middle America.<sup>63</sup> A liberal minister worried less about the study being contaminated by bias and instead argued against it as an unnecessary waste of church dollars. She pointed out that, “...since we met the last time [1972], there have been more than 4,000 books published representing studies in individual and conference studies in sexuality.” She went on to reflect that it was naïve to believe that a denominational study might offer any new insight that had not yet been uncovered by secular society.<sup>64</sup> The coalition of liberal and conservative forces easily defeated the proposal to study sexuality. Not until 1991 would the General Conference sanction such a project.

The balance of power between the North and the South remained stable through the 1984 and 1988 General Conferences. In each conference the combined southern and foreign delegation controlled approximately 55 percent of the General Conference vote share. Interestingly, although the UMC would continue to move to the right on the homosexuality question by passing additional legislation against gays and lesbians, support for such measures declined. This trend continued into the 1990s and 2000s, supporting the assertion that demographic shifts

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<sup>62</sup> Schreiber, *Journal of the 1976 General Conference of the United Methodist Church: Volume I*, 501.

<sup>63</sup> Schreiber, *Journal of the 1976 General Conference of the United Methodist Church: Volume I*, 502.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 504.

are not responsible for the UMC's conservative stance on homosexuality.<sup>65</sup>

In the 1980 General Conference, delegates voted slightly more than three-to-one to maintain the anti-homosexual language, and while the vote on the prohibition of funding to any pro-gay group was not recorded, it did ultimately pass.<sup>66</sup> Delegates also favored keeping language to protect LGBTQ civil rights, and called upon the U.S. Congress to enact federal legislation to the same effect. The delegates likewise called for executive orders banning discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in federal agencies and the military.<sup>67</sup> Negative language stating a homosexual relationship to not be marriage was replaced with positive language stating a marriage to be between a man and a woman.<sup>68</sup> This minor semantic victory did nothing to promote gay and lesbian rights, but it did at least rephrase the gay marriage ban to avoid using negative language.

The UMC delegates did vote down a proposal to ban openly homosexual clergy, ensuring that ordination standards would continue to be determined by local Annual Conferences. Conservatives had attempted to ban openly gay ministers after the Southern New York Annual Conference retained Reverend Paul Abels, an openly gay minister of a New York City congregation.<sup>69</sup> By maintaining that homosexuality was incompatible with Christianity, but also leaving the door open to gay and

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<sup>65</sup> For a full list of all recorded votes, See Amanda Udis-Kessler, *Queer Inclusion in the United Methodist Church*, 194.

<sup>66</sup> Udis-Kessler, *Queer Inclusion in the United Methodist Church*, 194. See also John L. Schreiber, ed., *Journal of the 1980 General Conference of the United Methodist Church: Volume II* (The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, 1980), 776, accessed April 2, 2013, <http://www.archive.org/cletails/journalindiana02unit>.

<sup>67</sup> Schreiber, *Journal of the 1980 General Conference of the United Methodist Church: Volume II*, 801–802.

<sup>68</sup> George W. Cornell, "Methodist Church Maintains Firm Stand Against Homosexuals," *The Associated Press*, April 19, 1980, accessed March 12, 2013, <http://www.lexisnexis.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/hottopics/lnacademic/>.

<sup>69</sup> *The Globe and Mail*, "Church Won't Ban Ordination of Gays," April 24, 1980, sec. T.5, accessed April 28, 2013, <http://proxyau.wrlc.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/docview/386968101?accountid=8285>.

lesbian ministers, one minister reflected that, “the church prefers ambiguity to clarity.”<sup>70</sup>

Even as the church maintained the proscriptions of the 1970s, it also began to address the problem of homophobia. Approved by a wide margin, a 1980 church committee prepared a document on human sexuality designed to educate local congregations. A lengthy section of the document denounced homophobia as a waste of talent and intellect and reflected upon the pain and suffering that such fear and divisiveness causes.<sup>71</sup> Subsequent to the report, one of the social resolutions produced by the 1980 conference condemned homophobia as bigotry against people of sacred worth, and a waste of intellect and energy.<sup>72</sup> Needless to say, homosexuals were confused by the church’s positions. Many gays and lesbians found it contradictory to label homosexuality incompatible with Christian teaching, while also allowing ministers to be gay or lesbian and condemning homophobia. How could a person have civil rights and sacred worth, but also be incompatible with their God?

In 1984 the votes toward the incompatibility language and the ban on pro-gay funding were not recorded, but by a nearly six-to-four margin the General Conference would ban ministers from performing homosexual acts. The UMC had not favored banning homosexual acts in 1980 because the institution does not normally ban specific acts of ministers, such as smoking or drinking, lest the prohibitions be endless. Yet in 1984 conservative forces were successfully able to introduce, “fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness,” into the *Discipline* by a vote of 568 to 404.<sup>73</sup> Since homosexuals were not able to marry, this effectively meant

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<sup>70</sup> Russell Chandler, “Methodists Refuse to Bar Ordination of Gays but Renew Anti-Homosexual Stand,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 22, 1980, accessed February 26, 2013, <http://proxyau.wrlc.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxyau.wrlc.org/docview/162793249?accountid=8285>.

<sup>71</sup> Schreiber, *Journal of the 1980 General Conference of the United Methodist Church: Volume II*, 796–801.

<sup>72</sup> See United Methodist Church, *The Book of Resolutions* (Nashville: Methodist Publishing House, 1980).

<sup>73</sup> Russell Chandler, “Methodists Act to Shut Homosexual Loophole After Adverse Ruling,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 11, 1984, accessed April 3, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/153850902?accountid=8285>.

that the homosexual ministers would have to remain celibate if they wished to serve as ministers. In effect, this forced many aspiring LGBTQ ministers to abandon ordination. The vote revoked long-standing policy that allowed local regions to determine the standards of ordination. The decision reflected the twentieth-century, post-unification trend of the UMC towards a more centralized governing structure.

The one notable exception to the centralization of doctrine relates to Methodists living outside of the United States. Historically, foreigners were represented at the General Conference but were not allowed to vote. As a consolation, the UMC allowed foreigners the right to ignore those policies adopted by Americans that were repugnant to their own culture and customs. So while the foreign delegation could not always vote on social policy, it also had tremendous leeway not to follow the policy that was actually adopted. Even after gaining voting rights, foreign delegations are still not obligated to enforce the General Conference's policies. This is significant because the foreign delegation votes very conservatively on issues of social policy that affect American parishioners, while also being free to nullify any liberal positions that come out of the mother church. This has led many of the more liberal pastors of the 1990s and 2000s to suggest amending the *Discipline* to allow American jurisdictions to likewise cater the General Conference's policies to local desires.<sup>74</sup>

## METHODISTS COMMISSION A STUDY OF HOMOSEXUALITY

By the end of the 1980s the UMC had moved from an essentially moderate, albeit ambiguous, position, to openly banning gays from marriage and ministry. Although there were no new major policy decisions made after 1984, in 1988 the General Conference did agree to finally commission a denomination-wide survey. It was decided that a committee, chaired by Rev. Nancy Yamasaki and meant to study homosexuality, would perform a four-year assessment of church policy and present its findings to the 1992 conference.<sup>75</sup> The committee interviewed many congregants and ministers, receiving a wide variety of

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See also Williams and the Committee to Study Homosexuality, *The Church Studies Homosexuality*, 12.

<sup>74</sup> Robbins, *A World Parish?*, 23.

<sup>75</sup> Williams and the Committee to Study Homosexuality, *The Church Studies Homosexuality*, 5.

feedback and experiences while also considering theological questions from a scholarly perspective.

Despite the diversity of opinions surrounding biblical interpretations, the committee concluded that the Bible does not speak to sexual orientation at all; it only speaks to sexual actions. There are only seven passages that illustrate homosexual actions, and they are each problematic because of their underlying cultural assumptions. The belief in the inferiority of women was found to be underlying most of the condemnations against homosexuality. Because men were supposed to be assertive and dominant in sexuality, and women were assumed to be passive and inferior by design, for two men to engage each other physically would require one to “reduce” himself to that of a woman. Likewise, when two women engage in lesbian behavior, one must overstep her position as an inferior. Once the Biblical assumption of the natural inferiority of women is abandoned, the text is revealed to have little impact on condemning homosexuality.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, the Biblical context of the term “homosexual” was quite different from the modern meaning of the word. Many of the Biblical condemnations of homosexuality are more akin to condemnations of pedophilia, and have been misinterpreted by readers who do not recognize the effects of poor translations.<sup>77</sup>

The committee was also heavily influenced by the inability of science to neatly define what homosexuality is, when it starts, or what kinds of factors might cause it. There was general agreement that sexual identity begins at a young age, and that it is difficult, if not impossible, to change one’s orientation. The committee found that homosexual “therapy” designed to change a person’s orientation was often dangerous and destructive. This finding was enough to sway some committee members towards inclusion as they did not wish to judge people for something that was not under their control.<sup>78</sup>

In the interviews I collected of parishioners and ministers, there were a variety of responses to gay and lesbian inclusion in the church. One mother, who had a son dying of AIDS, wondered if, “anyone would come to his funeral.” A father of a gay youth described the hostility his son faced at an Easter Sunday service when comments were made asking, “Is this a fag church?” Others described the confusion they faced in their lives

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.



over the mixed messages they received from religion and society. A lesbian woman commented, “Imagine my confusion when I would go to church on Sunday and be told that I was a sinner, then go to my therapist who encouraged me to accept and love myself.” A gay couple remarked of their surprise to not only be accepted by their congregation, but to be welcomed in with open arms and encouragement. Others spoke of their confusion with flirtations with homosexual behavior and the happiness that came to them later through heterosexual relationships.<sup>79</sup>

The committee ultimately found that the divisiveness surrounding the homosexuality debate was entirely out of proportion, unwarranted, and unjustified. They found monogamy to exist among both heterosexual and homosexual couples, no difference between heterosexual and homosexual effectiveness in parenting, and more instances of sexual violence between men and women than between gay or lesbian couples. The committee also determined that multiple partners, regardless of sexual orientation, exacerbated the spread of sexual diseases such as AIDS.<sup>80</sup> It is striking that the committee reached these conclusions, as they reflect a purely liberal view of theology, and essentially repudiate nearly all the conservative justifications for attacking gays and lesbians.

Among the recommendations approved by both liberals and conservatives, the committee recommended that homosexuals should have the same opportunity for redemption as heterosexuals. The church could not teach that “sexual orientation, either heterosexual or homosexual, is deliberately chosen.” They also recommended that a paragraph be added to the *Discipline* stating that the church was not of one mind on sexuality. That paragraph reads:

We acknowledge with humility that the church has been unable to arrive at a common mind on the compatibility of homosexual practice with Christian faith. Many consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching. Others believe it acceptable when practiced in a context of human covenantal faithfulness. (INSERTION) The Church seeks further understanding through continued prayer, study, and pastoral experience. In doing so, the church continues to affirm that God’s grace is bestowed on all, and

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 35. Many other powerful testimonies are included.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 27-30.

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that the members of Christ's body are called to be in ministry for and with one another, and the world.

A majority of the committee members preferred inserting the following passage into the paragraph at the point marked INSERTION:

The present state of knowledge and insight in the biblical, theological, ethical, biological, psychological, and sociological fields do not provide a satisfactory basis upon which the church can responsibly maintain the condemnation of all homosexual practice.

A minority of the panel preferred replacing the marked point of INSERTION with:

The present state of knowledge and insight in the biblical, theological, ethical, biological, psychological, and sociological fields does not provide a satisfactory basis upon which the church can responsibly alter its previously held position that we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.

Thus, while the vast majority consented to disagree, a smaller majority wanted to repeal the incompatibility language because there was not enough evidence to support the notion of homosexuality as morally wrong, and a minority wanted to maintain the incompatibility language because there was not enough information to say homosexuality was not wrong!<sup>81</sup>

On December 4, 1991, the General Council on Ministries voted to receive the committee's report as legitimate and valid, but would not approve any of its findings or recommendations, leading to no significant changes in church law. Regardless of how much division there was, the Methodists were simply unwilling to allow a policy issue to divide them in matters of governance. Battles over church policy would continue to be fought in the media, on the debate floor, in the Judicial Council, and in the court of public opinion, but the Methodists did not officially agree to disagree.

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 36.

## CONCLUSION

From 1972 through 1984, the UMC took increasingly conservative positions on the inclusion of gay and lesbian parishioners. What started with a short clause on the incompatibility of homosexuality with Christianity, added only after intense debate, grew into a condemnation of gay marriage, and a ban on openly gay and lesbian ministers. These decisions were not the product of demographic shifts in church membership as the decisions garnered support in both the North and the South. For liberals, the early decisions reflected a positive contribution, in that they officially recognized the civil rights of the LGBTQ community, while conservatives supported the incompatibility language. Later decisions to ban homosexual ministers and marriage saw much less support in general, though it was the logical outcome of the conservative position.

While the northern congregations lost members at a much faster rate than the southern congregations, there was parity between traditionally liberal and conservative congregations through the 1970s and 1980s when the proscriptions against homosexuals were passed. Furthermore, in the 1990s and 2000s, when the decline of northern and western congregations accelerated, the recorded votes of the General Conference on homosexuality actually became closer. In 1980 three-quarters of General Conference delegates voted to retain the UMC's incompatibility language, but by 1996 support fell to only 60 percent.<sup>82</sup> Given the fact that the United Methodist Church would retain all its other socially and economically liberal positions, one must conclude that the homosexuality debate represents an outlier to the church's *Social Principles*.

By removing the theological diversity that once marked Methodism, the UMC created a situation where every floor debate became integral. Since local congregations were not free to determine their own policy, losing a vote in the General Conference was akin to losing theological control. This has resulted in a very divisive and polarized public fight. However, the Methodists of the 1970s and 1980s, only a few decades removed from nearly a century of separation following the Civil War, preferred unity with its faults to theological diversity and possible

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<sup>82</sup> Udis-Kessler, *Queer Inclusion in the United Methodist Church*, 194.

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schism. As foreign congregations now comprise almost 40 percent of the entire Methodist church, it is unclear what direction future Methodists will travel.



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*Tonya Vander*

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BIBLICAL PATRIARCHY IN DOCTRINE AND  
PRACTICE: AN ANALYSIS OF EVANGELICAL  
CHRISTIAN HOMESCHOOLING

**INTRODUCTION**

“I spent most of my days while homeschooling trying to figure out how to be a better person, how to be more perfect, how to be a better homeschooler, a better dishwasher, a better everything,” Janine, a mother, reflected on her homeschooling years.<sup>1</sup> In the United States, homeschooled children made up three percent of the population in the 2011-2012 school year.<sup>2</sup> In addition, two-thirds of all homeschooling families were concerned about the integration of religion in their children’s education as a core reason for choosing homeschool over public school.<sup>2</sup> Some Evangelical Christian homeschoolers (ECHS) responded to such concerns by tailoring their homeschool curriculum. One movement within Evangelicalism that has gained tremendous momentum and influence among Christian homeschoolers is the Biblical Patriarchy Movement (BPM), a Christian organization that advocates for a hierarchical system where the man is understood to be dominant in both familial and institutional settings. Doug Phillips, one of the leaders of this movement, perceives patriarchy as the key tenet of the BPM. He believes that because

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<sup>1</sup> Janine Personal Communication February 12, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> NCES. (2013) Fast facts tool provides quick answers to many education questions. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=91>

God is male the father is the physical representation of God's divine authority, while the wife's role is submission.<sup>3</sup>

Data analysis of two of the BPM's leaders' websites, Bill Gothard and Doug Phillips, and ten in-depth interviews with individuals that have participated in ECHS, show that BPM's gender ideologies have had a tremendous influence on ECHS families. The findings from my interviews show that there are gaps between what the official BPM doctrine prescribed and how the families in question practiced those doctrines. Each family navigated gender roles uniquely, this included variance in family rules about dress and dating. However, all informants shared their commitment to sexual abstinence, in accordance with the teachings of the BPM.

## **EVANGELICAL HOMESCHOOLING AND THE BIBLICAL PATRIARCHY MOVEMENT**

There were a number of factors that influenced the development of the ECHS movement, including a collective interest of members to instill their religious beliefs into the day-to-day lives of their children. According to my informants, religion dictated nearly every aspect of their lives. Studies on ECHS at the height of the movement in the 1990s discovered a common drive for structure among ECHS members, including the implementation of rigid gender roles.<sup>4</sup>

The ECHS subscribe to a patriarchal model of family with male headship and female subservience. According to John Bartkowski and Jen'nan Ghazal Read, the concept of headship is reinforced through scripture, where Christ is positioned as the head of man and man is positioned over woman. Their success can be, in part, attributed to parents' interest in providing the "best" possible opportunities for their children, which the BPM and ECHS advertise.<sup>5</sup> But while these organizations tend to define their teachings with rigidity, two women from the same church may have different ideas about how to practice their models. Among the people who participated in this research, there was no

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Bartkowski, J., & Read, J.G. (2003). Veiled submission: Gender, power, and identity among Evangelical and Muslim women in the United States. *Qualitative Sociology* 26(1), 73-77

singular format for how the BPM model was implemented on the ground.<sup>6</sup> There was a plurality of beliefs among my informants—some women reported feeling empowered in their submission to their husbands, while others sought a more egalitarian based relationship. In fact, from family to family members of ECHS appeared to perform their gender roles quite diversely.

Many of the ECHS who embraced fundamentalism grew anxious over changing gender roles and the growing influence of feminism in the church. As a result, Gothard added what he referred to as the “chain of command.” Gothard argued that God only speaks through male authority. By using what he believed to be the Biblical model of authority—where God is the ultimate head, followed by the husband, then the wife, and finally the children—Gothard supplemented faith with obedience.

According to Steven Mitchell the door to the BPM was opened by ECHS families’ desires to see their children grow in character.<sup>7</sup> BPM gained relevance among mothers attempting to balance their various responsibilities, including homeschooling and combating what they perceived as the “cultural wars” negatively impacting youth. Sociologist Mitchell L. Stevens argued that the “fragile child” became the focus of BPM and that order within the home was the route to success.<sup>8</sup> This intersection between ECHS and the BPM was created through a shared fear of feminism and desire for greater order in the home.

Within the BPM there are sub-communities, such as the Quiverfull movement or community, a name that represents the group’s emphasis on their perceived calling to raise as many children as they can for God—the arrows in the quiver being a metaphor for children.<sup>9</sup> One of my respondents subscribed to these beliefs. The Quiverfull movement believes that women should be willing to sacrifice their bodies for the purpose of procreation, and forego the use birth control.<sup>10</sup> Daughters

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Stevens, M. (2001). *Kingdom of children: Culture and controversy in the homeschooling movement*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

<sup>8</sup> Stevens, M. (2001). *Kingdom of children: Culture and controversy in the homeschooling movement*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

<sup>9</sup> Mesaros-Winckles, C. (2010). TLC and the fundamentalist family: A televised Quiverfull of babies. *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*, 22(3), 1–20. Retrieved from <https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1G1-246536555/tlc-and-the-fundamentalist-family-a-televised-quiverfull>. B The quiver is used in biblical texts as a metaphor for a large family with lots of children.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.



remain under their father's "headship" until they are married and are trained to be "keepers at home,"<sup>11</sup> which minimizes their options for advanced education. The Quiverfull community is just one expression of the BPM, but demonstrates the diversity of the broader movement.

Drawing on the literature surrounding the BPM, several recurring themes emerge that demonstrate the influence of the BPM within individual families, such as the prescription of male hierarchy, female submission, and distinct gender performance. I surmise that BPM capitalizes on members' nostalgia. Many perceive that the past embodies a safe and more moral era, which BPM accredits to patriarchy and traditional family values. The influence of the movement is quite vast.

However, little sociological work has focused on the tensions within ECHS families as a result of the BPM's strict gender based theology. My research explores the teachings endorsed by the leaders of the BPM, and, by drawing on the interviews that I have collected, the diverse ways they are practiced. My hope is that by using mixed methods I will be able to understand the pressures that affect parents who chose to be in ECHS and the influence of the BPM's doctrines on Evangelical homeschoolers.

## **METHODS**

My methodological approach is a mixed methodology of in-depth interviews with ECHS parents and daughters who were homeschooled, and analysis of key texts written by leaders of the BPM as well as social artifacts, such as toys that are displayed and sold at homeschool conferences. I also examined Phillips's now defunct website, Vision Forum ([www.visionforum.org](http://www.visionforum.org)), and Gothard's website, Advanced Training Institute International ([www.iblp.org](http://www.iblp.org)), to better understand the teachings of the BPM.

I conducted a series of in-depth interviews with four current and six past members of the BPM. I deployed the snowball method of sampling to find participants for in-depth interviews by using Facebook to recruit alumni and current ECHS. I interviewed the participants via Skype or FaceTime. One lacuna in the current literature is an ethnographic based study on former ECHS and how families approached modesty, purity, and courtship. This research hopes to fill that gap. I asked the participants why

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

they chose to be ECHS, and how much they participate in teaching and determining curriculum. Additionally, I asked questions about many of the explicit ideas of the BPM, such as how families interpret modesty in clothing, submission in marriage, and how much outside social interaction they have with non-Evangelicals. I used Judith Lorber's "Components of Gender" as a tool to analyze the data in which she defines gender statuses, kinships, sexual scripts, personalized social control, ideology, and imagery that are used in social institutions.<sup>12</sup> Following Lorber, I looked at the gender identities, beliefs, displays, and processes that compose an individual.<sup>13</sup> I transcribed the interviews, looking for common themes, and then coded them. I wanted to explore the full impact the teachings of the BPM on these ECHS families.

## DATA ANALYSIS OF BIBLICAL PATRIARCHY WEBSITES

This paper focuses on two of the founders and the dissemination of their materials and teachings online. On both Phillips's and Gothard's websites, they define biblical patriarchy and other beliefs of the BPM. They commonly use symbols and metaphors to differentiate and promote distinct gender roles, such as the woman as the "heart of the home."<sup>14</sup> The BPM is performance-based, meaning that members demonstrate their faith through works rather than the Protestant interpretation of faith that emphasizes grace.

One way Phillips reinforces gender roles in the home is by selling toys. For example, an advertised toy for a boy is a castle and for a girl, a dollhouse.<sup>15</sup> While these choices are far from atypical, the toy descriptions, as advertised on the website, reveal an overt attempt to socialize boys and girls into their respective gender normative roles. Boys are to play with castles and girls with dollhouses; children are only allowed to play with their own gendered toys, which creates a very constrictive binary environment. The castle is described as the following:

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<sup>12</sup> Lorber, J. (1994). *Paradoxes of Gender*. Binghamton, NY: Vail-Ballou Press, 30.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> VFM. (2008b). *Doctrine*. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20111021044709/http://www.visionforumministries.org/home/about/doctrine.aspx>

<sup>15</sup> VFM. (2010). *Folding castle*. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20100128034607/http://www.visionforum.com/beautifulgirlhood/productdetail.aspx?productid=13882&categoryid=199>

Whether protecting the home front from the enemy, or used as a frontier outpost against the wild dragons in the land, this Fold & Go Castle opens for easy deployment. The soldiers can man the walls, lock up enemies in the dungeon, or make the castle a home for the king and queen. The king and queen have thrones and a royal bed, and are protected by two brave knights on horses to guard them. The castle includes a working drawbridge, a dungeon and a handle for storage or transportation.<sup>16</sup>

The little girl's pink dollhouse is described as the following:

This special wooden dollhouse in the Fold & Go product line is a charming little Victorian style cottage. Containing two flexible, wooden play figures (Daddy and Mommy), and furnished with eleven pieces of wooden furniture, this dollhouse is ready to be made a home by your little homemaker in training. The dollhouse opens for easy access and folds closed for convenient storage.<sup>17</sup>

I am fascinated by their mention of a shared bed for the king and queen. Specifically, because little boys do not normally think of the bedroom as a male-specific space, although I suspect it is the inventor's intent to correct this oversight. I also postulate that the use of royalty is intentional, emphasizing man's headship and responsibility to rule over his kingdom—his home and family. In contrast, the dollhouse symbolizes women's subservience, which, according to the description, was designed to train the "little homemaker."

Gothard's "Institute of Biblical Life Principles" website (IBLP) has a slightly different function, as they have ten different organizations that help ECHS as well as churches. The website is designed to guide them in how to perform social roles. Whereas other ECHS families may look outside their home for healthcare, economic provision, or to attend a local church, the IBLP asserts that the home should be the center of everything. The clearly defined roles provided online by Gothard (i.e. the child is a person, the husband is the financial provider, and the wife

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> VFM. (2015c). Folding Mini Doll House. Retrieved 8 December 2015, from [https://web.archive.org/web/20100128034607/http://www.visionforum.com/beautifulgirlhood/productdetail.aspx?productid=13882&categoryid=199of\\_vision\\_forum\\_mi.aspx](https://web.archive.org/web/20100128034607/http://www.visionforum.com/beautifulgirlhood/productdetail.aspx?productid=13882&categoryid=199of_vision_forum_mi.aspx)

provides for the vital needs of her partner) is meant to leave little room for individual variation or adaptation.

IBLP also teaches that there are five roles of the mother: she is (1) the heart of the home, (2) the light, (3) the learner-teacher, (4) the creative recorder, and (5) coordinator of responsibilities.<sup>18</sup> The father is the head and the mother the heart. The head and heart are instructed to work together. The mother is the “light” which illuminates spiritual problems or conflicts that arise between parent and child. The “learner-teacher” role emphasizes the woman’s responsibility to continually educate herself, so that she is equipped to homeschool her children through the upper grades. The mother is also the coordinator; families in the BPM tend to be larger and the responsibility of cleaning, teaching, and food preparation can be overwhelming. Many of the older children are taught how to help the younger children, and it is the mother’s responsibility to train her children to do so. Despite the importance of her role, she has little autonomy and is expected to operate under the headship of her husband and male leaders.

In contrast, the father’s role specifically relates to spiritual leadership and he is responsible for teaching his wife and children. The father also is to engage in spiritual warfare and is in charge of protecting the home from sin. Additionally, he is instructed to recognize the needs of his wife, maintain communication with his children, rearrange his schedule for his family, and apply God-honoring principles to his business. Since women are not allowed to work outside of the home, the vast majority of the family income comes from the husband.

## **NARRATIVES OF HOMESCHOOL FAMILIES**

My informants include ECHS men and women. The participants were all white, and defined as evangelical.<sup>19</sup> Many reported negative aspects of their ECHS experience that they attributed to the influence of the BPM. However, most stated that they did not regret their choice to homeschool. Several informants did not perceive a correlation between their negative experiences and the BPM.

Four participants were mothers in their mid-thirties to early fifties. As an average, the women who participated in this study had

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<sup>18</sup> IBLP. (2011a). How can I meet my husband's basic needs. Retrieved 8 December 2015, from <http://iblp.org/questions/how-can-i-meet-my-husbands-basic-needs>

<sup>19</sup> According to Nces.ed.gov the vast majority of homeschooling families are white, and thus it was difficult for me to find other families of different races and ethnicities.

homeschooled their children for fourteen years and had six children. Only two of the mothers were still homeschooling. Three out of four mothers worked full-time outside of the home, one mother did so while homeschooling. Two women had some college education; one was working on her bachelor's degree at the time of our interview. Instead of interviewing multiple members of the same family I focused on collecting a more diverse sampling.

As an average, the three men who participated in this research had also homeschooled their children for fourteen years, but had three children. All three male participants had an associate's or bachelor's degree. Two of them owned their own business, while the third worked for a company.

I also interviewed three young women in their early twenties. Each was the oldest female sibling in their family and had four to five siblings. All were homeschooled throughout high school. All were married. Two of the three women were pursuing bachelor's degrees, and the other had earned two college-level degrees. Only one of the young women had children. All the women enjoyed working outside of the home, including the mother who worked part-time and attended school full-time.

My questions addressed ECHS families' approaches to modesty, abstinence, dating, and courtship among their teen children. I also asked what type of responsibilities they delegated to their children and the respective roles and responsibilities of parents. Each participant was asked what they liked best and least about homeschooling, and to describe a typical day of homeschool. Participants were also asked how their religious beliefs influenced their approach to homeschooling, to describe how "spiritual authority" is manifest within their homes, and what spiritual influence, if any, played a role in determining the size of their respective families. In addition, the three younger women were asked if they planned on homeschooling their children, and if they knew why their parents chose to homeschool. Two questions pertained to character training, which would include any spiritual and emotional development that would need to be shaped in the child. I also asked informants to discuss their interest, if any, in the official BPM websites.

Prior to conducting the participant interviews I selected a small group of ECHS mothers that were willing to look over my questionnaire. I asked for feedback about how the questions made them feel. I ended up reframing three of the questions and including one additional question,

which I directed toward homeschooling women. The feedback was beneficial.

## FINDINGS

### Roles and Responsibilities

All participants accepted that the mother was the primary day-to-day teacher. I asked each of the women to describe a typical day; surprisingly, there was very little variation: they arose, ate breakfast, conducted chores, and homeschooled their children throughout the early hours of the day. One ECHS mother changed her children's sleeping habits so she could work and homeschool, but even with the time change the other patterns remained the same. Fathers who supported their wives had a significant and positive impact on the homeschooling women participating in this research.<sup>20</sup>

House chores were divided between husband and wife and followed with traditional gender norms. While the husband is the breadwinner, he also has responsibilities within the home. According to my informants, the husbands worked full-time and participated in homeschooling as an ancillary teacher. Fathers occasionally shared the disciplinary role with their spouse. Peter, one of the ECHS fathers, called it "being the heavy."<sup>21</sup> He described scenarios in which disciplining a child might be necessary. He explained that if he needed to intervene, he would invite the child into his office and would say, "Your teacher is having a problem with you in this area. What is going on?"<sup>22</sup> He laughed as he described the scenario. He implied that it was not a regular occurrence. He believed that in taking on the disciplinary role he was able to support his wife. According to Peter, the husband played the role of a principal and the wife played the role of a teacher. While the family adhered to traditional gender roles, the parents tried to collaborate in their efforts. As Peter explained, his wife preferred that he take on the disciplinary role while she taught. Drawing

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<sup>20</sup> Vigilant, L. G., Trefethren, L. W., & Anderson, T. C. (2013). "You can't rely on somebody else to teach them something they don't believe," impressions of legitimization crisis and socialization control in the narratives of Christian homeschooling fathers. *Humanity & Society*, 37(3), 201–224. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1177/0160597613495841>

<sup>21</sup> Peter Personal Communication February, 5, 2015,

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

on my broader sampling of fathers, all informants seemed to emphasize the importance of supporting their spouse.

The gap between what was prescribed by the BPM and what was practiced on the ground was expansive. One informant, Joe, explained that there were times when he did the majority of the homeschooling while his wife worked full-time. However, this was atypical and his wife was generally the primary teacher. Many of the fathers that I interviewed cooked regularly and helped with household chores. Although overall, the division of labor tended to reflect traditional forms.

I also interviewed the women about their roles and responsibilities in the home. Beth and Ann disclosed that their husbands helped out when they could, but for the most part they took care of the home, children, and homeschooling. However, they had no problem asking for help when they needed it. In fact, Ann told me that her husband was much better at cleaning than she was, and she loved when he helped. Bridgette had an unusual experience: she not only worked out of the home, but as her ex-husband was diagnosed with mental illness and was unable to help with any of the household chores, income, or homeschooling, she had to balance a broad spectrum of responsibilities. One woman, Janine, felt that fulfilling her household responsibilities and homeschooling four girls was very difficult. Janine recalled that her ex-husband was often angered that she struggled to fulfill his expectations.

Two of the girls that I interviewed believed that they had a safe and pleasant upbringing because their parents did not avidly follow the teachings of the BPM. Another informant, Barbara, the oldest of five children, believed that her difficult upbringing was related to her parents' strict adherence to the doctrine of the BPM. She explained, "There was a lot of separation between what was expected from the boys and us girls. We did a lot of house cleaning; the boys did not do as much as the girls. We cleaned the bathrooms and were constantly in the kitchen and cleaning and cooking."<sup>23</sup> Barbara explained that she was not allowed to mow the lawn because it was a "man's job."

Women with children confessed that homeschooling was arduous, and that it required a great deal of time and energy. All respondents mentioned that they were continually refining their management of time. However, they all felt that a sacrifice was necessary to produce kind and productive adults, explaining that the benefit outweighed the cost. These

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<sup>23</sup> Barbara Personal Communication February 12, 2016

findings were similar to sociologist Mitchell Stevens's study on childrearing and parental efforts to build adolescent character.

### **The Pursuit of "Character"**

The families I interviewed shared varying reasons for choosing to homeschool. The reasons ranged from wanting to spend more time with children to a desire to offer advanced educational opportunities to their children. Most explained that they resided in economically disadvantaged school districts. While the BPM's focus was adherence to strict gender roles and children's spiritual development, the parents that I interviewed discussed the temporal advantages as well. Parents, at least in part, followed the instruction outline from the BPM because they believed it would help their children attain greater social mobility.

All of my informants, except one father, had used Gothard's or Phillips's materials or toys. The interviewees can be divided into two groups: those who embraced some or all of the BPM, and those who believed the movement was toxic. To provide an example of the former, Ann, a mother of thirteen children, does not embrace the BPM wholly, but does follow the Quiverfull movement. She and her husband believe that they should not prevent pregnancy, but rather, the size of their family should be determined by God. In her interview, Ann discussed her weariness of the BPM. She stated:

The father is the ultimate authority and that's downright unbiblical and scary. Because they feel like they have all this power and they can do anything they want, and the families are damaged as a result. So just the fact that they believe that women are to be subservient to their fathers and brothers and teaching that is not a biblical role for women in any way, shape, or form. So, I just saw those dangers early on, so we stayed away from any of their specific teachings.<sup>24</sup>

On one hand, Ann finds merit in doctrines related to procreation, while on the other, she rejects the patriarchal structure that she described as demeaning women. Joe and Peter discussed their apprehension for "the legalistic forms" of ECHS, including members who adhere to very strict

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<sup>24</sup> Ann Personal Communication February 5, 2016



codes of conduct related to dress, separation from others, and family size.<sup>25</sup> They found that these groups were harder to interact with and, as a result, they made a conscious effort to find ECHS groups that were more “open and accepting.” One informant, Beth, described her visceral reaction to a BPM publication:

The story was of Tamar who was raped and they [Gothard] blamed her. They said she should have called out louder for help. And after that, I just threw the book in the trash, because I figured that it is where it belonged. I figured that if they were going to skew that story what else are they skewing.<sup>26</sup>

On the other end of the spectrum, Bridgette embraced the BPM and discussed the advantages of character training and gender differentiation. She explained, “It is more about how can you become, and who you are supposed to be. Or the character traits, you know that is important for a female or a male.”<sup>27</sup> She wanted her daughters to be prepared for marriage because she had felt unprepared. In her interview, she discussed the positive aspects of BPM’s teachings and how she believed those teachings would prepare her girls for that transition into adulthood. She also believed character training would enhance their education. In terms of the gender imagery—or as the scholar, Judith Lober, defines it, the “cultural representation and embodiment of gender”—Bridgette saw it as a protective force.<sup>28</sup> However, even Bridgette swayed from some of the more restrictive gendered scripts. For instance, she allowed her girls to learn from their father how to change the oil of the car, they built a computer from scratch, and the girls knew how to balance a checkbook. These are activities that are typically defined by the BPM as male-specific.

Another informant, Barbara, whose family embraced the BPM, viewed the rules as “unfair” towards girls. She explained, “so for me, I didn't ever think, oh I just wish I went to school, or I can't wait till I go to college even from a young age of twelve or thirteen. Well, I just want to

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<sup>25</sup> Legalist forms describes the rigidness of some Evangelical Christian beliefs that can include restrictive standards concerning dress, dating, and entertainment that would influence these Christians.

<sup>26</sup> Beth Personal Communication February 5, 2016

<sup>27</sup> Bridgette Personal Communication February 12, 2016

<sup>28</sup> Lorber, J. (1994). *Paradoxes of gender*. Binghamton, NY: Vail-Ballou Press.

be married, because I saw marriage as my escape route and a kind of escape. It is kind of a dramatic word, but the truth.”<sup>29</sup> Barbara’s desire to “escape” her home situation by entering an institution that might replicate her upbringing highlights the lack of opportunities extended to women within the BPM. Barbara’s responses concur with what Kathryn Joyce found in similar stories as she studied the Quiverfull movement.<sup>30</sup>

### **Modesty, Purity, and Courtship**

My informants’ responses to questions regarding modesty, purity, and courtship varied. Some were strict in their application of the BPM’s teachings, while others were more flexible or less restrictive. Purity normally was defined by being a virgin until marriage, but some defined purity as not even kissing before marriage. I noticed a palpable discomfort when my informants discussed such topics.<sup>31</sup> Because sex is often a taboo subject in conservative BPM communities, I suspect that many feared being judged or misunderstood. All of the respondents identified as proponents of abstinence and modesty, but their interpretation of modesty varied depending on whether they were part of an encouraging, open, and supportive ECHS group or not—strong community ties often meant less judgment and therefore more liberal interpretations.

Most respondents stated that there were more restrictions for girls than boys. Joe, one of the ECHS fathers, did not believe in strict rules but felt that dialogue was more important. He admitted that he was open with his daughter and that he did not think about what his sons wore versus what his daughter wore. His own self-awareness and openness towards his daughter showed her that he was still learning and wanted to treat his kids with equality. The other two fathers, Chris and Peter, were more concerned with what their daughters wore than their sons. However, they allowed their daughters to make their own choices.

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<sup>29</sup> Bridget Personal Communication February 12, 2016

<sup>30</sup> Joyce, K. (2009). *Quiverfull : Inside the Christian patriarchy movement*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

<sup>31</sup> One of the most interesting aspects that came out about modesty was how the respondents’ homeschool groups or co-ops played an integral part in either allowing them to embrace their own standards or trying to enforce very rigid modesty and purity guidelines. Homeschool groups or co-ops are groups of families that have pooled their skill sets together, and some may teach particular classes. Every respondent had been a part of multiple homeschool groups at different times.

In discussing modesty, Ann also mentioned that she only allowed girls to change girls' diapers and boys to change boys' diapers. Since she mentioned how all thirteen children rotate between all of the chores in the house, I asked her the rationale behind this and she stated, "It was advice given to us a long time ago, and just to eliminate mischievousness."<sup>32</sup> I asked her for further clarification, and if she was worried about inappropriate touching; she confirmed. She also required the girls to wear bras unless they were in the privacy of their own bedroom, and the boys to wear shirts. The children were also required to come to the breakfast table fully dressed for the day. Ann insisted that she wanted to teach her children to be respectful of others. She explained, "So I just teach the girls that [it] is a stumbling block [to not wear a bra] to your brother so, don't do that, and same with the boys."<sup>33</sup> She was trying to set similar standards for both sexes. Her interview was the only one to mention the concern of sexual misconduct within the family. There appears to be greater emphasis on women's purity than that of men's, not only out in public, but also in private. Ann perceived these rules as aiding her children through their transition into adulthood, because, as she believes, modesty reduces promiscuity.

The ECHS groups also socialize women toward a distinct expression of femininity. Elizabeth shared a story in which she wore army boots and a studded cross t-shirt to a sock-hop and was shunned as a result, even though it was a fifties-themed teen dance. Modesty was not simply about dress, but also about gender performance. Many of my informants discussed the insecurity they felt as a result of always being monitored—their body and actions always being on display.

Nicole, one of the homeschooled girls, related a story about how difficult it was for her while competing in ECHS Speech and Debate. She stated:

There was lots of shame around my body; I developed quicker than most of the girls my age. I have large breasts and large hips; I was told those were a distraction, that I need to not wear pants or a pant suit. I should only be wearing a skirt suit, that I shouldn't wear high heels because when you wear high heels your legs lift up muscles and accentuate things, so during that time there was such an intent

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<sup>32</sup> Ann Personal Communication February 05, 2016

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

focus on a particular theological perspective that really impacted like every aspect of my speech and debate career.<sup>34</sup>

Another one of the homeschooled girls, Elizabeth, talked about how she struggled with being bullied. She described the difficulty of living within a conservative ECHS community that did not approve of girls wearing pants, or friendships between girls and boys. She stated, “I was considered a slut and a whore because I wore pants and hung out with guys, and I didn't have my first kiss until I was seventeen years old. I wore make up, I wore pants, and I hung out with friends that were guys and I was called nasty things.”<sup>35</sup> She is now employed as a children’s church coordinator, and was quick to specify that she was a virgin until she was married. She felt they had tried to totally spoil her identity but failed.<sup>36</sup>

During my interviews with the girls, I noticed their body language changed—they looked down and avoided eye contact, there were long pauses and sighs. They had a difficult time finding the right words to convey their stories. I surmise that they felt ashamed.<sup>37</sup> However, both interviewees expressed their determination to overcome the ridicule they endured. One of the girls even presented an argument supporting Christianly kindness during a school debate that addressed this. However, they both discussed their insecurity and admitted that they had, at least in the past, occasionally questioned their own modesty—worrying that perhaps they had become “stumbling blocks” to boys in the community. Nicole recalled the years she had participated in the debate group for school: “It really felt demeaning. I was participating in those activities because I was smart, because I was passionate about you know, different issues. And for so much of the focus to be on my body versus my actual skill set and what I was trying to say, it made me feel like what I had to say was not worth saying unless I looked a certain way.”<sup>38</sup>

Each of my respondents described the isolation that resulted from the stigma of simply being a girl. Nicole also articulated how she did not feel like she could talk to her parents or coach because so much of the

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<sup>34</sup> Nicole Personal Communication February 19, 2016

<sup>35</sup> Elizabeth Personal Communication February 19, 2016

<sup>36</sup> Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

<sup>37</sup> Pattison, S. (2000). *Shame*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>38</sup> Nicole Personal Communication February 05, 2016

criticism she endured was associated with “scriptural principles.”<sup>39</sup> She has only recently begun to open up and share her experiences. She recalled how disheartened her mother was when she heard what Nichole had endured. Elizabeth also discussed how she felt stigmatized and how this took a toll on her self-esteem. As discussed previously, in the BPM the onus of “character” is put on the girl—women are urged to conform.<sup>40</sup> From what I observed, the consequence of policing women and their bodies was vastly negative—there were few spaces where a woman could safely navigate her interests and identity.

Three of the four mothers reported that their ECHS group or community had, on various occasions, pressured them into “covering up” their breasts. That is, that grown women, as well as young girls, were regulated by ECHS communities; and modesty was often enforced by peers—even, and perhaps most specifically, by women. This gendered social control had enough power to influence the mothers and not just the daughters. While the mothers had not considered their clothes improper or immodest, other women in the group enforced these standards and had approached them and told them they should cover up more. These gender processes and scripts and how women tended to safeguard against the lack of modesty in dress or behavior were mentioned by all the female respondents. In fact, Janine, who was a leader in her ECHS group, recalled a conversation initiated by other leaders about her daughter:

Our oldest daughter, who was wearing your average clothing, nothing provocative, nothing offensive, just your average teenage clothing, no midriff, showing no cleavage, just average teenage clothes and that was not enough for them. They sat us down, had a conversation with us, and tried to get us to encourage her to wear more skirts, and they used their daughters to get our daughter to wear more skirts. So, it kind of went beyond policies and procedures and what was on paper.<sup>41</sup>

She described to me how she felt after such interactions with fellow ECHS members:

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Lorber, J. (1994). *Paradoxes of gender*. Binghamton, NY: Vail-Ballou Press.

<sup>41</sup> Janine Personal communication February 12, 2016.

I would just have to say that I was pretty much in survival mode. I hadn't really processed that, and how I felt. I just basically listened to what they said, well, we will see. I am not an extremely deep thinker when it comes to this stuff. I just I know what I believe; well I will just continue to live our lives the way we should live them. But I was in so much survival mode in my own marriage; I don't know if I even knew how to process that, if that makes any sense.<sup>42</sup>

Janine discussed how she felt the need to regularly evaluate herself and improve—a theme shared by many of my female informants.

The group's focus on courtship rather than dating meant that children were actively looking for a spouse rather than enjoying the company of the other gender. In addition, most of the parents were involved in the courting process in order to help their children find spouses. However, trying to implement the rules of courtship seemed more difficult than first expected with each family. Parents felt that it was their job to assist but not dictate their children's search for a spouse, with only one exception. Barbara recalled that her three oldest siblings did not follow the prescribed method of courtship. Both Nicole and Elizabeth chose to date rather than court.<sup>43</sup> However, both admitted that their dating was fairly limited. In fact, Nicole married her college boyfriend. All parents perceived the ECHS guidelines for courting or dating as serious, and, according to my informants, was a difficult aspect of culture to navigate. The organization often emphasized what they believed were the consequences of not living a chaste life, such as damaging one's personal relationship with God. I would argue that the BPM uses fear to influence ECHS families to abide by their guidelines.

Ann, whose oldest daughter is currently courting-age, reported that she and her husband were heavily involved in the process of courtship. While she stated that it was completely up to her daughter whether she wanted to court or date, she warned her daughter, "If your goal is abstinence until you are married, it would be a good idea if there was someone else to go with you because the option to go back to his place is very strong, and it would be in your best behavior."<sup>44</sup> They also suggested

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Stevens, M. (2001). *Kingdom of children: Culture and controversy in the homeschooling movement*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press

<sup>44</sup> Ann Personal Communication February 05, 2016.

that whomever she chose to take with her needed to be in eyesight but not have to hear what was being said. Ann insisted that her daughter wanted their input and that she welcomed their suggestions.

Peter explained that he often disagreed with the partners his daughter chose to court. While he did not forbid the dating, he openly discussed problems he observed within the relationship. He stated:

I would explain to my daughter why I felt something of a concern, and my wife may or may not agree with me and she would explain if something was a concern [to her]. I may or may not agree with her, and our daughter was exposed to both of those thoughts. And she had to process things on her own, and we would still draw the line if it was needed and most of the time I would let my wife make that decision because I gave my input and she did what she thought was the best for it.<sup>45</sup>

Though both Peter and Ann's families believed that abstinence was important, they implemented courtship rules differently. For instance, Ann promoted courtship, but was open to her children dating.

### **Spiritual Authority and Leadership in the Home**

The other topic that seemed to cause unease was that of "spiritual authority" in the home. The respondents' views varied more on this topic than on any other. The three daughters that I interviewed had very interesting, and often differing, opinions about their parents' relationships. According to Nicole, her father thought favorably about women in authority and supported women pastors. Elizabeth spoke highly of her parents' relationship; she felt her parents did not reflect the norm within ECHS communities because they had more of an egalitarian relationship where her mother had a say in family-related decisions.

Barbara's response seemed the most surprising, because her parents fully embraced the BPM's teachings. She stated, "I would say that my mother had final authority, but it always came through my dad's words. So, the decisions were made by mom, but my dad was always the one who spoke them."<sup>46</sup> According to Barbara, her upbringing was

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<sup>45</sup> Peter Personal Communication February 05, 2016.

<sup>46</sup> Barbara Personal Communication February 12, 2016.

wrought with hardship because of the patriarchal nature of her father. She once wrote her parents a letter mentioning the desire for their family to attend counseling, and as a result, she was kicked out. She ended up living with her grandparents who took her in. They taught her how to drive and find new employment, since, up to that point, she had only worked for her father. She eventually took a job as a nanny, a skill that she knew well since she had taken care of her siblings. Then things only became worse. She stated:

I lived with my grandparents, but things just got worse and then my parents told my grandpa that I couldn't live there anymore and that if I didn't move out then my grandparents couldn't see the rest of my siblings, and so I didn't want to put my grandparents in a situation where they had to choose between me living there and them seeing their grandkids and my thought process was if they are angry at me there is no reason for them to be angry at them as well. So, I moved out of my grandparents'.<sup>47</sup>

She described how she had to scrape by to just survive because her parents considered her mindset—and particularly her request for family therapy—dangerous. She explained her desire to do things differently now that she is a mother:

My goal is to try to find [my] flaws and how I am acting and how I am treating other people or how I am thinking so I don't repeat my parents' mistakes. I can't fix how my parents treated me, but what I can do is be there for my siblings. I can't fix how I don't have a mother-daughter relationship, but I can hope to provide one. That is part of the reason that my degree is in psychology, because I am fascinated to learn about how hitting milestones as a child, and how it totally shapes your worldviews. I want to be a good mom.<sup>48</sup>

Barbara had to establish new cultural boundaries for herself and her child. She, too, described working through shame and the need to reinterpret womanhood as disassociated with the teachings she had been inculcated with as a child. The author Stephen Pattison describes how

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.



shame is caused by the misrepresentation of religion where the focus is on God's judgment, instead of focusing on how God offered redemption for sin and guilt, which Pattison says should be demonstrated by the fathers. This unconditional love is withheld, and the Christian is left no longer united with God.<sup>49</sup> Barbara is now not only looking for social and familial connectivity, but also a renewed spirituality.

Ann discussed her own marriage in terms of "egalitarian." She once told a friend to leave her husband because of the emotional and spiritual abuse she had endured. She described the conversation:

He [the friend's husband] just bangs his wife over the head with Ephesians, to submit, you have to submit! I keep telling her that submission in the Bible doesn't tell you to obey your husband, it says to submit, and I think that only comes in when two people cannot make a decision if they both want different things.<sup>50</sup>

Congregants were encouraged to seek personal revelation from God, and yet, that revelation is to be revealed through the husband who is the final authority. Ann's comments seem to suggest that there is never complete clarity as to how women are to navigate their personal lives and marriages.

Bridgette acknowledged how she tried to follow the headship of her husband, but due to him being "institutionalized twenty-two times during [their] marriage due to mental illness," it was very difficult.<sup>51</sup> She relayed a conversation she had with her pastor regarding her now ex-husband. She stated:

He doesn't want to make decisions. He can't make decisions. He won't make decisions. How can he lead if he won't make decisions? And so I was told, "Well give him two options, and ask him which one he wants. You present the option and have him tell you to do it, so it is really his decision. He is being the leader you are being submissive; you are not just doing it, and so I tried. It felt wrong. It felt very manipulative."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Pattison, S. (2000). *Shame*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>50</sup> Ann Personal Communication February 05, 2016.

<sup>51</sup> Bridgette Personal Communication February 19, 2016.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*.

She went on to explain that her girls had seen him physically abuse her. She was told by her pastor that it was her responsibility to remove stress from the home, but due to his disability they had to move constantly, and as a result, the cycle of abuse continued. It was not until they relocated to a different county (where county officials threatened to take her children away) that she finally filed for a divorce. She divulged, "I struggled my entire marriage. It was very difficult for me to be loving towards him. I took on a mother role, rather than I can count on you and you can count on me."<sup>53</sup> All the responsibility was on Bridgette's shoulders and yet, according to the BPM, she was to remain subservient in her role as a wife. She explained that it was difficult to reconcile her life with the will of God. She wanted to be obedient, but was unsure of how to maintain the patriarchal model; the BPM had provided little direction as to how she should navigate her unique circumstances. Bridgette struggled with the shame and frustration of balancing God's will with her real-life circumstances.

Another informant, Beth, negotiated for greater personal authority by using the system. She explained that she often felt pressured to conform to gender expectations by friends who did not believe that she should wear pants in the home. According to Beth, they perceived it as a sign of disrespect. So in an effort to resolve the problem, she asked her husband to intervene. She explained, "So I finally had an epiphany [laughing], and I had my husband call her husband and tell her that my husband wanted me to wear pants and that she needs to back off because that was his decision as the head of the household. And that was the end of the problem, and we were fast friends after that."<sup>54</sup>

Pressures to conform came from pastors, ECHS groups, and friends. Beth also described how she felt pressured to allow her husband to make a financial decision that she did not agree with. She explained:

My husband didn't pay the taxes on our business and we had a big to-do about it. And I finally decided to shut up about it, because we were about to get divorced over it. And the taxes didn't get paid and there still is a problem, so I am not sure if I should have gone out on it. I am pretty sure if I had, we would have split so I left it alone.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Beth Personal Communication February 5, 2016.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

Looking back, she explained how they have grown and changed in their marriage, but she wished that she had more of a voice back then. Presently, their relationship is more egalitarian and she is the main breadwinner. Although most couples discussed in this research started out with headship, all my respondents described an evolving negotiation between spouses that eventually resulted in a more egalitarian marriage. These men revealed that with men and women in the church, both genders are looking for ways to better navigate, and perhaps expand, their roles.

My male informants recalled that they had attempted to take on the role of independently presiding, but they did not find it conducive to what they wanted in their marriages. They believed that their wives had so much more to offer their family and did not want to squelch that potential.<sup>56</sup> However, in the BPM, gender roles are intended to be nonnegotiable. One respondent, Chris, talked about how his church had pushed patriarchy. He stated:

The things that we were involved with had serious prejudice against women and so there was a lot of negativity. My wife and I were probably a lot more egalitarian than most of the people we hung out with, but most of that interaction was done between her and me and without the other people around. So it was almost like two different lives, or was it more of just like presenting a different front—or well it wasn't like that for me, but I think for my wife it was like two different lives, so having to present this front, and being around the religious people and trying to fit their mold was a concern for her. After that happened, and since then I have been very upset about it; it made me very unhappy. My eyes were opened and changed, we were very entangled—I was very entangled into their religion, and so I didn't really ever take time to examine it, to see what fruit it was actually producing."<sup>57</sup>

When asked what brought about the change, he stated:

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<sup>56</sup> Bible Gateway. (2017). Bible Gateway passage: 1 Corinthians 11:3 - New International Version. [online] Available at: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+11:3> [Accessed 30 Jun. 2017].

<sup>57</sup> Chris Personal Communication February 12, 2016.

Honestly, my wife gave me an ultimatum one day, she had finally had enough, and so we decided to leave the church. It became clear to me that things were very broken. The further I got from it, the easier it was for me to see the kind of thing that when you are there you cannot see, but the further away from it you can.<sup>58</sup>

Chris's reflections demonstrate how patriarchy is not always visible neither are the effects always overt. The alienation nearly ruined their marriage.

Two of my informants described being sexually abused, which they ascribed, in part, to the BPM's patriarchal teachings. Even though both leaders of the BPM encouraged their followers to stay sexually "pure" before and within marriage, both Doug Phillips and Bill Gothard stepped down from their positions of leadership due to allegations of sexual misconduct. Doug Phillips admitted in his public statement that he had a relationship with his nanny:

There has been serious sin in my life for which God has graciously brought me to repentance. I have confessed my sin to my wife and family, my local church, and the board of Vision Forum Ministries. I engaged in a lengthy, inappropriate relationship with a woman. While we did not "know" each other in a Biblical sense, it was nevertheless inappropriately romantic and affectionate.<sup>59</sup>

In Bill Gothard's case, 34 women came forward with sexual harassment allegations as part of a lawsuit. The accusations stemmed from the 1970s when the plaintiffs were mere teenagers. Gothard responded to the allegations through his attorney. His attorney stated, "Mr. Gothard communicated to the Board of Directors his desire to follow Matthew 5:23-24 and listen to those who have 'ought against' him."<sup>60</sup> There were allegations against local leaders of the BPM as well.

One of the informants, Bridgette, shared an example of sexual abuse perpetrated against her girls who had attended a youth group trip to the mountains to sign "courtship oaths." The attending pastor molested five of the girls attending the retreat, despite the purpose of the trip, which according to Bridgette was to "commit to purity of not dating." She stated,

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> The Aquila Report, (2017)

<sup>60</sup> World.wng.org. (2017)

“My two older girls took the courting oath that the pastor signed. He molested them on the second trip right after they signed up. So, I don't know, that one is very hard for us to cross that bridge. We haven't yet, for there is a lot of emotion tied to it.”<sup>61</sup>

When I asked more about what took place, and if the pastor's wife was aware of what was going on, she said,

Every single one of the five girls went to her [the pastor's wife] and told her what was going on. They went to her for help, because they were all confused by his actions and didn't know what to think. They all went to her saying we are not really comfortable what should we do? And every single one of them was told that was just normal, that was a father's love, and it was their fault for feeling uncomfortable because they didn't understand a father's love. And that was because your daddy doesn't love you right.<sup>62</sup>

Bridgette explained that the pastor was convicted and in prison and that they no longer attend his church. They were in the church for over sixteen years and both the pastor and his wife had personally counseled Bridgette and her ex-husband. The pastor's betrayal created a tremendous amount of hurt among the entire family. The two older girls are now of dating age. Bridgette told her oldest daughter to have “fun” while dating, something not emphasized within the courtship culture of the ECHS.

Another example of sexual abuse was in Janine's home. She disclosed that her ex-husband was often angry and that abuse had taken place behind her back for some time. Eventually, her oldest daughter admitted that Janine's now ex-husband had sexually and physically abused her. This led Janine to take action. Initially she sought help from family:

I remember calling some family members who are marriage counselors, and begging them for help numerous times. They would sit down and have a meal with us and talk with us. I would tell them about his anger and how overwhelmed I was. He would turn it back on me and, I have hard time saying this—I love my family, we are all taught in the church with that whole submission thing is—so these family members they would hear my side and

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<sup>61</sup> Bridgette Personal Communication February 19, 2016.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

his side. He would say he was angry because the house wasn't in order, and if only I did my job the way I should he wouldn't be so angry. And so, then she would turn to me and say, "If you get your house in order and do what he is asking you to do then he won't be so angry." And so it got turned back on me. Nobody ever dealt with his issues; nobody dealt with his anger.<sup>63</sup>

He was angry not just about how well she kept house, but that she also disclosed that she had suffered sexual abuse and believed that she had been raped during the labor of her youngest daughter. She stated,

I ended up testifying against him on the sexual abuse, which was part of the investigation, but one of the things that I kept secret for a long time was the internal female injury from my youngest daughter's birth [that] he caused. And it was while I was in labor with her, so immediately after she was born my uterus came completely out of my body, fully inverted so this was what they call medically a full uterine prolapse.<sup>64</sup>

When I asked her what caused the prolapse, she said:

It started out in a sense, what I thought was, you know, how they say sex will speed up labor. But it quickly went from a mutual thing, to a him thing, if that makes sense. It was more about him pleasing himself, it was no longer the way I testified to; it was that the look in his eyes changed and he became extremely rough, and I was softly crying. I tried to get him to stop and he wouldn't. So, it then became rape at that point.<sup>65</sup>

I clarified, "You were in labor?" Janine responded, "Yeah, I was in labor."<sup>66</sup> Janine delivered her child at home and the midwives unexpectedly missed the birth. Her ex-husband, according to Janine, was supposed to gently massage her belly but didn't, which resulted in midwife-recommended bed rest for six weeks. Janine explained that the police and social services became involved in her divorce and her ex-

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<sup>63</sup> Janine Personal communication February 12, 2016.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

husband went to jail for the sexual abuse. This took a major toll on their family and they lost their home due to financial hardship. Janine was forced to put her children in school and work full-time to support them. She cried as she explained the difficult transition she and her family had faced. However, she never regretted homeschooling her children. She explained:

I would say I don't regret homeschooling, I still advocate for homeschoolers; I regret submitting myself to a group that encouraged, whether it was directly or indirectly—I don't think they ever intended to through the teachings—it was encouraging the abuse in our home. I don't know, I think the situation we got in, because it was so patriarchal, it removed my identity.<sup>67</sup>

While Janine's narrative included intimate, and undoubtedly graphic imagery, I include the better part of our interview with my contributor's permission. At the time of our interview, Janine was finding her voice after years of hardship and desired to bring visibility to her circumstances and the circumstances of others dealing with sexual abuse.

When reflecting on her beliefs regarding purity, she concluded:

People can't use courtship and abstinence as a foolproof approach for protecting their children. Part of it is in the Christian culture it is a shameful topic [talking about sex] and it is uncomfortable—it's not an easy one at all. So, I am not a big proponent of you need to get married quickly, although that is what I used to believe. I don't believe that anymore. I think people need to take the time to get to know one another and I've made that very clear to my girls. I am still a proponent of abstinence, but how the young man treats my daughters is just as important.<sup>68</sup>

Janine's experiences had clearly shaped her perception of purity and courtship—influencing the way she raised her children and the expectations she had for their future marital relationships.

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

The responses of my informants demonstrate the various ways that the BPM's teaching impact families. While my research is limited to a small sample, it does illuminate the way women and men navigate patriarchy and negotiate their identities within patriarchal institutions.

## CONCLUSION

There is a gap between the doctrine of the BPM—what is taught—and the practices of individual homeschooling families. My informants' employment of the BPM's doctrines regarding dress, dating, and modesty varied. Ultimately, two families ended in divorced and three young women expressed the emotional repercussions of feeling judged by other members of the ECHS. However, while some informants left, others have remained a part of the ECHS.

While this study only scratches the surface, my hope is that it provides a basis for future inquiry on the BPM and the members of the ECHS. Currently the study has several limitations, including a limited sampling and the snowball method that more than likely impacted the course of this study. However, my research has merit in exploring the impact of the BPM on the ECHS and how individuals navigate for themselves the teachings and practices embedded within these institutions.



# Book Reviews



Culpepper, R. Alan, and Paul N. Anderson, eds. *Communities in Dispute: Current Scholarship on the Johannine Epistles*. Society of Biblical Literature Early Christianity and Its Literature 13. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014. 316 pp. ISBN 978-1628370157.

*Communities in Dispute: Current Scholarship on the Johannine Epistles* is a volume which—as the subtitle states—aims to “catch up” readers on the current state of scholarship regarding the New Testament epistles of St. John. Alan Culpepper and Paul Anderson have done contemporary students of Johannine literature an invaluable service by editing this admirable book and have succeeded in doing the very thing they set out to do.

*Communities in Dispute* lives up to its title. Culpepper explains: “The title for this volume conveys an obvious double entendre...It signals both that the essays in this volume deal with the Johannine Epistles as artifacts of ancient communities in dispute...and that they represent the disputes in current scholarship over the interpretation of these short letters.” (3) Bringing together a diverse group of experts in the field, who each contribute a state of the art study of a live issue in the epistles of John, the editors and contributors demonstrate that the Johannine epistles are some of the most difficult and contested books of New Testament. The reader learns that there is little agreement among experts

regarding the authorship, composition, and historical background of the epistles, how the epistles should be approached, and how to interpret the various themes and concepts found within the epistles. Yet the multiplicity of perspectives is the great strength of the book. Since the field *is* so contested, the editors did a fine job of providing the reader with an introduction into the disputed material. Culpepper and Anderson deserve praise for showcasing the many complexities of the field, as well as for allowing both liberal and conservative perspectives to be heard.

The book is also well organized. There are three parts; but due to the nature and size of each part, the book can be divided into two halves. The first half deals with issues related to textual criticism, order of composition, and the historical setting of the epistles. The second half explores the theology and ethics of the epistles. This division is helpful as it enables the reader to mentally organize the different issues that need to be addressed in studying the epistles of John. It also enables the reader to see how one’s view of the origin and context of each epistle influences how the content of the epistles is understood.

The book, however, is quite limited in what it can accomplish. As an introduction to the state of scholarship on the Johannine epistles and of various perspectives on theological subjects found in the literature, it is tremendously useful,

but what it gains in breadth it lacks in depth. The space each contributor has to develop their ideas is only one chapter, and although they make use of that space well, the authors are inevitably limited by the constraints of the book's format. Therefore, while technical and scholarly (it is not for the casual reader), the book is introductory. This is, of course, the expressed goal of the editors—a goal accomplished with flying colors. Readers who are looking for more depth can consult the Works Cited located in the back of the book.

Among the contributors, Urban von Wahlde's exposition of Raymond Brown's Johannine community hypothesis is extremely helpful for understanding the theory. Judith's Lieu's strictly inductive study of the epistles was a refreshing approach that counterbalanced the Brown hypothesis and yielded useful insights. The missional nature of the Johannine epistles was skillfully traced by Peter Rhea Jones and then profoundly contemplated in the superb chapter by David Rensberger. Andreas Köstenberger's chapter on the cosmic trial motif in John's writings was brilliant, showing the deeper theological unity within the entire Johannine corpus (i.e., Gospel of John to Revelation), thus providing a significant argument for common authorship.

The state of scholarship on the Johannine epistles leaves much to be desired. In the opinion of this reviewer the failure of contemporary scholars to incisively probe the crucial question of what precisely John means by his concept of the intra-fraternal love of the brethren is particularly remarkable. In the final chapter, Anderson summarizes the contributions of the book and performs the welcome task of underscoring and recommending areas that Johannine scholars need to focus upon and further develop. However, despite what

appears to be a gaping hole in Johannine scholarship (i.e., the precise meaning of the love of the brethren), Anderson seems unaware that there is a problem. As far as the love of the brethren is concerned, he only proposes that scholars seek to understand how the love of the brethren may be related to the mission of the Church to the world (which is a wonderful proposal to be sure).

Anderson's understanding of the love of the brethren is revealed when—earlier in the book—he makes the following statement: “While some interpreters have distanced the appeal for love within the community from the exhortation of the Synoptic Jesus to love one's enemies, in addition to loving God and neighbor, the difference is directional rather than qualitative. Indeed, it can be more difficult to love those with whom one is close than to love a more distanced adversary.” (91) In other words, for Anderson, the love of the brethren is *not at all* different than the love for our neighbors; it is rather *the prime example of it* (simply due to our brethren's closer proximity)! This statement is representative of a great oversight in Johannine scholarship: the failure to see the exclusive and intra-fraternal nature of the love of the brethren in John (i.e., the love of the brethren is *not* the love of our neighbors, but something quite different). While other contributors in the book do not miss the exclusive nature of the love of the brethren, they too fail to give a satisfying explanation of what precisely this love of the brethren is. In this particular area within the field of Johannine scholarship, the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few.

*Communities in Dispute* delivers on its promise to inform readers about current scholarship on the Johannine epistles. I highly recommend this book for anyone desiring to learn the latest developments

within this exciting field of biblical studies. This is a valuable book and an ideal launching pad for the enthusiastic Johannine scholar.

Eli Brayley  
Utah State University

Herbel, D. Oliver. *Turning to Tradition: Converts and the Making of an American Orthodox Church*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. 244 pp. ISBN 9780199324958

D. Oliver Herbel obtained his Ph.D. in historical theology from the Saint Louis University. He currently ministers as a priest in the Diocese of the Midwest at the Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church in Fargo, North Dakota, and also serves as a military chaplain in the North Dakota Air National Guard. In the eyes of most Americans, the Orthodox Church is either unnoticed or seen as ethnic enclaves for various immigrant groups such as Greeks (popularized in films such as *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*). However, with increasing interest in this ancient faith, scholars have questioned what is drawing people to a faith so foreign to traditional American Protestantism? Herbel answers this question by arguing that we can understand this phenomenon as being very much at home within American cultural traditions. In his monograph *Turning to Tradition: Converts and the Making of an American Orthodox Church*, Herbel uses a variety of published and unpublished sources and analyzes the stories of St. Alexis Toth, Fr. Raphael Morgan, Fr. Moses Berry, and Fr. Peter Gillquist and the Evangelical Orthodox Church (EOC) as case studies to understand the nature of conversion in America.

For Herbel, the answer to understanding conversion is to understand that they are “a turn to tradition, one that occurred through a unique kind of restorationism” (3). Herbel describes this idea this idea as the “anti-traditional

traditional.” American Christianity, in Herbel’s eyes, is characterized by this aversion to traditional religion and the continual fracturing and reforming of Christianity, often in the pursuit of “restoring” the early Christian church. (4) Therefore, American conversion to Orthodoxy is seen as keeping within that tradition of anti-tradition, as converts seek to both to reject their previous traditions and restore the early church by, paradoxically, turning to the tradition of the ancient church. For Herbel, each of his examples utilizes this “anti-traditional tradition” in their own contexts to deal with their own issues.

For St. Alexis Toth, an Eastern Catholic priest from the Subcarpathian region of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Herbel sees his conversion to Orthodoxy as serving two ends. First, Toth rejects his previous tradition of Roman Catholicism for its oppressive (and at times racist) treatment of Eastern Rite Catholics, especially his own Carpatho-Russians. Second, Herbel argues that Toth perceived his own personal and his parishioner’s conversion to Orthodoxy not so much as arriving at a new faith, but rather a return to the faith of their ancestors, as the Carpatho-Russians were once Orthodox, but had converted in mass to Roman Catholicism in 1646 (29). Thus, Toth is seen as a form of restorationism, albeit not a typical one. This chapter also introduces two themes Herbel expands on further in the following two chapters: the role race/ethnicity plays in conversion and the turning to tradition as a means to escape oppression.

Herbel’s next two chapters deal with Fr. Raphael Morgn and Fr. Moses Berry’s conversion to Orthodoxy. Fr. Raphael Morgan was most likely born in Jamaica in 1869 (details on Morgan’s life are obscure, a fact that Herbel acknowledges) and in his adult life was an ordained minister in the Protestant Episcopal Church, a historically black denomination. (62-63) During his time there, Morgan not only struggled with the

inner racism of the Episcopal Church, but also began to express doubts theologically about the doctrines of the protestant faith. Morgan began to encounter Orthodoxy through interactions with members of his own circles and a traveling schismatic bishop Joseph Rene Vilatte, who was infamous for his non-traditional ordinations. After a trip to Russia and his encounter with the kindness and racially progressive attitude of the Russian church, Morgan converted and was the first African-American ordination in the history of the Church. He served the rest of his life as a priest, traveling around America and Jamaica. This chapter also contain a section on George Alexander McGuire, another African-American convert, who established the African Orthodox Church (a church which sought to create a church with black leadership). Fr. Moses Berry's own conversion to Orthodoxy followed much the same path of Morgan's. Berry came to adore the liturgy and traditions of the Orthodox Church, while appreciating the presence of black saints such as St. Moses the Black. He converted, was ordained in 1989 (90), and founded the Brother of St. Moses the Black, a movement that sought to promote Orthodoxy among African Americans. For Herbel, both cases offer examples of African-Americans using tradition as means to both escape racial oppression and to restore the Church to its pre-western and pre-racial roots. Moreover, Herbel argues that though race played a large role, it was primarily theological reasons that were the ultimate factor in conversion. One critique of these two chapters is that I would have liked to see the case of McGuire explored in its own chapter rather than a subsection of the chapter on Morgan.

Herbel's final two chapters cover the case of Fr. Peter Gillquist and the Evangelical Orthodox Church. In the decades of the 1970's and 1980's, a group of evangelical ministers, led by Peter Gillquist in the Campus Crusade for Christ, had

become disillusioned with the ministry and began an in-depth study into the history and tradition of the Church. Eventually, they came to the conclusion that they distanced themselves from the historical church and in 1979 (110) established the Evangelical Orthodox Church, ordaining each other as bishops. Their early years were filled with both internal and external controversy, especially their questionable ordinations in the eyes of more established Orthodox churches. They were eventually received into the Antiochian Orthodox Church in 1987 (125) among much controversy. The following chapter deals with several specific instances of controversy. For Herbel, the EOC demonstrated the "anti-traditional tradition" and restoration by first rejecting organizations like Campus Crusades and instead sought more authentic understanding of the early church by first searching for, then attempting to recreate their own tradition, and finally seeking to return to a long-established tradition.

Herbel's understanding of the nature of conversion in America is both in-depth and groundbreaking. Herbel's theory of "anti-traditional tradition" is a remarkable description of the American Christian experience and he proves that it is an apt description of the Orthodox convert. Moreover, the fact that Herbel connects his theory with the idea of Christian restorationism makes his understanding of conversion even more remarkable. I have but two critiques of the book. The first has already been mentioned, which is that the fascinating section on George Alexander McGuire should have been its own chapter. The second critique has to do with the apparent lack of study into the conversions of American women. While Herbel does a well enough job of discussing race, the study of gender and its related power structures in relationship to Orthodoxy would only improve this monograph. Despite these missing areas, Herbel's analysis of American conversion to Orthodoxy provides

a solid foundation for future study into the field and would prove useful to anyone interested in the histories of American Orthodoxy, American religion, and the history of conversion.

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Pfatteicher, Philip H. *Journey into the Heart of God: Living the Liturgical Year*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. 415 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-999712-1.

Drawing on his experience as a minister, liturgist, and literature professor, Pfatteicher has written a hefty yet accessible tome that serves as an excellent guide to the spiritual practice of the church year. His *Journey into the Heart of God* guides the reader through the church year examining various traditional folk practices, communal prayers, collects, hymns, and poems that are incorporated in Catholic and mainline Protestant calendrical-liturgical traditions. The book begins with Advent and ends with an exploration of Ordinary Time, and includes several chapters on the meaning of liturgy. Pfatteicher's book might be best read alongside the Church year it explicates.

Pfatteicher begins his book with a broad bird's-eye view of liturgy. According to the author, liturgy is a pilgrimage through the year, a journey that is both linear as it moves through Jesus's life, and cyclical as it repeats year after year. He writes:

“Liturgical action in its largest sense is the most generally accessible statement of the experience of Christianity. The liturgy is the Church's peculiar literature, its imaginative appropriation of its own past, its present life, and its expectation of the future, which draws upon the whole experience of humankind of the divine and what

the race has found of ultimate significance.” (7–8)

Thus, liturgy is the entrance point into the Christian life. It is a ritual enactment of the sacred drama of salvation history. It is also a *collective* form, stemming from ancient tradition, rather than the invention of any lone thinker (7–10).

Pfatteicher fittingly begins his review of the Church year with Advent, the traditional start of the liturgical year. Advent, he writes, presents the paradox of waiting for an event that historically has already happened; “past-present-future are made one and experience as a single whole” in ritual time (28). In his review of the Sunday Advent readings, collects, and hymns, he demonstrates how this dynamic of waiting increases in intensity. He also explores how the roots of the prayers and songs were traditionally used. For example, he reveals how steeped the ancient authors were in the language of Scripture by charting the biblical quotations in the hymn from the *Aspiciens a longe* responsory in the First Sunday of Advent (36–37). He provides a similar treatment of the “O” antiphons, which occur on the final week of Advent and demonstrates how these ritual chants are also drawn from Holy Writ. Pfatteicher also includes practices of ancient origins that have faded from the contemporary tradition, such as the Ember Days, and various Advent folk practices such as the Advent wreath, candle-lighting, and paper stars. He concludes the chapter by asking what Advent means for Christians in a commercial context which he asserts has “transformed some of the Church's symbols into merchandising encouragements” (70). The next chapters analyze Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Ordinary Time.

In addition to the liturgical year's cyclical ritualization of salvation history, there is another calendar commemorating saints both ancient and recent explored in ninth chapter of this text. For Pfatteicher,

saints are “those in whom the paschal victory of Christ is clearly manifest, those in whom the holy and life-giving Spirit is clearly at work” (325). The calendar of saints reminds believers that God’s gifts work in a variety of ways. Pfatteicher reminds his readers that the saints are fellow pilgrims both in the Church year and in our journey to sanctification.

Pfatteicher begins his concluding chapter by pointing out that “the liturgical year is a most peculiar construct that can drive logical fundamentalists crazy” (341). Hemispheric differences are one obvious offense, as much of the music accompanying the Church seasons reflect a northern-hemisphere location. (It would be rather odd to sing “In the Bleak Mid-Winter” (78–80) during December in Australia!) Yet rather than reject these oddities as unbecoming our modern era, Pfatteicher encourages his readers to begin a “disciplined search for new insights in the old words and odd ways” (343). The author argues, the deeper we dig into the linear-cyclical, art-filled pilgrimage that is the Church year, the closer mankind comes to the heart of God.

*Into the Heart of God* explores the rituals that are too often lost in repetition. In the American context, where high-Church liturgy is often seen as irrelevant and dated, Pfatteicher defends ritualized worship. Because much of his book comments on individual days in the Church calendar, it could be helpful to pastors wishing to incorporate liturgical commentary in their homilies. However, it is also written rather densely and packed full of examples—sometimes Pfatteicher gives more examples than he unpacks—making it less useful as an introduction for a newcomer to traditional liturgy. Overall though, his book delights with poetry and devotion.

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